

Word notes Sunday 20/10/13 Tony Hodge
Church: The Body of Christ

Summary (read this bit out to remind cell members what was said on Sunday)

Key Texts: 1 Cor 12:12-27

In his letter, Paul gives guidance to the church at Corinth on many things to do with Christian life and the life of the church. This section on unity comes in the middle of a larger section on spiritual gifts, their source and purpose. The well known image of a body, made of many different parts all needing each other, underlines the unity of the Spirit who gives the gifts, and the unity that should be in the body to see them work as intended. The main points to be drawn from the passage are:

- We are united in the Spirit and different individuals (v13, 14)
- We are meant to be together not separate (v15-17)
- God made us different and puts us in the right place (v18, 19)
- We need each other to function fully (v20-25)
- We share in joys and suffering (v26)
- Jesus is the head (v27)

Bringing these together we must conclude that Paul intended them to understand that Christians are not meant to live in isolation (see also Gen 2:18 and Heb 10:25) lest they miss out on the full blessing God has for them. With this in mind we should embrace our differences, accepting one another as Christ accepts us and see that it is God who brings us together for our edification and His glory.

Since the gifts are distributed among believers, that is not all given to one or all to everyone, then unless we work together the body does not function as it should (see also 1 Cor 29 & 30). In addition while we might think in an earthly sense that some are more “presentable” than others, in truth these deserve special care, or honour not disdain. In understanding that we need each other to be whole, then it follows that we should stand alongside each other in the good times and the bad – much like the marriage vow “in sickness and in health”.

Lastly let us not forget who is the head, the source of all that we are and the object of all our worship, to whom all honour is given.

Application (this is the bit where cell members get to participate. Lead discussions around these points)

1, Paul uses the body as an illustration of different parts coming together to form a whole in the unity of the Spirit. a) Can you think of any other analogies that speak more clearly to you? b) Why is the body such a good illustration?

2, This illustration is in the middle of a passage on spiritual gifts. a) Why do you think Paul needs to bring this message here? (Hint: 1 Cor 1:12 and 1 Cor 12:7 & 12). b) What do you think had been going on when you compare 1:12 to 12:15-17?

3, Read verses 22 to 25 and discuss what you think this means in practice. What implication does that have for each of us in our relationships and activities within the church? How might we extend that to the wider body in our relationships with members of other churches and denominations?

Witness (this is the bit where the cell talks and prays about how to share the Good News)

Ask each person what he or she considers his or her main strength and main weakness to be in relation to outreach.