

Teamwork makes the dream work.

Most organisations today recognise the need to build a strong team - the ability for a group of people to work towards a common goal and vision.

The Springboks

Before the RWC I was privileged to attend a talk with Rassie Erasmus. He had the enormous task of putting a 31 man squad together with the aim of winning the RWC for South Africa. With that squad he also needed a team of coaches to assist him in training and preparing the squad. In a rugby team you have 15 different positions, each with its own function in the team. One of the 15 is appointed as a captain to lead the team on the field. On the bench you have another 7 players who may substitute for injury or replace the player on the field. Rassie was asked why certain outstanding players were not selected for the squad. He said it is simple, although they are great players, they are not beneficial to the team. These players cause division and strife and don't have the best interest of their fellow players at heart. The players were to spend 20 weeks away from their families and travel and live with their teammates. It was clear that there was more at play than just being a good rugby player. For the first time in many years we experienced South Africa backing their team. Even though they didn't always agree with Rassie's selection or game plan, it was clear that they were backing the team. The team was different than previous teams. You could see they trusted Rassie and there was a good spirit between team members. Losing the first game against the All Blacks was a big setback, as no team that lost a pool game had won the RWC before. The Springboks really seemed to need a miracle now. Slowly but surely the team made it up the ranks, although not always convincing the supporters, they won every game after that.

A lot of talk about rugby, but what has this got to do with church?

The Word doesn't refer to a Team, but it refers to the Body of Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:12- 27

For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. And if the ear says, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. If they were all one member, where would the body be? But now there are many members, but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; and those members of the body which we deem less honourable, on these we bestow more abundant honour, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honour to that member which lacked, so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.

The body

- A body is like a team made up of many members (body parts).
- Members working together towards a common goal.
- Each part has a role to play to make the body function.
- We don't eat with our feet and likewise we don't walk on our hands. The hands and feet have different functions, but they are part of the same body.
- When the body wants to do something, all the members must work together to achieve the goal.
- When I walk, I use my feet, but my arms and hands swing to help me balance. My eyes show me where to walk and my ears are very important for balance too.
- When a part of the body is aching, it affects the whole body.
- The Word says that the Spirit has given gifts/roles to all of us in the body.
- For this reason, it is important for us to know what our role is and to fulfil that role.

Unity

- The members of the body need to be in perfect unity.
- Like a team, there needs to be a common goal and vision.
- Every member must play his role for the goal and vision to be accomplished.
- When the left foot wants to go left and the right foot wants to go right the body ends up on the floor.
- The Word says where there is unity, God commands a blessing (Psalm 133).
- I refer to unity in the family, in the church and the church in the larger body of Christ.
- In unity members defend each other.
- For those who followed the RWC, there was a lot of criticism on Faf De Klerk and the game plan he executed.
- His team member did not talk down on him or criticize him. Instead they defended him and told supporters to stop criticising him and support the team.
- On the field, the testosterone gets high and players get into brawls. The members of the teams climb in to protect their team members.
- Are you defending your members or are you helping to break them down? "You know worship today was terrible, Pastor Juan was preaching in circles again today."

Non-Functioning Member

- If a part of the body is not functioning properly, the rest of the body must compensate for the non-functioning member. This puts strain on the rest of the body.
- When a player is not doing his work on the field, the rest of the team suffers.
- The rest of the team members must work harder to try and cover for the member that is not performing.
- Players will now not just focus on what they must do, but also play out of position, making their own position weaker as well.
- The non-functioning member makes the team vulnerable and the opponent will attack on the weak points.
- Is the team picking up on your slack?

Maturity

- When we were born, we were born with our bodies with all its members.
- Our members or body parts were weak, our muscles and coordination had to develop.
- We had to learn how to crawl, walk, talk, learn to hold things with our hands. The Word says that we must come into maturity as members in the body.
- We need to grow together.
- Imagine if only your one foot grew or only your ears grew, and the rest of your body remained the same.
- All the members need to grow together so that they are on the same maturity level.
- If the body parts are not on the same maturity level, they won't be able to work together.
- Are you as a member growing with the rest of the body?

Commitment

- When Rassie selected His team, I'm sure he had a one-on-one with all the players and got their full commitment.
- Each player knew that this task was going to be a sacrifice and that there was a price to be paid. Hard training sessions, special diets, traveling, difficult games possible injuries and 20 weeks away from their families.
- God asks for your commitment. He says there is a price to be paid to follow Him.
- Where is your commitment?
- Do you come to church to fulfil you part in the body?
- When players don't come to practice, they don't play that weekend. If there is no commitment, that player is dropped and a replacement player is called up to fulfil that position.
- Do you pitch for practice? Where are you on Sundays and Wednesdays when the body is training and equipping?

Conditioning

- Each player in the team must be the best member for that position that they can be.
- To do the best, they need to practice and condition themselves for that position.
- If I am a Springbok Wing, then I better play like a Springbok Wing. I was selected to be the best wing to represent my country.
- Are you conditioned for your role in the body?
- You have been called, are you the best member that you can be?
- Do you walk in a manner worthy to the calling that you have been called?
- The RWC players represent the team, they are being watched. They can't say what they want and do what they want.
- You represent the body; you need walk in a way that represents the body.

Humility

- In the Springbok team, everybody in the team are Springboks.
- Each member is a master in the position that he has been selected for. No member regards himself more important than the other members. Each member acknowledges their dependency on each other.
- Members hold each other in high regard, irrespective of their position in the team.
- Let's have high regard for the members in our body and treat them with the necessary respect and dignity.

Obedience

- Following instructions, doing what you are instructed to do.
- Many people criticized Faf for box kicks in the RWC. Supporters wanted Faf to pass the ball more to the backline and run the ball.
- Faf was playing under instructions of his coach, Rassie.
- Siya Kolisi was the captain of the squad and it was his job to ensure that players executed the game plan on the field.
- The rest of the team knew it was Faf's job to kick the ball and their job to retrieve the ball and gain territorial advantage.
- Faf could have decided to rather pass the ball than kick it, but then he would have been disobedient to instructions.
- The rest of the team would not have understood what was going on.
- If Faf disobeyed instructions, the coach would have replaced him with someone that would follow instructions.
- Are you doing what you were called to do?
- Do you do things to please people instead of God?
- Do you argue with the captain and coach when you are corrected?

Trust

- The most important thing in a team is trust.
- If members of a team don't trust each other, they won't be able to work together.
- Only where members can trust and rely on each other will they be able flourish.
- Can your fellow members trust and rely on you?

When we understand how the body works, we can understand how the Kingdom of God works. Jesus came to establish His Father's Kingdom. We can only establish His kingdom if we can operate as a body, walking in maturity.

Ephesians 4:1-32

Unity of the Spirit

Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all. But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it says, "When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, And He gave gifts to men." (Now this expression, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.) And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

The Christian's Walk

So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbour, for we are members of one another. Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity. He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labour, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need. Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.