

Fitness for ministry 3

Couch potato, cooked potato or high energy carbohydrates.

¹² 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.

¹³ For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

Process 1: Being a body – We are all in this together.

Here the church is described as a body. We identify with this metaphor, because we all have a body. We understand. What we sometimes don't understand is how that metaphor plays out in reality.

Let's just unpack it a bit.

A Body – has arms, legs, head, eyes, ears etc

A church has people who do certain roles. Leading, encouraging, supporting, caring. Hang on that is pretty vague too. So let's say it this way. Our church has a pastor – me, an office admin person, Kathy, deacons, Peter, Sally, Neil, Elaine and Rob. As well as that we have people who run say – kids church – Kimberly and Elspeth and their team. Then if we look further we include crèche, Sally and her team. If we had time we could identify everyone who does a part of this church's ministry. Each of these people are a part of the body.

Some would say I am the head, others would say Pete Moore is the head, depending on how you view your Governance structure although our leadership structure technically is flat and has no actual head person as such. We are all supposed to work as a team, or a body.

The author of 1 Corinthians is blunt about this:

¹⁴ For the body does not consist of one member but of many.

He then goes on to state the obvious.

¹⁵ If the foot should 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.

¹⁶ And if the ear should 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.

¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell?

What do we get out of this?

Process 2: Own who you are and your church – If you are an arm be an arm!

Sometimes we feel we don't belong. These days people use the term connect. Some people say they just don't connect with church. There are a multitude of reasons for this. Some the persons fault, some the church's fault some no fault, just the way it is. We live in a world that demands instant connection. Facebook, twitter, internet, youtube. All very instant.

So we have in our minds that church should be the same. Walk in, get connected. Little effort, little thought process. Unfortunately, there is more to it than that.

If we are truly part of the body, we need to recognise our part. Both in the blessing parts, and the work parts. For the body to work it needs to all function together.

Recently I torn a muscle and ripped a tendon. My leg didn't work right. Funny but even sitting at my desk, my brain didn't work the way it should have. It is like one part hurt so the rest went out in sympathy. While I had that sore leg, I limped a bit, and eventually the other leg got sore. While I compensated, another part took up the strain.

While this is a really good example of who we as a church support each other when we need to, if this becomes the state of the church all the time because some people don't want to do their role, well we start to limp as a church. We can't ignore it: the author again gives us a perspective here.

²¹ 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."

²² On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable

Notice what it says:

the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable

Paul is getting at the fact that each part is important.

My body has a problem, it is small in size but it affects all of me. My body doesn't produce insulin, or at least at this point not enough insulin. Insulin is a relatively small peptide hormone produced by cells in the pancreas. Small little hormone, but affects the whole lot of me, in fact it affects my lifestyle.

So the process is vitally important, even though it isn't seen, it isn't necessarily even felt or experienced in any great way insulin creates a balance in my body so my body functions correctly.

Because my pancreas doesn't do its thing quite right, the rest of me is affected.

See where this example of the body and the church fits in. We need our body (church) to be healthy and all of its bits working.

Notice this next bit.

²³ and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unrepresentable parts are treated with greater modesty,
²⁴ which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it,
²⁵ that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶ If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

Note that underlined bit:

that the members may have the same care for one another.

While we do different things – the body functions together and the care / support / is the same.

Here is something interesting. The concept here is that because there is no division we all partake of the same care. One commentator said that “because the system function efficiently, the care system works.” If everyone does their thing in context with everyone else in the church, church works.

So we need to own our role in the church. Someone said to me the other day that their role in our church was to let others practice pastoral care on them. Sorry, it doesn't work that way. That person said I'm old, I've done my share. Sorry, if God's still got you here you are part of His church and He has a role for you. Think about it.

Story of old Jack.

Jack had to own his role in church, he did, and the church benefited.

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.
²⁸ And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues.
²⁹ Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles?
³⁰ Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?
³¹ But earnestly desire the higher gifts.

Notice the list, seems a bit like a heirachy doesn't it. I don't think that is the main point here. The point is there is a heap of difference and we don't all have the same gift. And we shouldn't try to have someone else's gift.

Process 3: Be who you are; - Live like God made you

If you are different, God wants you that way because He made you that way. If you have different gifts, talents, experiences whatever, God wants you to utilise them within the church.

God doesn't want you to be someone else, nor does He want you to do someone else's spiritual role. So be who you are, be who God designed you to be, if you aren't sure where all that fits in, well it's time for conversation.

Next week we will look at Romans again and in the next few weeks we will start looking at spiritual gifts and their utilisation in the church. WE may have a spiritual gifts workshop as a special bible study if enough people are interested.

So what are these processes

Process 1: Being a body – We are all in this together..

Process 2: Own who you are and your church.

Process 3: Be who you are;

Hang on you may think, these aren't processes they are statements. They are only statements if you leave them there. They become processes when you participate in the body, take hold of who you are and your involvement in church and be who God designed you to be.