

PART OF GOD'S GLOBAL FAMILY

A BIBLE STUDY

1 Corinthians 12: 12-26

One Body, with many members

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptised into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear would say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honourable we clothe with greater honour, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honour to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it. (New Revised Standard Version, NRSV)

Some things to think about...

What do we mean when we talk about the Church? For many the word 'church' refers to a building where Christians meet together. But the true meaning of the word is something far more exciting. The Church is made up of everyone who has decided to put their trust in and follow Jesus as the Son of God. So if you're a Christian, you're part of a Church that has around 2.5 billion members around the World.

It gets better. This famous passage from 1 Corinthians compares God's Church to a body, and says that each one of those 2.5 billion Christians around the world has an important role to play as part of that Body. That includes you: you are just as important as anyone else in the Church. The Bible makes it clear that every person has special gifts and abilities, and we can use those to come together and do amazing things. No one is unimportant to God.

Questions for reflection:

- What do you think is your most important body part? What would you miss if you lost it?
- What happens to a hand or a foot if it is removed from the rest of the body? Why, then, do you think it might be important for us to be in relationship with other Christians?
- Do you treat everyone in your youth group/Sunday school/local church with equal importance? Do you feel you have equality with everyone else?
- How does it make you feel to know that you are important to God?
- There are several places in the Bible where Jesus is described as the head of the Church – or the head of the Body. What happens when your head is chopped off? Why, then, do you think it is important for us to pray, read our Bible and do other things that help us to have a relationship with Jesus?
- Is there something that you feel God would like you to do, that you could ask for help with from others in the Church?

Matthew 12: 46-50

Who is in Jesus' family?

While he was still speaking to the crowds, his mother and his brothers were standing outside, wanting to speak to him. Someone told him, “Look, your mother and your brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you.” But to the one who had told him this, Jesus replied, “Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?” And pointing to his disciples, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.” (NRSV)

Some things to think about...

When reading this passage, it's important to note that Jesus is not being disrespectful to his mother and brothers. The Bible is very clear that our physical family is important and we should care for them (see 1 Timothy 5:8). Instead, Jesus is taking this opportunity to offer a pretty incredible message of hope and encouragement as he tells us about his spiritual family – which we can all be part of! Some people have very difficult family and home situations. Sadly, many people can feel left out, abandoned or alone. However, in this passage, Jesus offers love, care, peace, mercy and kindness to everyone. He considers those who follow him and who obey God's will to be his brothers and sisters. That means that, as Christians, we should also treat others in the Church as our brothers and sisters too – and love them as family.

Questions for reflection:

- How do you become part of God's family? Who gets to be called a brother or a sister of Christ?
- How does it feel to know that Jesus considers you a brother or a sister?
- Do you always treat other Christians as a brother or sister? Do you always find it easy to love other people in your youth group/Sunday school/local church? What makes this easy/hard to do?
- How could you show love to your brothers and sisters in Christ?
- Do you always feel loved by other Christians?

Psalm 67

All nations called to praise God

May God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face to shine upon us,
that your way may be known upon earth,
your saving power among all nations.
Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you.
Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,
for you judge the peoples with equity
and guide the nations upon earth.
Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you.
The earth has yielded its increase;
God, our God, has blessed us.
May God continue to bless us;
let all the ends of the earth revere him. (NRSV)

John 3:16

God loves the World

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.” (NRSV)

Some things to think about...

How many bodies do you have? Just the one, right? It's exactly the same for Jesus. There is just one Body of Christ, not lots. So it doesn't matter what country you live in, what you look like, what type of church you go to, how old you are... if you are a Christian you are part of one body – one family – around the world. That means you have brothers and sisters you haven't even met in Zimbabwe, China, India, the USA, Guatemala, Syria, Yemen, Poland... the list goes on.

You might want to find out more about your Methodist brothers and sisters around the World on the following web pages:

- www.methodist.org.uk/global-relationships
- www.methodist.org.uk/jma

Questions for reflection:

- What does it mean for us to be part of a global Church? How do you feel about the idea that you have a spiritual family around the world?
- What things might we have in common with children and young people in the Church around the world? What are their concerns?
- Most of the Church can be found in what we call the Global South – some of the poorer countries in the world. Some Christians around the world also face persecution, which means they are treated badly by other people – especially those in charge in their countries – because of what they believe. What responsibilities do we have to them as our family? What might you do to help them?