

# *Being family in Christ's Church*

## **Introduction**

We will explore what it means to be a church that lives out the Lord's vision of what church should look like. In other words, what it means to be family in Christ's Church. We are going to use Romans 12 as our model.

We have been saved by faith through God's grace, the only reasonable response is to praise the Lord by giving our life to the Lord.

The first two verses focus on our individual response – the body of the individual. Paul says we should offer our whole self entirely to the Lord as an act of worship. This will lead to revelation of his will for our lives.

Then we move to the church – the body of the Christ (verses 3-8). Paul is calling the church to live as a single community, a recurring theme in Paul's letters. Paul is saying that the church is to be shaped by Jesus himself. Christians are to strive for unity, which will come through the humility in which each individual offers their gifts, neither over valuing their part nor under valuing that part, because each part of the body plays an important part.

The final verses describe the body of Christ at work in the world – love in action (verses 9-21).

We will explore ten themes from this chapter: worship, relationships, discipleship, gifts, giving, pastoral care, encouragement, hospitality, prayer and being ambassadors for Christ.



## **Week 1: Worship**

### **WELCOME**

*Spend time relaxing and sharing together.*

When you are on holiday, do you find a church to worship at? If you do, share something of your experience especially the encouraging aspects.

### **WORSHIP**

Read one or more of the praise psalms (e.g. 100, 96) Take a few moments of silence to pick out verses that you have been drawn to. The leader can then encourage people to read their verse as an act of worship and perhaps elaborate on why they were drawn to this verse.

Alternatively (or in addition) sing a praise hymn/song.

### **WORD**

1. What does worship mean to you?
2. How do you worship?
3. Why do you take part in corporate worship at church? (Hebrews 10.24-25)

Read Romans chapter 12. (This week we will focus on verse 1, but we will explore the entire chapter over ten sessions).

Verse 1 starts with the word “Therefore”. Paul is saying that because of what he has explained in the previous eleven chapters... *“I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.”* (verse 1).

What does Paul say in the first eleven chapters? That is a big ask! Paul’s letter to the Romans is his longest and arguably the most important letter. It is rich with theological content. You could skim through these chapters looking at the titles. Most English translations (inc. NIV) insert titles in the

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text, these are not part of the original text but help to summarise what is being said. If time doesn't allow you to do this, I offer this, as the shortest summary I could manage in less than 100 words:

*Paul describes what Jesus has done for us. Paul explains that God's family is now for everyone: Jew and Gentile. Paul explains how God feels about sin. He explains how grace works. He explains that our salvation is based on faith and not on what we do. He explains that the law is now written on the heart and not on parchment. At the core of the first eleven chapters of Romans is the sacrifice that Jesus has made for us.*

4. Why should we *offer our bodies as a living sacrifice*?
5. Who is the sacrifice for?
6. What does "*offering your body as a living sacrifice*" mean in general?
7. What does it mean, more specifically, in our life: with our family; with our friends; in our workplace, in the church, in our community?
8. Jesus said to the rich young man, "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor" (see Mark 10.17-31). Jesus said this because the man loved his wealth more than God. Is there anything that you can't sacrifice?

Paul says that *offering your body as a living sacrifice* is *holy and pleasing to God*. Holy means set apart for God, so our bodies - our entire being, are placed at God's disposal, to do with as he wills. This is pleasing to God. This can be rather counterintuitive for many, when we have been taught that nothing we can do can commend ourselves to God. It is true that we are saved by God's grace and not our own efforts.

Paul says that our very purpose is to please the Lord. See 2 Corinthians 5:9 and Ephesians 5:8-10.

To finish, read Romans 8:5-11

9. How can we please the Lord?

### **Summary**

Our participation in corporate worship, prioritising this time with the Lord, is part of our worship but not the complete response that the Lord is asking for. The point of the word body here is that it refers to the complete person. So, our act of worship is not just spiritual, but is also physical, in that it involves our entire physical body, and all that we have and all that we do. When we fully commit our lives to Christ, everything we do is an act of worship and is holy and pleasing to God. This is not about being perfect, it's about putting Jesus at the centre of everything, of all that we are, and living in accordance with the Holy Spirit.

### **WHAT NEXT?**

Take some time (either in silence or with some appropriate music playing) to allow people to prayerfully reflect if there are any parts of their life that have not submitted to the Lord.

If your group would like to be accountable to each other, you could share and pray for each other (honouring confidentiality).

Pray for other needs as necessary including follow-up from previous weeks.

If some of your GG members don't normally go to church on Sunday (maybe some members struggle with this), why not consider going together as a GG. You could all sit together in church and perhaps have lunch together afterwards.

Could each GG member invite a friend or family member to a Sunday service, and all sit together so that your guests know that they will not be the only newcomer?