

Created to Serve 301-2

The Apostle Paul asked a rhetorical question in...

1 Corinthians 6:19, Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?

1 Corinthians 6:20 For you were bought at a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

As Christians, we belong to Jesus and have died to ourselves, so we should always evaluate **why we do what we do**.

As Christians, there are two wrong conclusions about serving the LORD: we either serve the LORD out of **duty**, or there are those who don't serve because they feel they don't have to.

As Christ followers, we should serve Jesus because He provided a perfect sacrifice to forgive us and provide a way to have a relationship with Him.

Our sacrificial service to God of our time, talents, and treasure should be a natural love response to all that He has done for us.

Jesus has left us here on earth as His followers, with the privilege and responsibility of advancing His kingdom.

Every resource we have, time, talent, and treasure, is entrusted to us by the Lord Himself.

Luke 12:48 to whom much is given, from him much will be required. NKJV

Recognizing the LORD as the source of every good and perfect gift helps us understand the privilege and **responsibility** that come with the intention of glorifying God.

I. How to properly use our giftedness.

Read ***1 Peter 4:10-11***

Earlier, Peter had been discussing the times in which we live and Christian love. Here, he communicated that Christian love results in service for the Lord, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Every true follower of Christ has at least one **spiritual gift**.

Romans 12:4 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function,

Romans 12:5 so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.

Romans 12:6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith;

Romans 12:7 or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching;

Romans 12:8 he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. NKJV

As stewards of the *manifold grace of God*, we are also stewards of the gifts He has given us.

There are speaking gifts, and different serving gifts, but all the God-given gifts are important to the body.

Notice *1 Peter 4:11*, “*If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God.*”

1 Peter 4:11 says, “*If anyone is speaking to the church body, the things spoken should come directly from the Word of God*”.

James 3:1 My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. NKJV

Some people take speaking for the LORD flippantly, but teaching the Word of God is a serious matter and should not be taken lightly. Speaking for the LORD is a **grave responsibility!**

Next, Peter mentioned the gifts of ministering, and ministering means serving the body.

As we serve one another, we are to do it with the strength and abilities that the LORD provides His children.

The LORD works in us, and then we do ministry. **How does God work in us?** Through His Holy Spirit.

Paul said in *Philippians 2:12* ***Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.***

But then notice, *Philippians 2:13, For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. NKJV*

Jesus will equip and enable us to do everything He calls us to do. He will never call you to do something for Him without enabling and equipping you to complete His work.

2 Corinthians 9:8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. NKJV

Everything created was done by Jesus, our Great Shepherd. Now we understand that He also enables us to serve Him.

Spiritual gifts were given by the Holy Spirit for the building up of Christ's church.

Every follower of Christ is to have an active part in the ministry of the Gospel of Christ. Church is a member participation event, where every member is a minister!

The intended result of spiritual gifts is that the church as a whole can grow, being strengthened by the combined supply of each member of Christ's body.

When we serve the Lord with *the ability which God supplies*, all of the *glory and the dominion* go to Him, to whom it belongs.

II. Counted worthy as a follower of Christ.

Read *1 Peter 4:12-13*

Throughout this letter, Peter has spoken about suffering and trials in the life of the believer, and specifically to the recipients of this letter.

Peter reassured these persecuted Christians that if they suffer while serving the LORD, they are blessed and can find calm and peace by trusting Jesus rather than **fearing** man.

As a Christ follower, only the things the Lord **allows** in our lives will happen to us.

The Apostle Paul said in *Romans 8:28*, “*And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*” NKJV

Peter said that when we are punished for things we have done wrong, it is no benefit. But when we are punished for doing good and take it **patiently**, we are commended before God.

Peter also said, “*Don’t think it is strange when these trials come, but we should expect them as a Follower of Christ.*”

Instead of thinking of fiery trials as strange, we should view them as ways we join Christ in His **suffering**.

While in prison, the Apostle Paul said in *Philippians 1:29* *For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,*

Philippians 1:30 *having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me.* NKJV

C.H. Spurgeon said, “*The joys of heaven will surely compensate for the sorrows of earth.*”

We know that Peter has spoken about suffering and trials within the life of the believer, but here he said something completely contrary to our flesh.

Instead of thinking fiery trials are strange, Peter said to ***rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.***

We are told to not only endure the trials, but to **rejoice** in them to the extent that we get to partake in Christ’s suffering.

Just as faith in Christ is granted to the follower of Christ, so is the privilege to suffer for His sake, through trials.

In ***Acts 11***, followers of Christ were first known as Christians in Antioch, which means little **Christ**. If Jesus suffered in the flesh, then we as His followers will suffer as well.

We don’t need to fear our present trials because the LORD has not abandoned us as **orphans**. Peter said the trial is meant to try us and prove us fit for Kingdom service.

Although our present situation may seem difficult, it is actually a gift from God as He will use our trials to grow us and further His kingdom.

Francis Chan, in his book ***Crazy Love***, told a story about Ronnie, a blind boy who lives in eastern Uganda,

Chan said, “*Ronnie is unique not because of his circumstances or the fact that he is blind, but because of his love for Jesus.*”

If you met Ronnie, one of the first things you would hear him say is, “I love Jesus so much, and I sing praises to Him every day!”

One of Ronnie’s closest friends is a deaf girl. What stands out about these two isn’t that they are handicapped or very poor, but they are totally content and obviously in love with Jesus

*“They possess very little of what 'counts' in our society, yet they have what matters most. They came to God in their great need, and they have found **true joy**.” (Francis Chan)*

Because we don’t usually have to depend on God for food, money to buy our next meal, or shelter, we don’t feel needy.”

How can we experience exceeding joy through trials?

Galatians 5:22 the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

Galatians 5:23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. NKJV

Galatians 5 tells us **Joy** is a fruit of the Spirit, and **exceeding joy** is defined as: *to exult, rejoice exceedingly, be exceeding glad.”*

Since **joy** is a fruit of God’s Spirit living in us, we have access to **joy** by **walking** in the Spirit rather than the lusts of the flesh.

Galatians 5:16 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. NKJV

I have said it before; **joy** and happiness are not the same; Happiness depends on happenings: **joy** is a choice we make because we know who holds our future.

This does not mean we are living in denial of the tragic things that come our way in this life, or being happy in all situations.

Joy does not happen through our feelings or **experiences**; it is a choice. Biblical **joy** happens through our surrendering to the Holy Spirit and not allowing our emotions to rule over us.

Exceeding joy is based upon the Lord's attributes and trusting Him to work all things out for our good and His glory, no matter how dark life may seem during any given situation.

Our rest, trust, faith, and joy come from knowing Jesus, and the way we get to know and trust Him more, usually happens through **trials**.

Hebrews 12:5 "My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him;

Hebrews 12:6 For whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives."

Hebrews 12:7 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?

Hebrews 12:8 But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.

Hebrews 12:9 Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?

Hebrews 12:10 For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness.

Hebrews 12:11 Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. NKJV

God loves us too much to leave us as we are when we were first saved. Impurities in our lives cannot reflect His glory, and joy cannot be fully realized until some of the dross is burned away.

Trials are a **refining** process for a Christian that has a purpose; the heat the Lord allows will ultimately result in purity and **joy**.

Sometimes illness is allowed in the life of a believer to reveal the hidden areas of fear so God can help us build trust in Him.

Sometimes, financial difficulties are allowed in the life of a believer to reveal areas of self-sufficiency so God can help us build trust in Him.

Trials within the life of a believer are not evidence that God is cruel or has left you. They are evidence of how much God loves you and has a desire for you to become all He created you to be.

The truth is God uses trials in our lives to prepare us for Glory.

Pain and trials are often the Lord's way of making us holy so we can share in His Glory and bring praise glory and honor to Jesus.

The Lord will not allow trials without a reason, and He knows every tear you cry.

III. Spiritual leaders are given to profit the body.

Read *Ephesians 4:11-12*

Hebrews 13:7 Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct. NKJV

The Lord, in His wisdom and direction, places **different** parts of His body where He desires to fulfill His purposes.

When a body of believers is obediently following His plan, there is fruit, growth, joy, and unity; but the opposite is also true.

When parts of the body seek to disrupt the proper order of things, it can lead to chaos and division. As followers of Christ, we are all people under authority, with Christ as the head.

There is no human alive who is not under some authority.

The LORD is glorified when members use spiritual gifts for each other.

Paul did not name many "gifts"; instead, he named the gifted men God has placed in the church, and there are four offices.

- **Apostle**: one sent with a commission; one sent out.

Today, there are no Apostles in the original sense because the main criteria to be an Apostle, like the original 12, is to be called by God to be one and to have physically seen the risen Christ.

- **Prophet**: one who proclaims or speaks forth the Word of God.

Since we have the complete Word of God, nothing can be added or taken away from the 66 books of the Bible we already have.

Today, there are no prophets like those of the OT prophets because we have Jesus as the full and final revelation of God.

- **Evangelist**: one who delivers the Gospel; the Good News.
- **Pastor/Teacher**: the under shepherd of a flock of believers

The word Pastor is synonymous with other New Testament words, such as Elder or overseer.

1 Peter 5:2 Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; NKJV

The primary function of a Pastor is to feed and protect the sheep from false teachers, and the nourishment a pastor is to give his congregation is the Word of God, not his own opinion.

We are to follow godly leaders in the body of Christ, who show faithfulness to the Word of God and exhibit godly conduct.

God uses His gifted leaders to direct His church; just as a church needs godly leaders, it also needs followers to follow and imitate

Equipping was used for setting broken bones or mending nets.

Spiritual leaders are given for the equipping of the Saints so they will use their gifts to build up and edify the body.

The reason it is so important to keep the Biblical order of authority is that God has placed each part of the body where it is, to maintain order and unity within the Church.

IV. Unity is the result of maturity.

Read *Ephesians 4:13-16*

The LORD wants us to grow up in all things concerning Him, and the way to accomplish that is through His power and love given to us by His Spirit.

When the Church is growing and maturing, there is evidence.

1. The first evidence of maturity is Christlikeness.

A Christ-like person has qualities like Jesus, and being Christ-like is the result of surrender to God, a total self-dedication.

- Becoming more Christlike comes from knowing we have freedom from sin.

As we offer ourselves to God, we do not have to allow sin to be our master, and we can be identified with Christ.

- Becoming more Christ-like comes with growth.

Like a newborn baby, when we are first saved, we do not have the wisdom or knowledge that comes with maturity.

2 Peter 3:18, “Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

2. The second evidence of maturity is stability.

Immature believers constantly fall for false doctrine, but mature Christians are not tossed around by every religious novelty that comes along.

Religious quacks are waiting to kidnap God’s children and get them into their false cults, but the maturing believer recognizes false doctrine and stays clear of it.

The cults don’t try to win lost souls for Christ; they simply target immature or non-believers.

3. The third evidence of maturity is truth combined with love.

“Speaking the truth in love.” Ephesians 4:15

It has been said that truth without love is brutality, but love without truth is hypocrisy.

Proverbs 27:6 Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful. NKJV

I don't have a problem speaking the truth to people at all, but it is a mark of maturity when we can share the truth with our fellow Christians, with love.

Some people think it is good to refrain from telling others the truth to keep the peace, but if you truly love someone, you will be **honest** with them and save them from impending destruction.

We have to speak the truth to those around us, but only in love.

Truth is an unchanging attribute of God, and truth is absolute and unchangeable. Jesus said in *John 17:17, Your word is truth.*

Jesus also said in *John 8:31, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.*

John 8:32 And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." NKJV

Receiving truth is what allows us to come to a place of freedom, and the Lord has set up the body in such a way that we are to build up one another by speaking truth in love.

To speak the truth in love to others, a person must first receive the truth, because you cannot give away something you have never received.

It should be every Christians' goal to grow and then to help **others** grow as well; every part does its share in supplying, which in turn causes the whole body to grow.

This can have a domino effect on others, but if we refuse to walk in love, then even the truth spoken will not cause growth

This also means we are to esteem others above ourselves.

Speaking before you think is a bad habit that can get you into trouble and hurt you in the most important areas of your life.

Relationships will suffer or end, your career will be stalled at a level far below your talents, and most importantly, you will have little confidence in yourself.

Time and again, we find ourselves in situations where the outcome depends on what we say and how we say it.

If your words are getting you into trouble, you're showing others the very worst parts of you. You're presenting yourself as being thoughtless, careless, or just plain hurtful.

Not only can our words create positive or negative reactions in the world around us, but our speech also influences our thinking.

When our words are harsh, negative, inconsiderate, or judgmental, these aspects of our experience are emphasized.

It won't be long before we develop a habit of focusing our thoughts on dark things. Eventually, we can become miserable, depressed, and mean-spirited, only seeing the bad in others.

So we need to think before we speak: **T** - is it **True**?; **H** - is it Helpful?; **I** - is it Inspiring?; **N** - is it **Necessary**?; **K** - is it **Kind**?

4. The fourth evidence of maturity is cooperation.

Re-read *Ephesians 4:16*

Wiersbe said, “Each believer, no matter how insignificant he may appear, has a ministry to other believers.

The body grows as the individual members grow, and they grow as they feed on the Word and minister to each other.

Note the emphasis on love: “forbearing one another in love” (Eph. 4:2); “speaking the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15); “the edifying of itself in love” (4:16).

It has been discovered that isolated, unloved babies do not grow properly and are especially susceptible to disease, while babies who are loved and handled grow normally and are stronger.

*So, it is with the children of God. An **isolated** Christian cannot minister to others, nor can others minister to him, and it is impossible for the gifts to be ministered either way.” (Wiersbe)*

Hebrews 10:24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,

Hebrews 10:10:25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. NKJV

Look again at vs. 16....joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working

The evidence of maturity is seen as all the parts of Christ's body, the Church, are all doing their job, which is **effective** working.

This means every part provides what it should supply in a coordinated effort.

Like so many other things we receive with our New Identity in Christ, Spiritual unity is not something we manufacture.

Spiritual unity is something we already have in Christ, and we must protect and maintain it. Truth unites but lies can divide.

We are to do all of these things as a love response to what the Lord has already done for us, as *2 Corinthians 5:14* says, "***For the love of Christ compels us***" NKJV

We are to respond in love, in light of all we have in Jesus, and for all He has **done**. He shed His blood on Calvary for our Salvation and rose on the third day to prove who He is.

In light of those facts, we are called as one body where Jesus Christ is the head. So, Love unites, but selfishness divides.

Therefore, "***speaking the truth in love,***" let us equip one another and edify one another, so we may grow to be more like **Christ**.

1 Corinthians 6:20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

In *Acts 20*, Paul spoke to the Elders in Ephesus before he left.

Acts 20:35 I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words

of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" NKJV

There are times in our Christian walks when we become lethargic or simply stop serving the Lord in any capacity.

Sometimes this happens because we get burned out from serving Him in the power of the flesh rather than the Spirit.

Sometimes this happens because we get our feelings hurt and decide to stop serving the Lord. After all, something happened.

Sometimes this happens because of a death or some other tragedy within our lives, so we take a break and fail to re-engage.

To find true joy walking with Jesus, we must serve Him with the gifts and callings He has placed within our lives.

Your gifts, abilities, and strengths are all gifts from the Lord that He has given us to use to **advance** the Gospel and the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

Psalm 139:14 I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; NKJV

*“Wonderfully” in Psalm 139:14 means to be distinct, **marked out**, separated, to be distinguished.*

How do I discover what the Lord wants from me individually?

1. To determine what the Lord wants from us, **pray**.

James 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. NKJV

2. Fill a **current need** in your local Church.
3. Find where the Lord is **already** moving and join in on that movement.

Henry Blackaby wrote *Experiencing God* and said a “*Watch to see where God is working and join Him in His work*”

He also said, “*We don't choose what we will do for God; He invites us to join Him where He wants to involve us.*”

4. Look for opportunities that arise to help **other** people.

Helping other people not only shows Christ to others as we fulfill others' needs; it also brings joy to us because it is better to give than to receive.

5. Seek **wise** counsel.

Start with scripture and ask the Lord to reveal His plans to you.

Then, if after all the other suggestions have been tried, seek wise counsel from others who love Jesus and know us personally.

They can help us see gifts in ourselves and opportunities around us that we may have missed. They can introduce us to people and perhaps even open doors to new pursuits.

As part of the Body of Christ, you belong to the Lord, and our hearts belong to Him.

We serve out of a love response to Jesus; it gives *exceeding Joy*