

BIBLE 1203

SERVING IN THE CHURCH

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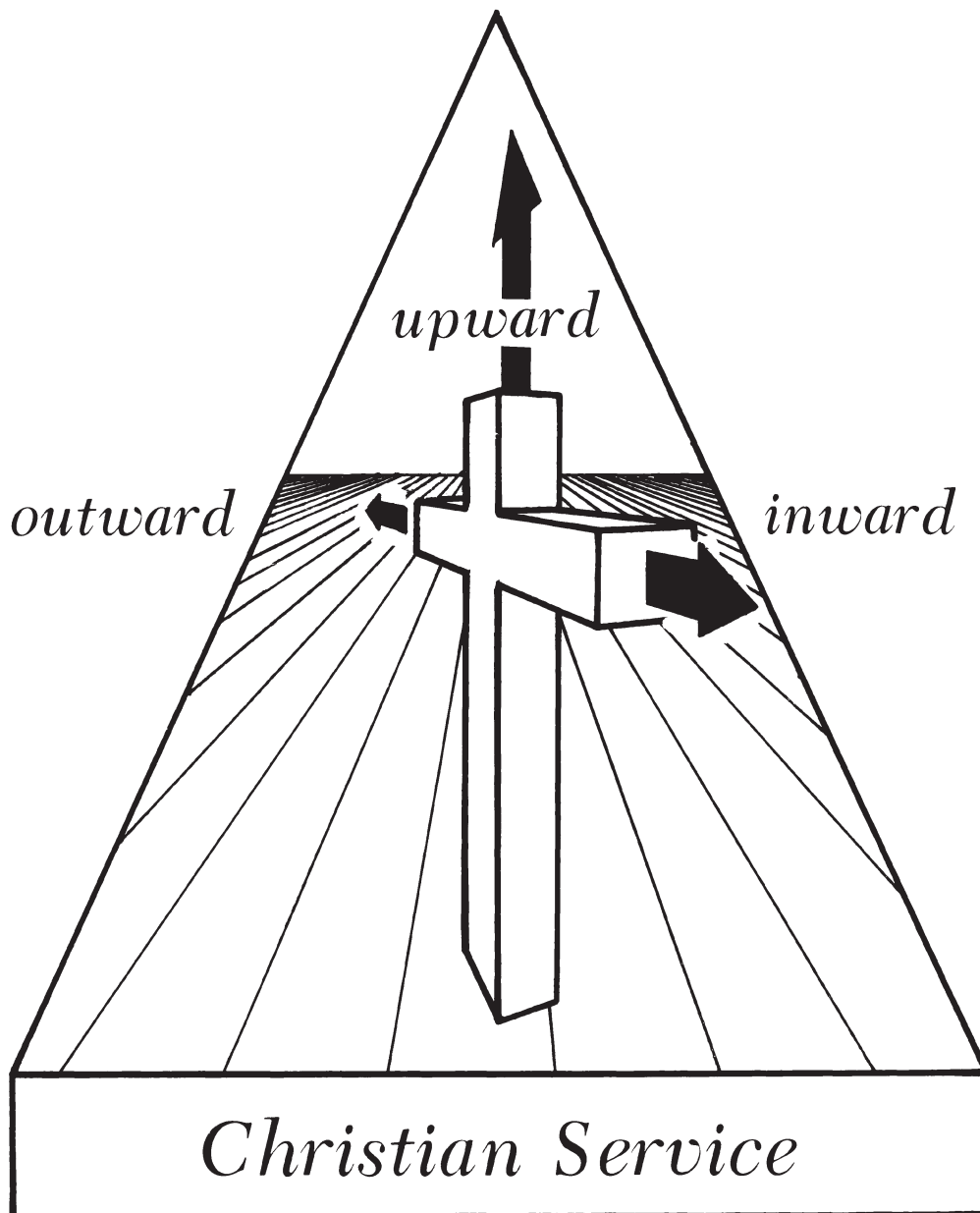
SERVING IN THE CHURCH

Christian service begins with Christian life. The moment you are indwelt with the Spirit of God, you become God's servant. You are not your own boss, nor is the devil your master, neither is your work, nor is any man. You are God's servant.

This concept of yourself is essential in *all* your service. Whether you lead the singing in church or mow the lawn for your parents, you should see it all as

service to God. This makes every task important. Pleasing God becomes the motivation for all that you do.

While the overall view of Christian service is *to God*, the outworking of that service may be divided into three basic divisions—first, to God; second, to His people; and third, to the world.



Although in many ways God sees you as an individual servant, He sees you also as a part of a larger servant—the church—and He intends that His people collectively serve Him. God wants His church to unitedly worship and glorify Him. He wants us to unitedly grow into the coordinated, powerful stature of His Son. And He wants us to be united in our ministry to the world, offering the redemptive blood of Christ to

those who are willing, refusing the temptations and pressures of compromise.

This LIGHTUNIT is designed to help you see yourself, and your service to God, in the perspective of the church. Entering the church of Christ is far more than having your name on a membership list; it is placing your life at the disposal of Christ's kingdom on earth. Pray for understanding as you study.

OBJECTIVES

- ★ **Study these objectives.** When you have successfully completed this LIGHTUNIT, you should be able:

1. To tell the importance of Christ as the Director of each individual Christian.
2. To tell what it means to be called and chosen.
3. To describe the meaning and function of spiritual gifts.
4. To tell the importance of Christ as the overall Director of the church.
5. To tell the importance of the church functioning as a brotherhood.
6. To describe methods of serving the brotherhood.
7. To define Scriptural unity.
8. To describe the importance of being a *corporate* habitation of God.
9. To describe the effect of openness in a brotherhood.
10. To describe the Biblical concept of discretion and see how it is applied in church relationships.
11. To name several methods of building positive relationships in a brotherhood.
12. To describe the process of correcting a brother in error.
13. To describe the relationship of the church to the world.
14. To tell how the church-to-world relationship affects relationships in the church.

I. CHRIST, THE HEAD

Six times in the New Testament Christ is referred to as the head of the church, four times as the head of the corner, and once as the head of every man. This metaphor is used to show Christ as *Director*.

You know well enough how vital your brain is to the function of your body. Not one action goes on in your body but what it first receives directions from your

brain. Even the involuntary movements such as your heartbeat, your digestive system, and your breathing have been “told” to perform.

While Christ is more to you than your head is to your body, the picture is appropriate to show how He oversees and how He is to control all you do as a member of His “body.”

SECTION OBJECTIVES

- ★ **Study these objectives.** When you have completed this section, you should be able:
1. To tell the importance of Christ as the Director of each individual Christian.
 2. To tell what it means to be called and chosen.
 3. To describe the meaning and function of spiritual gifts.
 4. To tell the importance of Christ as the overall Director of the church.

VOCABULARY

- ★ **Learn the meaning of these words.** Knowing the meaning of these words will help you to understand this section and enable you to use these words correctly.



aptitude	decapitate	propel
aspire	innate	supersensible

Note: All vocabulary words in this LIGHTUNIT appear in **boldface** print the first time they are used. If you are unsure of the meaning when you are reading, study the definitions given in the Glossary.

DIRECTING EACH MEMBER



Read I Corinthians 12.

The Bible uses several illustrations to show our relationship to Christ including stones and cornerstone, branches and vine, and sheep and shepherd. Each of these is important for teaching us particular truths of our relationship to Him.

The most common illustration for describing our functions in the church, however, is body and head. "Now ye are the body of Christ and members in particular." One of the blessed truths which this figure illustrates is that each member has an individual function; yet, in order to perform that function one must be a part of the larger body. This means that no function can be despised as being insignificant, nor can any be exalted as being independent. Every member is important but none is able to get along on his own.

Over this body of many members is one Lord. Jesus, the head, gives worth and purpose to each member, helps each member to meet a specific need of the whole body, and coordinates the body into a harmonious unit.

Your calling. Imperative to a proper understanding of Christian service is understanding that you have been called of God. Just as your mother or father has stood in the doorway of your house and called you by name from the out-of-doors, so God has called you.

You entered the body of Christ in answer to God's

call. Thus, your entrance was an act of obedience, and by your obedience to His call you joined His household. God "hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (II Timothy 1:9).

Knowing that God called you is not enough. You must also know that He called you *according to His own purpose*. God has a defined, clarifiable purpose for calling *you*. You are not aimlessly called; you are chosen.

When your mother stands at the door and calls your name, she has a reason for choosing you and not your brother or your sister. At a later time, she may call them, but she chose you for a specific "calling." Her call to you does not end when you enter the house. Rather, at that point she begins to tell you why you were called. She defines her purpose, describing the work, the time, and the method. She does not call you just for the sake of seeing you come.

So it is with God. His first call to you is the "high calling of God in Christ Jesus." But this includes the call to "fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness" (see II Thessalonians 1:11b). His call has purpose. He has outlined your work, and He intends that you harness your time and energy to fulfill your calling.



Complete these activities.

- 1.1 Tell the result of seeing all your service as service to God. _____
- 1.2 Name the three divisions of service. a. _____
b. _____ c. _____
- 1.3 Describe the central concept taught by describing Christ as a head. _____
- 1.4 Tell how the metaphor of the body clarifies the truth that each member is an individual and yet not independent. _____
- 1.5 Write a paragraph describing the implications of being called. _____



Spiritual gifts. One of the most difficult things we must learn about our calling is that we are not called because of natural **aptitude**. “For ye see your calling,

brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.”



Read I Corinthians 1:26-31.

This certainly does not mean that God has no use for abilities which we have developed. He intends that we use them. But all who wish to fulfill their calling must realize it is not possible in their own strength. The source of the strength, wisdom, and planning necessary for church building is *divine* not human.

For this reason God gives gifts—spiritual gifts—for the building of His church. There are several lists of gifts which God has given to His people. Romans 12:4-8 lists *prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, ruling* (leading or organizing), and *showing mercy*. Other lists are found in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 28-30, and Ephesians 4:11, 12.

The Greek word *charisma* which is here translated *gift* means “a *divine grace*.” The gifts of God to His church come with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. They are the outworking of the divine nature within man and do what man cannot do in his own strength.

Take the gift of prophecy for example. The Biblical definition for prophecy is *speaking to edification, exhortation, and comfort* (1 Corinthians 14:3). Many may be able to speak for the purpose of exhortation, but with the spiritual gift of prophecy, a man exhorts with a power beyond what is possible by his natural ability. His words become Spirit-charged. He has received a divine grace that **propels** him with divine power.

Thus, Peter and John, the unlearned and ignorant fishermen spoke with a boldness and power which made the rulers marvel. These qualities were not **innate** to these men; they were the manifestations of their spiritual gift.

Seeing these gifts as spiritual, surpassing natural abilities, is important for several reasons. It keeps man humble, for his accomplishments are not his own but God's. It also keeps man from **aspiring** to be what he was not intended to be. Campaigning for offices is a mark of worldly governments and natural abilities. In the church, Christ is the head, and the Holy Spirit gives to every man “severally as he will.” To Christ belongs glory both for the spiritual quality of the gifts and for the wisdom by which the gifts are dispersed.

Your personal calling, then, can only be fulfilled by the indwelling grace of God, the *charisma* of His Holy Spirit. As a member of Christ's body, you have been called for a purpose, and Christ intends for you to know the **supersensible** unction of spiritual gifts to fulfill

that calling. “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13).

Spiritual gifts have been the subject of much discussion in recent years. You have likely heard of the charismatic movement; it refers to this recent emphasis on spiritual gifts. Unfortunately, some promoters of this movement have neglected other important teachings in the Bible. This has resulted in an imbalance of doctrine and lack of obedience to some Scriptural principles. The imbalance which has resulted should not cause us to shy away from the Scriptural teaching. Without spiritual gifts, the work of the church is impossible.

One question which especially sometimes troubles youth is, “What is my spiritual gift?”

As an honest question this is right and good. We must always be open to the work of the Holy Spirit through us. Yet, we must be careful of a detailed pursuit of self-realization even though we be Spirit-indwelt. (The danger of self-analysis is self-awareness which, contrary to popular belief, makes faithfulness in spiritual service more difficult, not more efficient.)

The New Testament does not give instructions for “finding” our spiritual gifts. Rather it directs our eyes outward. As our vision of spiritual needs expands, the *charisma* of God fills us to meet those needs.

Seeing the needs of a lost humanity, Jesus did not tell His disciples to search themselves whether they had any inclination toward evangelism. He told them to look on the harvest and to pray. When the Holy Spirit was given, the spiritual gift of evangelism was one of the most notable of the gifts (Eph. 4:1). The disciples went everywhere preaching the news of salvation. Spiritual gifts are given as believers are open to receive them.

A gift may also be given through the church. Timothy probably received the gift of pastor-teacher at his ordination “with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery” (1 Timothy 4:14b). Some gifts may be given only for a certain time to meet a certain need such as the “sign” gifts which confirmed the Gospel during the time of transition. Always, however, the gifts are given for the building of the church. They are never to be used for personal advantage. And they are dispensed under the direction of Christ, the Head.



In your LIFE notebook, make a list of the needs in your church and community as you see them. Use this list as a prayer list for at least one week. As you talk to God each day about these needs, write down anything that comes to your mind as a method for meeting these needs. If you keep this up longer than one week, take notes on how the needs are met. As you begin to see the needs more clearly, be an instrument of the Holy Spirit in whatever way He wishes to lead you in meeting those needs.



Write true or false.

- 1.6 _____ God's call is usually stronger to those with greater natural aptitude.
- 1.7 _____ Christ has no use for natural abilities in building His church.
- 1.8 _____ Church building is impossible without spiritual gifts.
- 1.9 _____ *Charisma* means a *divine grace*.
- 1.10 _____ The *charisma* of God enables a man to do what he cannot do in his own strength.
- 1.11 _____ Although Christ is the head, the members of His body are responsible to choose the spiritual gift necessary for their situation.
- 1.12 _____ It is important for every believer to analyze himself and to discover his spiritual gift before he ventures into a spiritual function.



Complete these activities.

- 1.13 Name the two results given of seeing spiritual gifts as more than natural abilities.
- a. _____
- b. _____
- 1.14 Think of at least one more result and write it here. _____
- _____
- _____
- 1.15 Tell what is meant by the term *charismatic movement*. _____
- _____
- 1.16 Tell how Timothy received his spiritual gift. _____
- _____

DIRECTING ALL THE MEMBERS



Read Ephesians 4:1-8, 11-16.

You have just studied how Christ, the head, directs each of His body members, calling them by name and equipping them individually with spiritual gifts. The study is far from complete, however, on the individual level. Christ, the head, is also coordinator of all the members.

It is in fact with a mind to the whole body that Christ directs the members. The callings and gifts are given to "profit withal." Christ wants us to be individually strong so that a collective strength is developed. He told His disciples, "I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18b). He intends that His body be whole and strong and He

gives gifts "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12, 13).

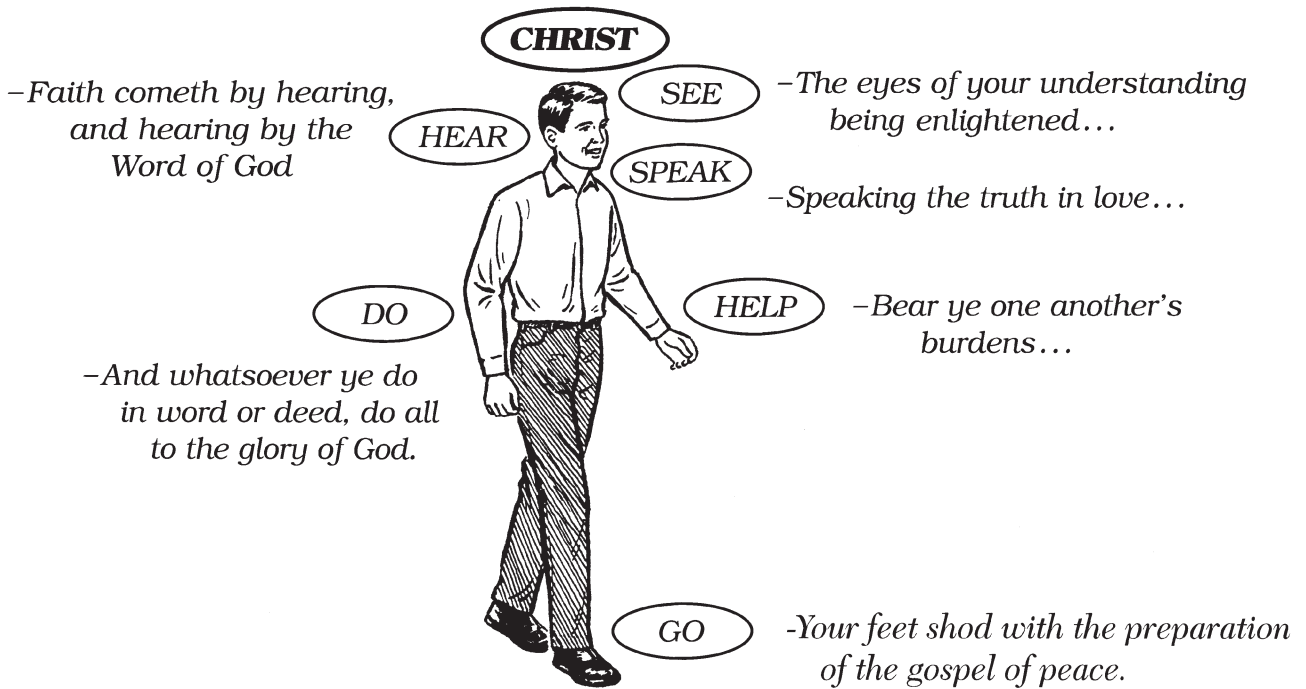
Christ's body is to have the strength and stature of Christ. Collectively the body is to mature, to become more coordinated with the head, more Christ-controlled and Christ-natured.

The head of the body. The impact of Christ, the head of His church, is somehow so far above our realm of understanding that we often fail to respond as His

body. Christ our head means His thoughts are to control our actions, His likes and dislikes are to set our goals, His joys are to become our affection, His will is to be our delight.

Christ our Head makes us His body. As responsive and submissive as our natural bodies are to our minds, so we are to be to Christ. The hand is to do nothing but

what Christ has given the impulse to do. The feet are to go nowhere but where Christ's face has been set to go. The function of every member is to be geared to contributing to the whole. Not one member is to have ambitions of his own; each is to be totally committed to the purpose and function of the entire body.



Not only does Christ, our Head, give us direction, He also, because He is the Son of God, gives us spiritual powers and capacities beyond human understanding (Eph. 4:8). With Christ as our Head, we become a human organization under divine control.

Imagine the difference between a normal person and a **decapitated** body. There is scarcely any comparison, almost all contrast. This is the basis for the continual distinction made in the Scriptures between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdoms of this world. One is *his* body, the other is only a body, nothing more.

The body of Christ under the command of Christ's unlimited intelligence, wisdom, and purpose, performs spiritual services understood only dimly by His body. Take the salvation of a man, for example. The church may bring him into fellowship, speak to him, lead him to surrender, and baptize him. In our understanding, the man has been saved, but we by no means fully grasp the spiritual reality of what we have done. We have simply obeyed the mind of Christ.

As Christ's body, we do not need to know the significance of all that we do if we know simply that we are doing His will. With the Apostle Paul, we can say, "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end.

Amen" (Ephesians 3:20,21).

The glory of the body. Christ, our Head, gives us entity, not only individually, but collectively. When we become a part of His body, we literally take the name of Christ. The church is, in a sense, Christ on earth. The things we say and do are to be so faithfully the words and actions of Christ that men think of Him whenever we speak and act.

The startling application of this principle is that men either respect or disrespect Christ by what they observe in His body. When Peter and John spoke with boldness in the temple, the rulers were not only amazed by their exercise of spiritual gifts, they "took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." The disciples were reflecting the person of Christ.

This reflection of Christ so permeated the early church that people began to call the members *Christians*—Christ's people. Christ was so obviously the Head of the church that men thought of Christ when they saw His body. The body glorified the head.

The pattern of the early church is what Christ has intended for us today, and it is a direct fulfillment of His prayer in John 17:10b, 11a. "I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee." Jesus left the world, but His disciples are yet in the world. As His body, under His direction, they will glorify Him.