

Equipping the Saints For the Work of Ministry

Finding Your Place in the Body

INTRODUCTION:

- I. Five weeks ago we embarked on a brief series of studies concerning the need for every member of the Body of Christ to be involved IN SOME WAY in what the apostle Paul calls the work of ministry.
 - A. If you recall we said the work of ministry involves two specific areas that are crucial to the growth of the Lord's church:
 1. One is to participate in SOME WAY to help share the message of the gospel of Christ with others – with those who have not obeyed the gospel and are in a lost condition.
 2. The other is to participate in SOME WAY to minister to the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of our brothers and sisters in Christ – to assist, encourage, edify and strengthen them when they have a particular need.
 - B. The apostle Paul made it clear that this is a responsibility each and every one of us share together.
 1. In **Ephesians 4:15-16**, the apostle Paul said when the Body of Christ – especially the local congregation – is: *"joined and knit*

together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share," the end result will be the "growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love."

2. We will not only grow deeper in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, but we will also grow closer to one another as brothers and sisters in Christ, and this church will grow numerically as new souls are led to Christ.
 3. Who would not want to see that happen?
 - a. It's certainly something the Lord desires to see.
 - b. And it should be something each of us also desire to see accomplished here.
- II. However, as we stressed in our last lesson, not everyone is expected to fulfill the same function.
- A. In other words, not everyone has the same talents and abilities as others, and therefore, not everyone is expected to do the same things.
 1. Not everyone can preach, or lead singing, or lead prayer, or give a talk, or teach a Bible class.
 2. While it's true that we should all be able to share our faith with others, not everyone is able to lead a home Bible study, or effectively minister to the emotional or spiritual needs of others.

- B. However, EVERYONE can participate in SOME WAY to at least ASSIST in these areas.
1. Therefore, this morning we're going to talk about some critical functions that are needed in THIS CHURCH to help us grow and be edified.
 2. There are two things I want to do:
 - a. First, I want to help you discover some areas where YOU could use the unique gifts God has given you to benefit this church.
 - b. Then second, I want talk about ways we can encourage you to put your unique gifts to work.
 3. To do this, I'm going to have some of the men hand out a SURVEY that lists a number of functions that are needed to help us in a wide range of areas:
 - a. From public worship, to evangelism, to edification, and to benevolence.
 - b. And then areas that are not actually the work of the church, but would benefit us as INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIANS in making an impact on people in this community, and even help us as INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIANS draw closer together from a purely social aspect.

4. So let's start looking at things we can ALL do, and discuss the IMPORTANCE of these things, and how we can ALL put our talents and abilities to use DOING them. (Hand out SURVEY)
 - a. As you get your copy of this survey you will notice that it is broken down into three areas:
 - (1). There are duties that are designed for men to perform – such as taking a lead in the worship services, as well as other areas of service.
 - (2). Then, there are duties that are designed for women – such as leading a women's Bible study, or providing other services.
 - (3). And finally there is a list of duties or areas of service that could be performed by either a man or a woman – such as teaching children's Bible classes, assisting with the Bible Lab, and a whole host of other functions that are either a work of the local church, or a work that you as an individual Christian can do to perform some much-needed work.
 - b. Now before you mark anything on this page, I want to draw your attention to a small paragraph located just under the

boxes where you are to put your name, address and other contact information.

(1). The paragraph reads: *Please mark [X] in the appropriate squares for those things you are willing to do NOW. If it is something you MIGHT like to do in the future, mark [O]. If there is something you wish to do that is not on this list please write it in the blank spaces.*

c. Also, as I said before, some of these functions are clearly a work God has designed for the church as a collective body of Christians to perform, while others are areas of service that are uniquely suited for you as a Christian man or woman, but are not a work of the church.

(1). Therefore, at the bottom of the Survey you will find this statement: *Please remember that some of these things are our responsibility as individual Christians, and not the work of the local congregation. But by indicating what you are willing to do, it will help to know who can be called upon when such needs arise.*

BODY:

- I. The first area of service in the Survey are duties and responsibilities that are either BIBLICALLY designed for men, or are best suited for men.
 - A. As you can see, many of these areas deal with our public worship together.
 1. For example, we need men who are either ready NOW to lead singing, or who would like to LEARN more about leading singing and perhaps do that sometime in the future.
 - a. Therefore, you have the option of specifying WHEN you would be willing to lead: Sunday morning, Sunday evening, and/or Wednesday evening.
 2. The same thing goes for leading in either opening or closing prayer.
 - a. And once again, you have the option of choosing either all of our times of worship together, or specifying the worship services where you would feel more comfortable.
 3. You also have the opportunity to preside at the Lord's table during the observance of the Lord's Supper on either Sunday morning, or Sunday evening, or both.

- a. Since not everyone is comfortable with the beliefs of others regarding Sunday evening communion services, you have the option of stating when you would like to serve.
4. The same goes for assisting at the Lord's table.
 - a. Generally, those assisting are needed only during the morning service, but as this congregation grows we may want to consider adding someone to assist on Sunday evenings.
 5. Making announcements, or reading a pre-selected Scripture are also areas where some of you men can serve.
 6. There are also opportunities to preach on Sunday morning and evening.
 - a. At times I am away on vacation, or there may be occasions when someone needs to step in when I am unable to preach due to illness.
 - b. However, as part of my function as an evangelist I am expected to help men develop their abilities in this area of service, and so I provide an opportunity for men to gain experience in three ways:
 - (1). One is by scheduling various men to preach on the next to the last Sunday evening of the month.

- (2). Another is by encouraging men to begin giving short 10-minute talks during our newly reformatted Wednesday service that will be moved to the LAST Wednesday of each month.
 - (3). And the third is by encouraging men to give a brief 5-minute invitation on Wednesday evenings following our normal Bible classes.
- c. To help men who are interested in doing ANY of these things (preaching, giving a 10-minute talk, or a 5-minute invitation) I'm planning a brief training class on sermon preparation and presentation.
 - d. I will also make myself available to any man who would like my assistance in gathering material for a sermon, organizing that material, and in presenting it in a way that will be beneficial to all.
7. In addition, I want to encourage men to take on the responsibility of teaching either a Sunday morning adult Bible class, or a Wednesday evening adult Bible class.
- a. These classes are generally designed to run for a period of 13 weeks, depending on the subject matter.

- b. And to assist men who wish to develop this talent, I am committed to working with those teachers to help them gather and organize their class material, and to study privately with them in advance of teaching their class.
- 8. We also need men who are willing to put forth the effort to teach a Bible class of young people – usually middle school age and up – on both Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings.
 - a. Again, I will offer my assistance in helping find suitable material for teachers to use in those classes.
- 9. A very unique area of need is for men to be properly trained to lead a home Bible study.
 - a. Therefore, I am also making myself available to work with men who want to develop this ability – to not only learn HOW to teach a private home Bible study, but also to provide teaching material I have developed and used in the past that has been successful in leading others to Christ.
- 10. Finally, there are OTHER areas of service such as:
 - a. Learning how to set up and record the audio portions of our worship and teaching services.

- b. Being responsible to take attendance – not simply counting heads, but identifying who is absent from services so that we can use that information to contact them.
 - c. And finally, men who can assist with baptism – to either learn how to properly baptize someone, or to assist in other ways.
11. Although this list is fairly inclusive, there may be other areas of service where you feel your talents and abilities as a man could benefit the work of the church, so please write those down in the blanks provided.

II. Now let's focus our attention on areas that are most suited for women.

A. Again, some of these are areas that fall into the realm of teaching and benevolence, but are not necessarily a work of the church.

1. There is always a need for women who are willing and able to lead a women's home Bible study.

a. This can be a study where a group of Christian women get together for the purpose of encouraging one another.

(1). The apostle Paul told Titus: **Titus 2:3-5** - ...*teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. 4 Then they can train the younger women to love*

their husbands and children, 5 to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.

- (2). In the past, most Ladies Bible Classes, as they were called, were taught by the preacher – usually some morning during the week.
- (3). But God intends older women to be teachers of younger women. Therefore, we need older women in this congregation to mentor and teach younger women in how to be good wives and mothers.
 - b. Or, this can be a private home Bible study between women, either for the purpose of evangelism (of teaching those who are not members of the Body of Christ), or for the purpose of edification – a one-on-one private study between two sisters in Christ.
2. And, if you don't feel comfortable leading a woman's home Bible class, perhaps you would be willing to open your home to host one.
 - a. There is a need for that as well.
3. There is also a need for women to assist other women who are preparing to be baptized.

- a. This involves helping them find suitable clothing and towels for the baptism, and taking those items home and washing them so they will be ready when they are needed again.
4. One of the most valuable areas of service you can provide is to take care of children and entertain them while adults are engaged in a home Bible study.
 - a. This valuable service allows the mothers in a woman's Bible study to concentrate on the lesson without interruptions.
 - b. In a home Bible study setting where a man is leading and studying with a couple who have children, you can provide an priceless service there as well.
5. And then, there are always those occasions when someone needs emergency child care, and may not have either the family to take care of their children in an emergency, or may not have the money to pay a babysitter or child care provider.
 - a. There are endless examples when emergency child care may be needed for a few hours, or even a few days, such as: during a sudden illness, or during an emergency trip to the hospital, or when there is an unexpected change in a work schedule, and on and on the list goes.

b. Being willing to provide this unique gift would be a tremendous blessing to those who need this service.

6. And there are other works of service you can provide, such as:

a. Providing flowers for special occasions (such as when someone is in the hospital, or shut in at home, or for a funeral).

b. Providing meals to families during times of sickness or bereavement over the loss of a lost one.

c. Or even providing meals and other help for the mother of a newborn baby. Not everyone is privileged to have family present during those times. Therefore, you can be their mother or sister to provide help as needed.

7. As we said before, perhaps there are other areas of service where you feel your talents as a woman could be used that are not mentioned here, so write those down in the blanks provided.

III. Now let's finally take a look at areas where both men and women can serve.

A. Some of these would qualify as a work of the church in areas like evangelism, benevolence or edification, while others are in the area of personal responsibilities we can fulfill as an individual Christian man or woman.

1. We generally think of women as being the ones best suited to teach or assist in a Bible class for toddlers and preschoolers (ages 2 through 5).
 - a. But children at that age respond exceptionally well to men who come to teach or to assist in their classes. More men are needed in this area.
 - b. In fact, this would be a great opportunity for a husband and wife to team up and co-teach a class.
2. The same goes for teaching or assisting in a children's Bible class at the secondary school level (Grades 1 through 5), or in the Bible Lab.
 - a. Although the Bible Lab is not a typical Bible class, but is arranged so that the students are mostly self-directed, there are opportunities and a need for men to participate in that area of teaching in this congregation.
3. We need men or women who will be responsible for preparing the Lord's Supper every Sunday morning and again on Sunday evening.
 - a. This not only includes preparing the unleavened bread and filling the cups with fruit of the vine, it should include keep tabs

on supplies and ensuring that those supplies are fresh and are always on hand.

b. We just recently had to borrow communion cups from another congregation because we didn't order additional cups in time to get them shipped.

4. The Bible Lab has a wide range of lessons and other resource materials that are constantly needing to be updated or organized.

a. This is another area where your services as a man or woman would be invaluable.

b. I would also be willing to make books from my personal library available to people, but I need someone to make sure that a record is properly maintained of who borrows what book. Some of the books in my library are one-of-a-kind – they are out of print, and can't be replaced.

5. Nancy Sullivan has been tasked with putting together our bulletin each week – a work she has faithfully performed for years.

a. However, it would be a real blessing for her to be able to send the completed file to someone who would then print the bulletin on their computer, bring those copies to the building, and then run them on the copier and fold them so they would be ready each Lord's day.

- b. How many of you men and ladies could volunteer to do that simple task?
6. The same goes with printing and distributing updated copies of our directory.
- a. That's another area where our sister Nancy has been tasked.
 - b. Talk to her about ways you can help.
7. Another much needed area – and one that is being neglected – is to write a brief letter to everyone who visits.
- a. This can be a personal letter from a couple in the church, or from a man in the church to a man who visits, or a woman to a woman visitor.
 - b. Thank them for attending and let them know you look forward to them coming again.
 - c. If they are a local visitor, then not only thank them for attending but offer an opportunity to receive a Bible correspondence course (something I would like to see us start), or offer them an opportunity to study the Bible in the privacy of their home.
8. We need men and women to pay courtesy calls to visitors who have received a follow-up letter – just to go by and personally

welcome them to come back sometime, or sign up for a Bible correspondence course or a home Bible study.

9. One of the most effective tools in evangelism is to hand out, or mail out, well-written, non-obtrusive tracts, or hand out fliers announcing such things as Bible correspondence courses, home Bible studies, gospel meetings, or simply inviting people in the community to worship services.
10. To have an effective Bible correspondence course, we will need people to mail those to people requesting them, and grade the lessons as they come back in, then mailing them back.
 - a. How many of you could participate that way in the evangelism process?
11. There are also needs for people to visit those who are sick at home, or who are hospitalized, or shut-in, in nursing homes.
 - a. The purpose should be more than just a visit – you can make sure all their needs are being met: do they have food, are they able to take care of paying their bills, do they need help or assistance in other areas?
12. Perhaps the most important thing you can do is to call those who are sick or shut-in just to let them know we care and are here to offer any help or assistance we can.

13. Maybe you can provide transportation.
 - a. During the summer months we frequently get visitors from out of state who have no transportation to and from worship services. Can you provide that kind of transportation?
 - b. What about providing transportation to members of this congregation who may want to come to worship services but are unable to get out on their own, or who don't feel comfortable driving during inclement weather?
 - c. What about providing transportation to members of this congregation who need to go to a doctor's appointment, or to the grocery store, but for one reason or another are unable to drive themselves? Could you provide that service?
14. And here's an area of service you may not have thought about. Can you provide emergency shelter to a family in this community that is temporarily displaced from their own home for one reason or another.
 - a. And if not providing actual EMERGENCY shelter, can you provide accommodations for a visiting preacher who comes to hold a gospel meeting?
15. What about using your talents and abilities to organize activities for children, or young people in this church, or even adults?

- a. While this isn't a work of the church, it's certainly something we need to be doing more.
 - b. We need to instill in our children the sense of family, and encourage them any way we can.
 - c. The same goes for us adults. One of the hallmarks of first century Christians is that they were together – not just in the context of worship, but in fellowshiping one another in their homes.
16. And while providing for the needy in our community is not a work of the church, it is certainly something we as individual Christians can do.
- a. **Galatians 6:10** – *Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.*
 - b. This would include providing clothing and food – and not just during the holiday season, but year round.
 - c. What a wonderful opportunity to open the door to someone who is in need with real, tangible help, and then lead them to Christ.
17. And last of all are areas where you can perform a work of service in helping to clean and maintain our building.

- a. This is a thankless job, but sadly, one that has occasionally been neglected in the past.
- b. Not only do we need to maintain our property in a presentable way to people in this community, we need to make absolutely certain that our facilities are clean and sanitary.
- c. Nothing SHOUTS louder to a visitor about us as a people when they walk in and see dirty, cluttered, or unsanitary conditions in the place where we gather to worship. What kind of message do you suppose they are getting about us as a people?

CONCLUSION:

- I. I think you can already see that this list could go on and on, especially when we seek to list things that are beyond the work of the local church and deal with areas of individual responsibility.
 - A. But my purpose with this list is to simply illustrate the fact that there are many different ways where YOU can serve.
 1. Your talents and abilities – your unique God-given gifts – are needed in the areas of public worship, evangelism, edification, and benevolence.

2. But there is also a need for your unique talents and abilities in other works of service that will not only benefit this church, but people in this community – works that are NOT specifically designed to be a work of the church, but more the work of an individual Christian man or woman.
 3. These are all works of service that can edify the body of Christ, or can lovingly reach out to those who are not Christians and help to lead them to Christ.
- II. In the parable of the talents (**Matthew 25:14-30**) Jesus talked about a master who went away for a period of time, and gave three servants a portion of his estate to care for and to use to make a profit.
- A. Each servant was given according to his ability (**v. 15**) – one received 5 talents (a sum of money), another received 2 talents, and the third received just one.
1. When the master returned and asked for an accounting, the servant who received 5 had made 5 more. The servant who had received 2 talents made 2 more.
 2. But the servant who had been given only one talent did nothing with that talent except to hide it in the ground for fear he would not use it properly.

3. The master punished this servant severely who had failed to do anything with the talent – cast into outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.
- B. Are you like this servant – are you hiding your “talent” in the ground, afraid to use it?
1. There is no reward for servants who don’t use what the Lord gives them – in fact, nothing displeases the Lord more than to see a gift wasted.
 2. Use what the Lord has given you to the best of your ability.
- C. However, to use the talents and abilities the Lord has given you, you need to do one of two things:
1. First, you need to BE a laborer in HIS vineyard.
 - a. If you’ve never obeyed the gospel of Christ by coming to Christ in faith, repenting of your sins and being baptized into Christ for the remission of your past sins, then you need to start there.
 2. And second, to use the talents and abilities the Lord has given you, you need to make sure there is nothing that is handicapping you from being an EFFECTIVE worker.
 - a. If you’ve obeyed the gospel, and yet there are sins in your life that are damaging your influence or are making it impossible

to serve the Lord with a clear conscience, then you need to confess those sins, and seek the Lord's forgiveness.