



SESSION 1 of 4

The body of the Church

MEETING AIM

To understand that all Christians are not the same, but are equally important

BIBLE PASSAGE

1 Corinthians 12:12-31

BACKGROUND

The church in Corinth was active, a little too active at times. It was a creative, spirit-led group of Christians. Yet, it needed guidance because it was making mistakes. In certain areas the church was growing freely but in others that freedom was causing issues. The church needed a little balancing out.

5 GATHERING TIME

Start by inviting the group to share what they have been doing during the past seven days. As they share, ask them if there was anything that happened that involved teamwork and working together? Or were there any sporting events where the teams worked well together, or not?

If appropriate you can explain that today you will be looking at how Paul encourages a church to use all its parts to work together.

5 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: pens and paper

Use the following questions as a quiz. All the questions are about body facts and figures. Split the group into teams or pairs. Let the teams confer and then write their answer down. When checking, the winning team will be the one closest to the answer.

1. Approximately how many cells does an adult human have? *Over 50 trillion*
2. The heart beats how many times in an average lifetime? *3 billion times*
3. What is the average percentage of human body weight from blood? *8%*
4. How many bones does a newborn baby have? *270*
5. How many bones does a human adult have? *206*
6. How many bones make up an adult foot? *26*
7. Researchers believe that the human eye can detect a candle flame up to what distance? *1.6 miles*

8. What part of the body contains the smallest bones? *The ear*
9. Apart from hearing what is the other function of the whole ear? *Balance*
10. How many bones make up the human skull? *22*

10 BIBLE EXPLORATION

You will need: images of the body parts in the drama

Use the drama as an introduction to the Bible passage. Practise before the session or ask for volunteers on the day. Give each performer a picture of their body part.

Eye: I want out. I don't want to be a part of this anymore. I don't see the point of hanging around you guys. You have no vision.

Ear: I hear you, I hear what you're saying. I've been listening to similar conversations and thoughts from others round here.

Eye: Really? Well, I didn't see that coming. I must have taken myself off the ball.

Ear: Yes, I overheard just the other day, just caught a snippet of a conversation from one of those body parts we don't often look at and try not to hear.

Eye: Oh I see, or rather I didn't, and I am quite glad I didn't. That just adds to my reason for wanting out. It seems no part is happy here. It's becoming a sight for sore eyes.

Hand: Well that is all well and good, but there are a couple of glaring issues arising out of this. And, I'm not pointing the finger at anyone here. I've felt this sort of discontent before. Normally a quick slap pulls everyone back in line.

Foot: It's ridiculous. I ought to stamp down on this right away. You all need a quick kick up the—

Hand: *Interrupting before the foot can finish.* Stop there, that sort of talk needs nipping in the bud.

Head: Oh, what twaddle. You're not using your head. You need to use your nut for all of this. How can you, an eye, or ear, or foot or hand go it alone? Eye, how will you be able to hear anything? Foot, how will you be able to scratch an itch?

Eye: Ah, I didn't see that.

Brain: Exactly, you need a brain for that sort of thing. It's only because I was thinking about it that Head over there was able to say anything.

Mouth: *Clearing their throat.* Excuse me, but what's more worrying is how you, an eyeball, an ear, a hand, a foot, a head and even a brain are able to talk without a mouth!

Ask for a volunteer to read the Bible passage 1 Corinthians 12:12–31. Explain that Paul is using a picture of a body to show that the Church is made up of all sorts of people with different abilities, levels of faith and understanding of what

being a follower of Jesus is.

Let the answer lead into 'Chatting together'.

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Use the following questions to continue your discussion about the Bible passage:

- What does Paul say holds all the different parts of the church together?
- What is holding your church and youth group together? Do the different parts of your church community stay apart?
- How can you be more involved in the church? How can you implement that as a group?

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: large sheets of paper; art materials

Give out the paper and encourage the group to draw a simple outline of a human body. Using the art materials, ask them to highlight and draw in detail the areas that Paul mentions in the passage: the eye, the ear, the hand, the foot and the head.

As this is done talk to the group and discuss what holds the human body together? In reality the bones, blood, the lymphatic and nervous systems link the various parts and they are all held together with the skin.

As the group have discovered, Paul says that love holds the body of the church together. Invite the young people to illustrate the blank areas of their outlines with ways their church and their group can show love. In this context it means love in its broadest sense that includes kindness, support, friendship etc. What can you do to make this happen?

5 PRAYER

Finish the session with a simple prayer. You could use the words from the chorus 'Bind us together'. Alternatively use the following:

Lord, hold this group together with love.
Lord, bring this group closer together with the church through love.
Lord, hold our church together with love.
Amen.

DARREN HILL

tells stories at the creative minimalist:
darrenhill.com.

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SESSION 2 of 4

The fruit of the Spirit

MEETING AIM

To identify what fruit is lacking in our lives and begin to grow it.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Galatians 5:22-26

BACKGROUND

The Galatians liked the law. Everything in their church had to be right and proper. They needed to be reminded that a life led by the Holy Spirit has little need for laws. Paul used the metaphor of fruit to illustrate this need. This session is more meditative in approach. It encourages the young people to develop the fruit of the Spirit in their own lives.

One thing to remember is that this is more than just being nice people. The fruit of niceness comes from the Holy Spirit and it is this fruit that holds us together and shows our faith.

5 GATHERING TIME

Start by inviting the group to share what they have been doing during the past seven days. As they share you might want to ask if they have seen, read or heard about any acts of kindness, where one person, or community, has helped another. If appropriate you can add that this session is about how a life with the Holy Spirit guiding us is one that displays plenty of good acts.

10 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: pens and paper

Split the group into teams or pairs. Let the teams confer and then write their answers down. Explain that we all need vitamins and minerals for a healthy life, but what are the top ten essential vitamins and minerals that we need? Give the group a few minutes to write a list of ten vitamins and minerals. The winning team is the one closest to this list: Vitamin A; B Vitamins; Vitamin C; Vitamin D; Vitamin E; Vitamin K; Folic acid; Calcium; Iron; Zinc.

Explain that in today's session you'll be looking at what is essential in our own lives using Paul's fruit of the Spirit metaphor.

10 BIBLE EXPLORATION

You will need: Bibles; pens and paper

Explain that you'll be exploring today's Bible passage through the ancient Bible engagement tool of Lectio Divina. This process is a quiet approach and one that the young people can do on their own when they are reading the Bible. Find a translation of the Bible passage that is easy to understand, ie one that uses patience instead of forbearance*.

Ask the group to get comfortable. They will be sitting still for a while. However, you don't want them to relax too much and fall asleep. Lying down is used in many meditation techniques but it is not advised for this.

Lectio (read)

Explain that the first step is to just listen to Bible passage. Ask the group to focus on each word and sentence as you read and to hear the passage as a complete unit. Read Galatians 5:22-26 through slowly. Repeat it twice more.

Meditatio (meditate)

The second step is to meditate on the Bible passage. The aim of this step is to let certain words stand out to the listener. Having heard the whole passage, it is now time to focus in and let elements stand out. Ask the young people to think deeply, or meditate, on each of the fruits as they are read out.

Read Galatians 5:22-26 through slowly but this time stop after reading each of the fruits out. Wait for about ten or 20 seconds before continuing.

Oratio (pray)

The third step is to pray as the passage is read. Before reading explain that you will stop several times. When you stop invite the young people to pray for each of the fruit in their lives.

Read Galatians 5:22-26 through stopping at each of the fruit as before.

Contemplatio (contemplate)

The final step is to think deeply or contemplate what the passage is saying and apply it to our lives. Explain to the group that for the final read-through they are to think about which fruit is missing or lacking in their lives. You'll return to this in 'Creative response'.

Read Galatians 5:22-26 through for a final time, again pausing as you mention each fruit. Leave some silence at the end for the group to reflect on this before moving on.

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Use the following questions to start a discussion about the Bible passage:

- What does it mean to live by the Spirit?
- How can you do this? What things can you do and what things should you avoid?

During this time, it is OK for there to be moments of silence as the group think. Gently prompt them but don't force any replies. This is a time to let the Holy Spirit speak quietly to each individual as much as individuals speaking out loud.

5 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: paper and art materials

Give everyone an A4 size piece of paper and access to a selection of coloured felt-tip pens and pencils. Ask them to choose a literal fruit and draw it on the paper.

They should then think about the fruit of the Spirit that they would like more of more of in their lives. They can write the name of fruit of the Spirit in their actual fruit and then colour in and decorate what they have created. As they do this encourage the group to think about:

- What do they need to do to stop and / or change the lack of this fruit in their life?
- What can they do more of or begin to do, in order to grow the fruit in their life?
- How will they show this fruit in their life?

Let them keep their art and encourage them to use it as a visual reminder in their own private prayer time.

5 PRAYER

As this session has been quieter you might consider finishing by praying in song. You could use the simple meditative refrain "Oh Lord hear my prayer" or you might prefer something a little more upbeat for contrast. Finish by saying the grace together.

*The Greek word for 'forbearance' begins with the transliterated word *makro*, from which we get macro, so it literally means big or large patience.

DARREN HILL

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SESSION 3 of 4

The armour of God

MEETING AIM

To understand that there is opposition to God's good news, but we are equipped to respond.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Ephesians 6:10-20

BACKGROUND

The letter to the church in Ephesus covers a lot and as it comes to the end Paul turns to an aspect that is very direct and personal but which hints at a much bigger picture. This passage ends with prayer but the first part deals with what is often called 'spiritual warfare'. There are two dangers when dealing with this. We can either end up seeing the devil, demons and evil everywhere and in every circumstance, or alternatively we can believe that they are nowhere. Different Christian traditions hold to different positions on this spectrum and hopefully your own will offer some guidance as to where your emphasis lies.

5 GATHERING TIME

Start by inviting the group to share what they have been doing during the past seven days. As they share you might want to ask if they heard anyone outside of the church talk about prayer. You can mention that this session is about how Paul talks about life a Christian using a military metaphor.

5 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: chess sets

Begin by playing a game, or more, of chess. As the game is being played point out that each of the pieces moves in a certain way. They each have different moves and are therefore used in different situations. To win a game of chess you need to know how each piece moves and can be used. You probably wouldn't be a very good player if you only knew how the pawns moved and not the knights. Explain that in today's session you'll be looking at all the different resources, or elements of battle, that Paul says a Christian has at their disposal.

10 BIBLE EXPLORATION

You will need: a belt; a body warmer; a pair of wellies; an umbrella; a hat

Invite someone to be 'strong in the Lord' and volunteer to be dressed in the armour of God.

Read Ephesians 6:10-20. As you get to each of the items have the group 'fit out' their soldier of God. The body warmer represents the breastplate, the wellies are for the feet, the hat is the helmet and the umbrella is the shield.

Ask the group what they would name these non-military items? The body warmer of...The wellies of...Encourage them to go beyond the mere words and to explain their meaning. What is righteousness? What is the gospel? And so on.

Close by explaining that whatever our belief in the presence of evil, the metaphor of God's armour is there to help protect us. Paul believed that God provided everything we need to overcome the opposition we face with regard to evil.

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Use the following questions to start a discussion about the Bible passage:

- Continuing on from the exploring the Bible passage, discuss what each of the items represent.
- What do all these different things (truth, righteousness etc) look like in your life?
- What about the sword? What does that represent? What is the word of God?
- The very next section of this passage talks about praying in the Spirit. Praying and the Bible are closely linked. How often do you use Bible verses, or passages in your prayers? Is this something you should / can do more often?

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: sheets of A4 paper; a stapler; art materials

Explain that praying is important in today's passage, although it is not described as a specific weapon. Prayer and how it works is something Christians have discussed since the beginning of the Church, and we still don't really fully understand it. However, we are all encouraged to pray. Essentially, prayer does what we can't do under our own skill and effort, whilst we still try.

Give everyone some sheets of paper. Fold the A4 sheets in half and then cut them making two A5 sheets. Do this again so each person has four A6 size sheets. Fold

these but don't cut them this time. Put them inside each other making a little booklet. If you do this with another sheet of A4 you'll end up with an A7 booklet of 32 pages including the cover.

Use the stapler to hold the booklets together. (You could bind them using a needle and thread. A simple loop will be sufficient at this size.) Encourage the young people to write their name and 'Prayer journal' on the front and to decorate the covers using whatever art materials you have provided.

Explain that this is their own private prayer journal. The young people should write what they are praying about at the top of each page and leave space below for them to record an answer or outcome. This will encourage prayer but also show how those prayers are answered.

Make sure you make and keep one too.

5 PRAYER

You will need: prayer journals from 'Creative response'

Use the prayer journals you have just made. Give the group some time to add some prayers to their prayer notebooks. These are for their own personal use and will not be seen by others. Encourage the group to use these notebooks each day and refer back to them in future meetings.

Close with a simple prayer of thanks to God for fitting us with the protection we all require.

If you have time, create a large prayer journal for the whole group (make this from A4 paper or buy a scrap book). Use this to record everything you pray for corporately as a group. Come back to the group journal every session to add more prayers and see how God has answered prayers previously written in the book.

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SESSION 4 of 4

The power of the tongue

MEETING AIM

To see that whatever we say is what we believe.

BIBLE PASSAGE

James 3:1-12

BACKGROUND

James is a practical letter. It is all about actions. What actions are good and what actions are dangerous to the followers of Jesus. In this passage James talks about how easy it is to say things that are bad, evil and wrong. We often say things that we would never actually do. But James points out that saying them is wrong. Saying them illustrates that all is not right within and can lead both ourselves and others, with regard to being teachers, astray. The tongue is small but it can do great damage.

5 GATHERING TIME

Start by inviting the group to share what they have been doing during the past seven days. If you want, you can encourage them to share anything that someone said that made them laugh. This session will involve a lot about things said that are negative so it might be nice to begin on a more positive note.

5 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: various phrases written on slips of paper (see below)

Play a game of Chinese whispers. Explain the rules. Sit the group in a circle. One person is given a phrase on a slip of paper, they must not read it out loud. They have to whisper it to the person next to them. This person then whispers it to the next person and so on around the circle. The final person is the one sitting next to the person who first 'whispered'. They say the phrase out loud to the original whisperer and you see how much the phrase had changed as it has gone around the circle.

Explain that messages can be changed and corrupted in this game. In life what we say is very powerful and it reveals what is in our hearts. Here are some examples you can use:

- Silly Sally simply said she saw Susan standing still since Saturday.
- Happy Henry has his hilarious hat hanging horizontally on his head.
- My mind makes mountains move more miles making my mind a miracle.
- Quarantine is questionable if queasy quartermasters quiver at the quay.

10 BIBLE EXPLORATION

You will need: a selection of newspapers and news stories printed from the internet
Hand out the papers and stories. In twos or threes, ask the group to look for stories about fake news, or lying, or other forms of propaganda. Ideally if you can find newspapers from different political persuasions you could compare how the stories are reported in both, what are the differences etc.

Ask someone to Read James 3:1–12. Reflect on what James might have had to say to some of the writers of the news stories they have read. Where else do we use our tongue to cause harm? (You might want to consider how the group uses social media, for example.)

Give some space and time to talk about where in the world we see people talking about and acting bad toward other people? Why do some people see other groups of people in a bad way? How can we show that we see everyone as made in God's likeness?

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Continue your discussion of the Bible passage by using the following questions to explore the passage:

- Why does James suggest teachers will be judge strictly?
- How does James suggest we can tell if someone is perfect?
- Can the group think of any other examples like the ones James uses in verses 3 and 4?
- Why we should not say bad things about other people?
- Where in your life do you need to rein in your words?

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: paper and art materials
Explain that the tongue has eight muscles. Four of these muscles move the tongue around and four of them change the shape of it. The four at the tip end of the tongue are for shaping it with the other four controlling its movement.

Give every group member a piece of paper and ask them to draw a tongue on it. The tongue needs to be big enough to be divided into eight sections. Say that this will be a private activity and no one will see what they write. Ask the young people to think of four feelings that sometimes make them say things they don't want to, eg embarrassment can cause us to say something we shouldn't. Write these down in each of the four sections of the tongue which represent how the tongue moves.

Now ask for four examples of things they have said that they shouldn't have. They might want to use asterisks here! Write each of these in the tongue areas that change its shape.

Using the art materials they should cover what they have written in pen, paint or collage, to end with a tongue free of what has been written. As they do this tell them to think about how focusing on God can help us control the things we say. To finish write on top of the tongue the words 'under God's control'.

5 PRAYER

Finish with a time of silent prayer. Ask the young people to focus on what is in their hearts as they pray. Encourage them to be led by their Holy Spirit led feelings and emotions rather than their words. You could use this meditation:

Dear Lord

At this moment I feel... *Leave a time of silence.*

I would like to feel... *Leave a time of silence.*
Hold my tongue when I feel angry, bitter, resentful.

Let my tongue speak peace, friendship, praise.

Guide my words by your spirit.

Amen

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