

SESSION 3: From spectator to player

In this session we use an image from sports: Are we like a spectator when it comes to the church's life and ministry, or like a player?

ICEBREAKER: What is your favourite sport? Why? In your experience, what's the difference between watching it and playing it?

DISCUSSION STARTER (*optional*): Think back on a time when you started to serve God in a new role in church life. What was the decisive factor in giving it a go? *If your group has members who are not necessarily actively involved in church life, widen out the scope:* Think back on a time when you started in a new role (work, home, community group etc.). What was the decisive factor in giving it a go?

READ Romans 12.3-13

The Apostle Paul uses the image of the church as the Body of Christ with many parts and yet one in several of his letters (compare 1 Cor 12.12-27, Ephesians 4.7, 11-16).

NB: Depending on your group, there may be questions about the difference between natural and spiritual gifts. While this is not the focus of this study, I would suggest that there isn't a clear-cut divide (many of the spiritual gifts are also natural gifts - e.g. teaching, while others are more specifically God-given, e.g. prophecy), but a spiritual gift is empowered by the Holy Spirit and used for God's glory.

After some time of quiet reflection, invite the group to share their reflections. The following questions can help shape the conversation (as ever, select what seems most appropriate):

- What can we learn from the image of the church as a body? How have I seen this working well, with people using their gifts joyfully?
- In vv. 6-8 the Apostle Paul is listing some gifts as examples, not as an exhaustive list. What is his main point in these verses? How do we put this into practice?
- What would you say to someone who says "I don't have any gifts that could be useful in the church"? (Compare 1 Cor 12. 7, 15-20)
- Romans 12.9-13 describes how "the Body of Christ" operates at its best. What speaks to you especially? What are you struggling with and why?
- Rom 12. 11 has a sense of urgency. [If you have time, look at Jesus' parable of the talents (Matthew 25.14-30) or summarise it.] How do we respond to Jesus' message that God is holding us accountable for how we have used the gifts given to us?
NB: Jesus' parables are making one big point, often in a dramatic way. We can go wrong if we try to apply all the details of the story telling. God is not "a hard man who is harvesting where he hasn't sown". We tease out the main message and compare other details with the whole witness of Scripture!
- At Holy Communion we say "Though we are many, we are one body, because we all share in one bread." How can the account of Jesus' passion spur us on to serve him?

FOR QUIET REFLECTION: Is there a response that Jesus invites me to make?

Then slowly read this Bible verse: "Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it." (1 Corinthians 12:27)

LISTEN TO "The Servant King"

You can share this YouTube video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zCAwWs-ZyEk>

or play the mp3 attached to this email (which has a more contemporary style)

RESPOND IN OPEN PRAYER

SUGGESTED RESPONSES to offer to the group:

Ask the group members to take some time over the course of the next two weeks to reflect on the following questions. On Sunday 6 November we will share a booklet "Growing Hearts of Service" with more information and a "Volunteer Catalogue" that lists the many serving opportunities at Denham Parish Church.

(1) Is there an area of ministry at Denham Parish Church / at my home church / in Christian ministry that I would like to explore more? Who can I contact to find out more?

(2) Do I have a passion to offer my gifts to a particular group of people (different ages, life situations, etc.)? How can I find out more about opportunities in that area?

(3) Do I see a need in my church? Could I offer myself to respond to that need? A "first serve" can give me a better sense of it without 'signing up for life'.