

The Whole Body

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By Elvena Dew



I have found, since we have been hearing the sermons on discipleship each Sunday, my thoughts have persistently been drawn to 1 Corinthians 12:12-30.

In the past, as I have read these verses, I have predominantly noticed the obvious ways people serve the Lord. Our minister, those who preach, those who lead Bible studies, etc. As it says in the Scripture “first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers...” (v28). These roles are ‘centre stage’. How we value them as they help us to grow in faith and relationship to Christ.

However, this time as I have been reading something new has struck me. Before mentioning the above roles in the body of Christ, the Scripture uses the illustration of our physical bodies to aid us in our thinking (vv12-20). As I have pondered this, what hit me so forcibly is how the ‘centre stage’ parts of our bodies, important though they are, could not function without those parts of our body that are ‘backstage’ and ‘in the wings’.

When we see each other, we focus on our faces, our eyes, our gestures with arms and hands, the expressions on our faces... the visible ‘centre stage’ parts of our bodies. Yet the five vital organs we need to exist... namely the heart, kidneys, lungs, brain and liver... are ‘backstage’ and mostly go unnoticed in our consciousness... we pay little attention to them unless they are not functioning properly. We don’t ask “How are your lungs today?!” Yet these vital organs are so absolutely essential that, if they fail to work,

our bodies become increasingly sick and die.

Other parts of our body go unnoticed too... the seemingly insignificant bits like our nails and our toes, etc, etc. Have you ever had an itch you are desperate to scratch? It totally distracts your mind from what you are doing! Without our toes we would be forever falling over! We are extremely intricate and every bit of us, down to the finest detail, is needed for our well-being.

In Psalm 139 it is put so succinctly.... "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made". (v13 & 14).

How hard it has been during this pandemic. So many of the fellowship have told me that they have felt somewhat fragmented from the church. Paul made an excellent job of holding us together through Zoom and encouraging us to look after one another through phone calls etc, etc... but I am sure we all felt we missed meeting face-to-face. It is wonderful that gradually more and more of us feel able to meet in the church again.

As the Diaconate has met over recent months, we have often spoken of how that fragmentation has affected the church. Also, the sad realisation that we have lost the precious service of several beloved members during this time as they now worship with Christ in heaven. We are struggling to fill even the basic roles necessary for the smooth running of the fellowship... without even considering our part in making Jesus known in the community and among our friends who do not know Him.

Paul has mentioned the extreme concern regarding work with children... something our church has always considered of great importance. Not only are we failing to reach out to the community in this way... but we are also at risk of losing the young families who worship in our midst if we do not provide for their children. Serious indeed.

So where is all this leading me?

It seems to me that the above thoughts on 1 Corinthians 12 link in with how God spoke to us through 2 Chronicles 7:14 when we had the gift day for the kitchen and tech. To remind you of the words of that verse: "...if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and forgive their sin and heal their land."

The devil would love to distract us to focus on a problematic dishwasher and minor technical hiccups as operating expertise grows. Certainly, as we kneel before Jesus, we are worth attacking.

Will we resist this attack? Are our eyes fixed on the King of kings and Lord of lords...? His people humbly seeking His face... to let Him piece us back together to function healthily as His body again as we recover from the effects of the pandemic?

To function fruitfully, we all have to play our part. Once again, it is not about looking at each other to compare... but rather it is about each individual humbly seeking the Lord's face and asking "how do you want ME to serve you in Clare Baptist Church?"

Some of us will fulfil 'centre stage' roles and some will fulfil 'backstage' roles ... like the vital organs of the body... and some will be 'in the wings'... like the teeth and nails! Some of us are able to be more physically active... others not. Whatever our capabilities we are all part of His body, and the Lord has a role for each and every one of us. Without these 'backstage' roles being fulfilled the 'centre stage' roles simply cannot function!

This means all roles are equally important... no person in our church is more important than another... not even Paul! We are "a chosen people, a royal priesthood" of believers (1 Peter 2:9-10), and everyone is

needed so that we may regain strength to once again become a fit and healthy body of Christ “to follow and worship Jesus and make Him known.”

May our dear Lord richly bless us all as we humbly pray and seek His face. May He form and unite us as a cohesive whole to work together in His service and to worship His holy name... Amen.

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