

Ephesians 4:1-16

John 6:24-35

What do you understand by the word representative?

At the moment we are watching the Olympic Games and cheering on those athletes who represent Great Britain, in their chosen sport.

They also represent what it means to be dedicated to that sport in their general life style.

It's not an effort to discipline their life style because the end result is worth the effort.

What about a Sales rep.

We have all, I guess, had experience of the pushy sales person {nearly said man then } who, although supposed to represent the company he/she works for, or is keen to demonstrate belief in the product for sale but is actually only thinking of the commission he/she will receive when we sign the dotted line.

I once enquired about a recliner chair, for my husband, online. Within 24 hrs. I had the company ringing me and talking me into a visit by a rep. Even though I insisted that I was only enquiring to get an idea of the cost. When he came he sold us a very expensive recliner that we actually didn't really need and when I thought back about why I realised that in his sales pitch he had taken note of the fact we had dogs and that we were church members and used both these facts to form a relationship with us – he had a dog who he loved, he was familiar with church attendance and was a

regular worshipper – he said. He may have been genuine – but I have my doubts.

He was so nice I felt obliged to buy from him.
And then regretted it afterwards.

As committed Christians we have been chosen as representatives of Christ in the world, and Paul makes it clear we must leave no room for doubts of our commitment. This doesn't mean being pushy or pretending an affinity with someone that doesn't actually exist, it means being humble, gentle, patient, understanding and peaceful.

When we say we are following Jesus the temptation is to think of that as a sort of warm, fuzzy, safe feeling. Somewhere we can go when in need, someone who always cares no matter what, and all this is true but that relationship is a two way relationship. The Holy Spirit is not working hard at establishing a relationship with us purely to for the commission to benefit himself or dare I say herself. – maybe not!

The relationship is down to us as much as down to God. We are all one body, says Paul.

That doesn't mean we are all the same. We are all unique and so we will all have differing opinions and thoughts but as a committed world wide Christian family we are called to work hard at the things we do agree on – the important things, the things that truly unite us, one God, one Spirit, one faith, one future.

If someone really annoys us, and remember we are all human with all our foibles and eccentricities so this will

occur, the temptation is to keep out of the annoying persons way but, if we are living in unity, maybe we should be seeking to spend time with them and find out what we have in common not what separates us.

The Holy Spirit gives us all gifts in order to represent Christ. I mean if a gift is from God we should all be grateful for the building up of the church shouldn't we, no matter who it is that demonstrates that gifting.

I used to pray earnestly for an evangelist to join the church I belonged to because I know my track record in that particular discipline is not even bronze medal level.

God answered prayer – he sent Warren, a man gifted with an evangelistic gift in bucketfuls. He was a driving instructor so he met many people in his job.

And do you know what, he annoyed me more than anyone else I have ever met. He was a bit like the salesman I spoke about earlier- pushy, loud, charismatic. It took me ages to work out that he only annoyed me as much as he did because he was all the things I would have liked to be, and he brought people to faith.

This is why we are a body made up of different parts. If we were all evangelists there would be no nurturers or teachers or anyone to take responsibility for providing drinks and fellowship, because in my experience evangelists tend to bring the people in and then leave them to the church to care for while they go looking to connect with someone else; because that is their gift, that is how the Spirit works through them. Evangelism is a very important gift but its no more

important than the others I've mentioned plus many more. It's only when all these gifts are working in unity that we can truly represent Jesus.

It's a real gift to be able to realise when you have done all you can and it would be more helpful if someone else could actually take over, we must never overestimate what we can achieve on our own but never underestimate what we can do as a body.

And as part of that commitment to unity in Jesus we have to ask ourselves why, why are we stepping out and declaring we follow Jesus.

Why do we serve on PCC committees? Why do we offer our time on different church rotas, why do we do anything in church which entails stepping out. Is it because we have a need to know more about Jesus and his teachings or is to fulfil a deep need in ourselves to be noticed or needed?

John tells of a crowd following Jesus to Capernaum, to look for him, Jesus says to the crowd, "the truth is you want to be with me because I fed you, not because you saw the miraculous sign. But you shouldn't be so concerned about perishable things like food. Spend your energy seeking the eternal life, that I, the Son of Man, can give you. For God the Father has sent me for that very purpose."

We are called to follow Jesus as committed Christians not for what he can provide but because Jesus committed his life on earth for us in order that we may enjoy eternal life with him.

Following Jesus is not just a warm reassuring sense of being cared for. Following Jesus calls for thankfulness, obedience and loyalty to him and to each other in his name..

Following Jesus does not mean simply rejoicing in answered prayer, or unexpected provision. Following Jesus means worshipping Him for who he is. A relationship with Jesus is not about the fulfilling of our bodily or emotional needs, its about the fulfilling of our deepest Spiritual needs.

Jesus likens himself to bread, the food that sustains and satisfies hunger – but the hunger he satisfies is a deep hunger found within all people, a hunger that can never be satisfied by anything else but Him.

Let's pray:

Our Father in heaven,
We rejoice in the precious name
 Of your Son,
The Lord Jesus Christ,
For we have heard
The message of salvation
And we have understood it.
Now we receive Christ into our hearts by faith,
 With joy and thanksgiving.
Jesus thank you for being our Saviour,
Thank you for who you Are
Through Your Holy Spirit
We will live for you
And serve you gladly as one body,
Now and all our days. Amen.

