

FELLOWSHIP: STUDY MATERIAL

Fellowship: Bible Study

This study could be done by an individual or by a group. Most of the questions are personal, designed to spark personal engagement with the text. In a group, this will need some fore-thought, especially for a new group. It could be helpful to put people into very small groups, even two's, and then have a plenary in which anyone can share anything they've learned, or ideas for the church.

- Introduction:

Corinth in the 1st Century was a busy cosmopolitan port located on the narrow isthmus connecting the Peloponese (the bulgy bit at the end of Greece) with the main Greek peninsula. Paul visited Corinth on his second missionary journey. He planted a church there and stayed for about 18 months. After Paul left, Apollos, a skilled teacher, went to Corinth to support the church. Paul may have returned there on his third journey. This high-quality leadership was one of the causes of division in the church, as the congregation took sides with different famous figures. There were other causes of division too, such as over ethical issues, between richer and poorer members and over pride in spiritual gifts, especially the gift of tongues. These divisions were so severe that, in some cases, they even took each other to court. The picture in 1 Cor 11.17-22 of the church's chaotic worship at communion is about as far from the ideal of fellowship seen in Acts 2.43-47 as is imaginable. Paul addresses this division in his 1st letter to the church.

- Read 1 Corinthians 12.12-27

- [Group fun activity/icebreaker:

Print off one of the disconnected skeletons on this web-page:

<https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/191191946657129006/>

You may like to enlarge it before cutting out the parts. Get the group to assemble it together]

- Look at vv.14-17.

What is the pre-dominant body-part in your church?

Are you a church of brains, or mouths, or feet, or ...? Or do you have a good diverse mixture?

Why do think this might be the case?

- Look at v.21.

Can you recall a situation when you felt like the odd one out? (Or, to use Paul's analogy – like a time when you went to an ear party dressed as a foot?)

Can you say how you felt in that situation?

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What could the ‘in-crowd’ have done (or what did they do) to make you feel welcome and included?

- Look at vv.22-24.

Think about your church. Are there people who might be thought of as weaker, less honourable, less respectable?

Paul says that these members are indispensable and should be treated with greater respect. What do you do (or what could you do) to put this into practice – in church, at coffee after the service, in your daily life?

- Look at vv.24-27.

Can you recall a time when you’ve been ill?

How did having a problem in one part of your body affect the rest of you?

Were there any aspects of your healing or recovery that had to do with the whole person rather than only the body-part?

Were there people who made you feel like a human being again, and if so, how did they do it?

What can you do to show the love of Christ for church members, neighbours, colleagues, etc, who are suffering or feeling excluded, and draw them into the body of Christ?

- What insights into Christian Fellowship have you gained from Paul’s image of the body of Christ in this passage?

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