

Living
The Maximum Life
With
Power and Purpose

Your Function Within The Body

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The church is a spiritual body. In fact, it is the Body of Christ with Him being the head. It is Jesus who guides, organizes, oversees and shepherds the body in order for us to be what He wants us to be and to do what He wants us to do.

“And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.” (Ephesians 1:22-23)

“It was he (Jesus) who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:11-13)

The church is compared to our physical body to help us understand its structure and diversity of parts or members, all of which are necessary for the church or body to perform its task, function or work in unity and harmony efficiently. This can only happen when every body part is performing its specialty. Now it is true that our bodies can continue to function without certain parts functioning or functioning ineffectively; i.e., lack of sight or hearing, a missing arm or leg, only one lung, etc. But it is also true that it performs more efficiently when all parts are present and functioning as designed. It must also be true that the spiritual body is much more effective if all its members perform their gift (function) in unity and harmony as God designed. Jesus organizes the church so that we may function properly. He organizes His body by giving a gift(s); i.e., assigning ministries or functions to each and every member. You are who you are in the body of Christ because Jesus decided what your part is to be. Your assigned ministry is not your decision. Jesus is the one who decides. “It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:11-13) We just want to recognize and submit to His decision.

Jesus demands that all members be involved - 100%. No one is unnecessary. None are unimportant. No one is excluded or excused. All members of the body of Christ have been given a gift or ministry.

The work of the church can be roughly divided into three areas: Evangelism, Edification and Service. Through evangelism, the kingdom expands. Edification is for each Christian to grow to maturity and remain faithful. In service, we express God's character for God is love. We have active concern for others in their necessities. These three areas overlap greatly in practice.

Gifts are not natural talents or developed skills. They are not personality types. Gifts are functions, ministries, services or roles. They are each one's specialized services. Remember that all Christians should be merciful, but some have the gift of showing mercy. That is their specialty or their special ministry. Not everything you do is classified as your gift or ministry. Many things are just a part of your duty as a Christian. “Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. (1 Corinthians 12:7) But there is some service to which you are to dedicate yourself, to specialize in. This is your ministry. Through the exercise of our gift, i.e. performing our function or ministry, we all work together. Diverse personalities, ages, experiences all joined in a common enterprise requires that we get along well and that we treat each other with respect and consideration. If one or more member fails to do their task, the body fails to operate as effectively as God desires.

Some Steps To Help You Determine Your Gift(s)

Spiritual gifts (gifts of the Holy Spirit) were given to you by God when you became a Christian. The New Testament does not give a list of steps for determining one's spiritual gift. We are told to pursue gifts, to prepare and to use them, but we are not told how to determine them, at least not in a concise list. The following steps are suggestions on how to proceed and are not considered the final, authoritative word on the subject.

- 1. Place Yourself Entirely At God's Disposal:** This is an objective decision of yours which is implied by your decision to become a Christian. Say to God as Isaiah did: "Here am I, send me." Isaiah 6:8. Declare to God: "Not my will but Your will be done." Without this attitude, why would we expect God to answer us when we ask Him how He wants to use us?
- 2. Pray:** You know that God has a purpose for you in the body of Christ. So now you ask Him to show you what it is, knowing that He will answer for it is His will. Psalm 25:12. Praying for this we are simply asking for God to reveal to us what Jesus has determined for us to be doing.
- 3. Review The Lists Of Gifts In The New Testament:** You need to start thinking about what God calls a ministry. The following are some examples of gifts or ministries (not including temporary or miraculous ones) that should give you an idea.
 - a.** "And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues." (1 Corinthians 12:28)
 - b.** "It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ." (Ephesians 4:11-13)
 - c.** "For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do 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. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. 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. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; 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." (Romans 12:3-8)
 - d.** "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power forever and ever." (1 Peter 4:10-11)

Since these lists are not identical we conclude that they are not exhaustive.

Shepherd, Pastor, Bishop Evangelist,
Preacher, Minister
Teacher
Deacon
One who shows mercy
One who gives aid/helps
Exhorter
One who gives
Administrator

The following summarizes some of these functions.

Evangelists and preacher

“In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage-with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.” (2 Timothy 4:1-5)

Pastors, Overseers and Elders

1. Prepare God's people for works of service
2. Serve as overseers
3. Consider a doctrinal question
4. Keep watch and be on guard over yourselves and all the flock
5. Be examples
6. Direct the affairs of the church (evangelize, edify, restore, rebuke, discipline and be an example) 7. Eager to serve
8. Hold firmly to the trustworthy message
9. Encourage others by sound doctrine
10. Refute those who oppose
11. Pray
12. Lay hands upon individuals selected for a work needed by the body.
13. Receive reports of the work of others
14. Rebuke and discipline Teachers

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Christians

“Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts (functions) - *charisma, charismatos, charizomai* a gift of grace; a favor which one receives without any merit of his own) according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; 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.” (Romans 12:4-8)

Deacons

Some think Acts 6 specifies the work of Deacons others disagree. It should be noted that Luke does not call them deacons nor is there any indication that those selected met the qualifications specified in 1 Timothy. Their work is properly identified in the meaning of the *diakonos*, serve. For additional studies refer to Work of Deacons, Nov. 28, 2005.

4. Consider The Needs Of The Church: Peter plainly tells us that we are to employ our gifts for serving one another as good stewards of God's varied grace (1 Peter 4:10). Gifts are ministries or services. To serve is to meet a need. The purpose of the gifts is not to keep people busy but to meet needs of the church not our individual needs. So we must look to the needs of the church. As these needs become apparent, follow your desires in fulfilling them.
5. Look For Opportunities: Start a journal of doors that God has opened for you. As time goes on you may begin to see a direction in which He is leading you.
6. Seek Guidance From Church Leadership: Ephesians 4:11, 12 says that the gifts of church leadership are given to the church for the equipping of the saints. Make good use of these gifts of the leadership.
7. Take The Initiative: You have prayed to the Lord, reviewed the list of ministries in the New Testament, taken into account the needs of the church that the Lord has brought to your attention and possibly even put the desire in you to fulfill. You have noted that God is always opening up doors of opportunity in certain directions and you have talked things over with the leadership in the church. Wait no longer, take the initiative and get on with what the Lord would have you to be doing.
8. Should someone attempt to prevent you from performing what you perceive your ministry to be, you may find it necessary to look to Peter and the other apostles for guidance. “Peter and the other apostles replied: ‘We must obey God rather than men!’” (Acts 5:29)