

Body Building

1: One Body, Many Parts

Week 1 is rather different!

You will need to have discussed it & prepared for this beforehand.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-30 (or play an audio Bible version of it)

Make a big picture together (at least A1 size).

- Include the words: **We are the body of Christ.**
- Use whatever materials or media you choose – the more creative, the better!
- Try and make something which represents you both as individuals and as a group.
- Make sure everyone can take part.

Please bring the finished picture into the church by 21st September so we can display them all together.

WHAT NEXT?

- This week & next week: Make a new 'Prayer and Invitation' (PI) Chart (see notes 1 & 2 from Sept 13) – with new people or ones you've include before. Use it to pray for friends/neighbours/family over the next few weeks and as a reminder to invite them to events over the next few weeks in the lead up to Christmas & Alpha.
- Pray for one another.
- Think of all the different groups or activities that you can in the church and pray for them briefly.

Later in the series, we'll look at this passage in a more conventional way!

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2: United We Stand

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...

Each share something that you're looking forward to in the next few weeks and something you're worried about. Pray for one another.

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

Each take a piece of paper. Draw a symbol or picture representing something that is important to you about God's character at the moment (saviour, friend, rock etc). Put all your pictures in the middle & then say short prayers thanking God for who he is.

WORD

1 Corinthians is one of a series of letters between Paul and the Christians in Corinth (Greece). We only have two of Paul's letters, but in them we see him addressing specific problems raised by the church there. Paul is writing to people in particular circumstances, but there are some very important things for us to learn in our own situation today. In particular, the importance of the church being a single body made of many unique parts, each with a role to play.

Read 1 Corinthians 1:1-17

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?

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- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

In this letter, Paul addresses problems of divisions in the Corinthian church. Later, he also mentions their spiritual gifts and life after death...

- In the light of this, why does Paul start his letter in the way he does in verses 1-9? What themes does he hint at?
- If you were part of the church in Corinth, how would you have felt hearing verses 1-9? Why?

Looking at verse 10 onwards...

- Paul knew the Corinthians well. He had stayed with them (Acts 18) and written previously (see 1:11 & 5:9). Do you think Paul was right to criticise the Corinthians or should he have left them to their own opinions? Would you have done the same?
- If you see someone doing something wrong, how do you decide whether to point it out or not? What part does relationship play?
- Is it realistic to be 'perfectly united in mind and thought' (v10)?
- What differences are there between a healthy diversity of opinions and unhealthy division within a church? How can we encourage diversity, whilst preventing division?
- There are different types of churches in/around Alsager. Do you see this mixture as a 'healthy diversity' or as 'unhealthy division'? Why?
- What issues seem most likely to divide or unite the church these days? How important do you think they are to God?

WHAT NEXT?

- Use your PI Chart to pray for others
- Pray for our church that we would be healthy and united

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3: True Wisdom

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...

Each share the name of someone you regard as 'wise'. Why do you think of them like that?

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

Use a video of a song focusing on the cross, such as:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SuRNZg6uatg>

Then have a time of silence in which each person can spend time on their own thanking God for the cross.

WORD

Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:8

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

- How would you describe the 'message of the cross'? Individually, write down an answer in a few words, then share your different responses. What other responses might you have given? (verses 27 & 30 may help)

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- Each think of a situation that you know (eg at home/work/school/in the community). Then in 2s/3s...
 - * Share the situation you're thinking of.
 - * How might the cross seem 'foolish' to people in that situation?
 - * Who are the people or what are the characteristics that are most admired or respected in that situation?
 - * What would it mean to live according to the way of the cross in that situation?
- Paul is quite scathing of scholars and intellectuals, although he is well-educated himself. From this passage, what characteristics would you expect a Christian academic, philosopher or public speaker to have?
- These verses come amidst sections on divisions in the church. What messages are there for us about how we regard people who are different from ourselves within the church?
- Being honest about yourself (not pointing fingers at others!)... Who do you find it hardest to relate to? Are there types of people who you don't notice or ignore – in the church or the community?
- How might our faith rest on God's power, rather than on human wisdom? (v5)

WHAT NEXT?

- Pray for the people on your PI chart & think: what could you invite people to?
- Go round twice taking it in turns to say 'Thank you God for... Amen' All join in with the Amens.
 - * Each time put in names of people in the church – not just your close friends!
 - * Then put in the names of other people you know – those you find it easy to get on with & those you don't (but don't say which are which!)

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4: Strong & Healthy

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...

Play a game that involves some sort of a race or competition (Beetle, Xbox etc) – for fun, but it does also relate to the theme!

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

Sing the old hymn together 'Great is thy faithfulness' or a modern equivalent.

WORD

Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-10:13

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

- If one of you has trained seriously for a sporting event or challenge – share what it was like. How much time and effort did you put in? How did it feel before/after?
- Discuss together: What motives would you need personally to do serious training or preparation for an event or challenge?

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- Paul writes of 'training' to 'get a crown that will last forever' (v25)
 - * How many different ways can you think of in which we can 'train' in our lives as Christians? (habits, disciplines, use of time etc)
 - * Which ones do you find the most challenging? Are there any you have found particularly helpful?
 - * What is the difference between 'trying' to be Christians and 'training' as Christians?
 - * If God is the most important thing in your life, what steps could you take to train more seriously?
- Read Hebrews 10:24-25. How can you encourage one another in training and growing in the Christian life?
- In 10:1-12, Paul points out that although the Israelites all did the same outward worship, some of them were not living faithfully to God. What temptations did they give in to? How can we resist these as Christians?
- In v13 Paul reminds us that everyone is tempted (including Jesus) but that we can also all resist temptation. In what situations do you find it easiest to give in to temptation? What temptations do you find it easier to resist?
- How can we help other people in our society to resist temptations?
- Paul talks of idolatry – putting other things before God in our lives. What things is it easiest to put before God in our lives today? How do we resist the temptations?

WHAT NEXT?

- In 2s/3s: Discuss one regular action you can take to 'train' more in Christian living. Pray for one another that you would resist the temptation to give up and that God would be faithful.
- Find a way of reminding yourself to 'train' regularly.

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5: One Body, Many Parts - Again!

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...

- Go round the room. In turn, each say: 'Thank you God for [name of next person]. Thank you for [say a good thing about them]. All join in with 'Amen'. Then continue round the room. You could then repeat it going the other way round.

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

Read out 1 Thessalonians 5:11 – which Paul writes to another church. In 5 mins of silence, each think of people who have said encouraging things to you, recently or in the past. Why were they encouraging? What was the effect? In the quiet, thank God for those people.

WORD

Read 1 Corinthians 12

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

- You could watch this video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=egkRSJtNwjU>

and then discuss your answer to: Which part of the body are you?

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- Can you think of any other illustrations, instead of the body, that you could use to make the same points as Paul in this chapter?

Look at the following list of gifts (from here, Romans 12 & Ephesians 4). It's not intended as a complete list – people will have other gifts too.

- **Prophecy, Serving, Teaching, Encouraging, Giving, Showing mercy, Wisdom, Knowledge, Faith, Healing, Miracles, Discerning between Spirits, Tongues, Interpretation of Tongues, Being an Apostle, Helping others, Administration, Evangelism, Pastoring**
- Discuss briefly together any that anyone isn't clear about.
- Now, individually for 5-10 minutes:
 - * Look down the list & write down between 1 & 3 gifts that you particularly feel you have – from these or others you want to add to the list..
 - * Are there any that you feel you don't have, but wish you did?
- Now in 3s/4s, each in turn talk about what you've written and then let other members of the group add any gifts that they think you have.
 - * Be encouraging!!
 - * Now talk about how you can use your gifts in your daily life and within the church.
 - * Now pray for each person in turn, that God would guide them in using their gifts and give them the gifts they desire.

WHAT NEXT?

- Use your PI Chart to pray for people, but also think what you could invite them to.
- Pray for one of the Far Out organisations that we support as a church. If you don't already, you could choose a particular one to find out about and pray for regularly.

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6: One Body, Many Parts (Extra!)

This is an optional extra session which gives a different angle on the same passage as last time.

The session uses material on the Internet, which you'll need to be able to play online or download. You can find it at:

www.lstcoda.com – then select the 'Voice' icon

It features Geraldine Latty, who is coming to sing at Christ Church in December!

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...

Each answer: If you had the chance to sing in choir for a TV Series (like the ones done by Gareth Malone etc), would you do it? Why?

WORSHIP & WORD

Read 1 Corinthians 12 (as per last time)

Now use the 'Voice' Group Discussion Notes (they're on the website or you can download & print off a copy using the link in the first paragraph.)

- Do Session 1 (Explain, Watch, Discuss).
- If you have time, then you may also want to watch one or more of the videos for sessions 2-4.

WHAT NEXT?

Discuss:

- Who are you inviting to the Geraldine Latty Concert, other Christmas events at Christ Church/Oakhanger and Alpha?

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- How will/could you get involved in helping with church events over Christmas, as a part of the body alongside others?
- Pray for one another and for the Christmas events taking place

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7: Love is...

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...

Play a secular song about love. Talk about what messages or assumptions it gives about what love is. How do these compare to your own picture of love?

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

Read through the lyrics of Casting Crowns song 'If we are the body' at <https://www.castingcrowns.com/music/lyrics/if-we-are-body> You could then play/download it and think about the words.

WORD

Read 1 Corinthians 13

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

- See verses 1-3: Paul is positive about using spiritual gifts (see 14:1). However, he's concerned over how they're used. In what ways could gifts such as prophecy or speaking in tongues or giving or sacrifice be used without love?

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- Can you think of ways in which we can check that we are doing 'good things' for the right motive (love)?

In verses 4-7, Paul describes love in different ways. This is not meant to be a complete description of love. There are many other ways love is described in the Bible (eg John 15:13).

- Each take a piece of paper. Write at the top 'Love is...' Now, imagine asking people complete the sentence in 3 different ways that you think (with words or pictures). Then talk about what you've drawn and why. How do these descriptions compare with Paul's?
 - In Paul's list, he doesn't describe love as an emotion or as an impossible ideal, but in practical terms. How do you feel about this?
 - Which of Paul's descriptions do you find particularly hard to put into practice in your own life? Share some example of situations when you've struggled to love in this way.
 - In what ways can we work together as a church to show the sort of love Paul describes to others?
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- Why will some things remain and others cease when we see 'face to face' (v12)?
 - How would your life be different if you had...
 - * ...more faith?
 - * ...more hope?
 - * ...more love? (v13)

WHAT NEXT?

- Talk about what you've found most helpful in this series on 1 Corinthians. What will you remember? What will make a difference?
 - * Why not share something about it in a service one Sunday?
- Pray for the Christmas events and Alpha Courses starting soon.
- How could you show extra love of the kind described by Paul to someone this Christmas?

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