**SERVE 7 Body Talk 1 Corinthians 12 v 12 to 26**

**For the next few weeks, we will be looking at 1 Corinthians 12 & 13. The aim is to help us all to discover the spiritual gift(s) God has given us and to use them for His glory.**

So far, we have discovered that God has given gifts to every one of his followers. Every one has at least one gift, not to show off or boast about, but to use it for the ‘common good’. The church you belong to should be blessed by your gift – so you must use it carefully and humbly.

1. To really earth this, it often helps to talk about people you know in the church or in your group that just get on with using their gift(s) to bless others.

Take a look at the list of gifts on the previous weeks’ notes – maybe hospitality or administration were quite surprising.

You may like to give thanks to God for all the gifts you see in your church or group.

In this passage Paul is developing the idea of the church as the ‘body of Christ’. We all know when our bodies are not working as well as they should. Starting with toothache or a sprained ankle and on to long term issues that cause us pain, our bodies tell us when something isn’t right. He creates this almost bizarre picture of a body with different parts that speak to each other. The foot says ‘I am not a hand’ – how crazy to think of a body made up entirely of feet.

1. In verses 12 and 13, Paul anchors his argument

 ‘The body is a unit’ (v12)

 ‘It is made up of many parts’

 ‘They form one body’ (v13)

 ‘So it is with Christ’

 ‘We were all baptised by one Spirit into one body’

So, everyone who believes is part of the body but we all came into it through the work of ONE SPIRIT.

If this is all true, why does disunity occur in the body of Christ?

Do you sometimes wish you had a gift you have seen in someone else?

Do you ever feel that a gift you have is not being used?

**PAUSE**

**Just think what it would be like if every believer in our church was using her/his gift and everybody else was appreciating and valuing it.**

**What can I do to make that happen if it isn’t already?**

In verses 15 to 20 Paul spends a lot of time with repeated analogies of things that are obvious to us all. We know we don’t smell with our ears – we know we don’t walk with our hands? There is also the idea of belonging here – no part of the body can say it doesn’t belong

1. What is Paul so keen to get this idea of the unity of the body and the diversity of gifts across to his readers?

Why does he use so many body parts to get it across?

How do we help people who feel they don’t belong in the church community?

In verses 21 to 26 he applies his ideas to the way a church should function. He talks about parts of the body which, seemingly, have less power, value or honour – we must compensate our thinking so that all parts are seen to be equally valuable. The outward and obvious strength of a good arm or leg is no more or less important than the very small and relatively weak eye. Similarly, we all have organs like the heart and lungs that are invisible but crucial to our survival.

1. Paul’s thought here is that all gifts whether they be very obvious and ‘up front’ or rarely visible to the congregation should be equally valued and regarded as ‘crucial’.

But do we do that?

Do we tend to value the ‘up-front’ gifts more highly than those that are hidden?

Think of a couple of people you know about who do a faithful ‘behind the scenes’ role and thank God for them.

(Remember in the world of 1st century Corinth, there would be wealthy power-brokers who had acquired wealth through the working of the trade port. Also, Greeks valued public oratory as a special gift. Perhaps Paul was suggesting people in these categories were no more valuable than the person who gave time to people who were struggling)

Paul brings it all together in verses 24b to 26 – ‘God has combined the members of the body’ and ‘has given greater honour to the parts that lacked it’.

1. Less obvious gifts should be more highly honoured. How do we achieve that?

And there must be ‘no division in the body’ and its ‘parts should have equal concern for each other’. This is the glue that holds the church together and we shall see how love is the key dynamic when we come to the next chapter. If ‘one suffers, we all suffer’ – equally if ‘one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it’.

1. How does this work for us? Do we find it works in our small group?

How does it work in the context of a large church like ours?

Do we sometimes long for the closeness and intimacy that Paul seems to be describing here or do we prefer to stay a little bit distant?

How are you getting on with discerning your gifts – are you any clearer about what you could bring to the life of the church. There is a more detailed diagnostic test available in the office if you would like to be sure about the gift(s) God has given you because he’s given you at least one.