

Case Study

- This case study was worked through in groups before the sermon

It is the Kirk Session meeting at St Anywhere's, a fairly average Church of Scotland congregation. Two new members of Session have just been appointed: [Jack Evans](#) who has led the thriving Bible Class group for the past few years and [Mary Wilson](#), who has been part of the small team of pastoral visitors. Jack has now resigned as Bible Class leader and Mary feels that her role on Session is more important than her visiting and so will take most of her time now.

The Session agenda includes the appointment of a new Bible Class leader (for which there are no obvious candidates) and whether the church can afford to continue paying the minister's secretary (appointed when he was much involved in fund-raising for the roof repairs). Under AOCB [Anne Fletcher](#) who, as well as being an elder, organises the coffee rota is planning to tender her resignation from that role in desperation because she is finding it difficult to get people to assist.

- What issues does this kind of situation raise?
- What problems is the church facing?
- Why is this?
- How do people see their roles in the life of the Church?

Oscars!

- Picture yourself at the Oscars!
 - what do you see?
 - outside, thousands of fans gathered to watch the great and the good arriving, shouting and screaming when they see their hero!
 - the limousines drawing up, the stars stepping out, drop dead gorgeous or handsome, depending on your perspective! Photo opportunities.
 - inside, the hob-nobbing, the excitement, the cameras everywhere
 - *and then to the presentations themselves...*
 - the count-down, the three or four who have been short-listed.... and then the announcement of the winner! Applause!
 - winner up onto the stage to make their acceptance speech; all the attention, focus on them
 - very often pay compliments to those who helped them get their, friends, family, the team of people who made whatever film it was that got their name up in lights!
 - and the headlines the next day - who won the Oscars, which film "swept the board!"
- "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world..."
- The Oscars is not necessarily the best model for our Christian living!
 - even when the winner gives the credit due to the whole team, how many people really listen to that?
- As Paul starts to lay out how we are to live as Christians, how our lives are to be shaped in light of the gospel, he starts by urging us to ["not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you."](#)
 - for he knows that whenever we embark on any task there is always a danger that we will do precisely this!
 - to feel we are indispensable, to feel our contribution is greater than it is, to forget that we are servants, empowered to act by our Master.
- TV pictures of ships leaving for war... image is in our minds:
 - not quite sure how they do things today, but in previous conflicts there would often be an artillery spotter, positioned well forward with a good view of the battlefield and a radio

- their job was to call down fire on enemy movements, to direct the long-range artillery that was firing from well back behind the lines
- they didn't fire a shot, the power they exercised was not theirs but placed in their hands!
- so for us engaged in spiritual work - seeing someone come to faith through our witness; preaching a "good" sermon; giving good, Godly advice to someone; encouraging someone in their faith by our words or example... - the "power" at work is not ours, but God's
- However, sometimes in Scottish Presbyterianism we have been guilty of over-reading verses such as this:
 - rather than: "do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment...."
 - we maybe have read it as: do not think anything of yourself, but rather think of yourself as nothing more than a worthless sinner....
 - now, in one sense, that is true - we are nothing more than sinners, without God destined for destruction, abhorrent in the eyes of a Holy God
 - but that is only part of the story!
 - for we are also his precious creatures, made by him, loved by him, for whom he sent his own dear son, who treats us with a generosity, a graciousness that defies logic!
- "think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you...."
- God chooses to use us, to limit himself to the frailties and foibles of humanity, to send forth the gospel in jars of clay!

One Body, Many Members

- (4) Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, (5) so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.
- Formula One pit crew - how do they change a whole set of tyres and refuel the car in under 10s?
 - by all having their job, their role, and all being suited to that job!
 - practice, practice, practice.... left handers/right handers in the correct places round the car...
- They function as a single unit - the pit crew
- We form one body:
 - what pain would we feel if the people around us weren't here?
 - what would we as a congregation not be able to achieve without those around us?
- Body works by pumping blood around to carry nutrition to every part, oxygen to every part
 - otherwise gangrene sets in, and the body loses toes, fingers, limbs...

One Body, Many Gifts

- (6) We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. (7) If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; (8) if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.
- Diversity of gifts - mark of God's handiwork!
- Use our gifts!
 - prophesying - speaking God's word clearly into a particular situation; I can think of people, in the past and currently, who have an uncanny knack of asking pertinent questions that bring to the fore God's perspective on a situation...
 - serving - particular thing of serving other people, getting the neighbours shopping, helping set out the tables; but also attitude and perspective that

underlies all that we are trying to do...

- teaching -
 - encouraging - we can be bad at this in Western, particularly European, society; not meant to draw attention to good things, belittle them when they come along, not be over-effusive in any praise we do give; such an approach dries the life out of us! I know for myself that I am much more likely to
 - contributing to the needs of others - don't be ashamed that that is the position God has placed you in! Money is something else we don't talk about very much in our culture!! Give to serve, not to gain power or influence or praise...
 - leadership - at some level we all give a lead to others
 - showing mercy - helping others in distress
- If there is something that you are gifted in that you are not currently using, say! (to me, to Robert or Malcolm or someone else on the Session)

Playing for the Team

- I remember the camaraderie of playing rugby or basketball at school:
 - particularly in 6th year rugby team, all had to work very hard, new teacher came from a rival school and got us all psyched up for the match with his old side!
 - we were in it together; we were in it for that teacher!
 - each of us using the particular gifts and skills we had
 - *(and we won!!)*
- Even as we belong to Christ, we belong to one another.
 - we aren't the critical link, the essential ingredient, the star of the show
 - but neither is our contribution worthless!
- We are called on to start with that which God has given us, and use it!
 - not to simply role fill... **we need someone for the Sunday School...**