

ROLES IN THE CHURCH



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ROLES IN THE CHURCH

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Lesson 1: Servant Leadership

(Luke 22:24-27; Nehemiah)

Luke 22

24 Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest.

25 And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called 'benefactors.'

26 But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves.

27 For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves.

NKJV

Before we look at the specific roles in the church we must first examine the attitudes and characteristics necessary in fulfilling those roles. We'll look at servant leadership first.

What do you call a Christian who isn't serving? A contradiction! The two terms; Christian and servant should go hand in hand – they are synonymous.

What was the dispute about in this passage?

Had the disciples argued over this before? (Matthew 20:20-24; Mark 9:33-37)

What kind of leadership did the Gentiles exercise? Describe what you think Jesus is referring to in your own words.

What kind of leadership did Jesus model and teach? (see also John 13:1-17)

Contrast the difference between leading by example and leading by authority. Can an individual possess both? Do you have to have authority to be a leader? Can you be an effective leader if you have authority without being a good example?

Nehemiah 3

3:1 Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests and built the Sheep Gate; they consecrated it and hung its doors.

2 Next to Eliashib the men of Jericho built.

5 Next to them the Tekoites made repairs; but their nobles did not put their shoulders to the work of their Lord.

8 Next to him Uzziel the son of Harhaiah, one of the goldsmiths, made repairs. Also next to him Hananiah, one of the perfumers, made repairs; and they fortified Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall.

9 And next to them Rephaiah the son of Hur, leader of half the district of Jerusalem, made repairs.

12 And next to him was Shallum the son of Hallohesh, leader of half the district of Jerusalem; he and his daughters made repairs.

It has been almost 100 years since the first return under Zerubbabel and the walls of Jerusalem are still in ruins! When Nehemiah heard of this he asked permission from the king to go home to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls. He gains permission, and, amazingly, what several generations had failed to do for 100 years, Nehemiah was able to inspire the people to do in 52 days!

The book of Nehemiah gives us a great case study in leadership. We'll look a few select passages which teach some important lessons.

In chapter 3 we find some unlikely groups working on the wall. We read about everyone from the high priest (1), to perfumers (8), to governors (9), to the daughters of nobility (12) up on the wall. We even read about people coming from Jericho coming to help out (2). What kind of effect do you think that had on the work?

In sharp contrast to almost everything else we read about in chapter 3 we have the Tekoite nobles. What affect do you think this had on the work in this family?

Romans 12

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. 3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. 4 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. 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; 7 or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; 8 he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. 9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. 10 Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; 11 not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; 12 rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; 13 distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. 14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. 16 Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. 17 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. 18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. 19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. 20 Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Lesson 2: Stewardship

(1 Peter 4:10: Romans 12: Matthew 25:14-30)

Part of being a good leader as discussed in lesson one is being a servant (a positive example of what we are trying to influence or lead others to be). As we will see in this lesson, in order to be that fitting example we must take into consideration the gifts that the Lord has blessed each of us with individually. After close examination of our blessings, we are told that we need to be good stewards of those blessings.

What does it mean to be a steward?

Why is it so important to be a good steward?

Are there specific ways that we are told to be good stewards in Romans 12? If so, list some of them.

What kind of influence will you be as a leader if you are the kind of steward that is presented for us in Romans 12?

Who will you be an influential leader to? Just those that you worship with on Sunday and Wednesday?

1 Peter 4:10

10 As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

Matthew 25:14-30

14 "For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. 15 And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. 16 Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. 17 And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. 18 But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. 19 After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. 20 "So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, "Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.' 21 His lord said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' 22 He also who had received two talents came and said, "Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.' 23 His lord said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' 24 "Then he who had received the one talent came and said, "Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. 25 And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.' 26 "But his lord answered and said to him, "You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. 27 So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. 28 So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. 29 "For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. 30 And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

According to 1 Peter 4:10 - What are we to do with these gifts? Enjoy them for ourselves? What is the purpose of these gifts? To impress others? To glorify ourselves?

Did we do anything to merit these gifts? Does someone become a preacher, because they earned that gift? Does someone become a teacher because they are good moral people and deserve to be in front of others?

What will be our fate according to Matthew 25:14-30 if we suppress or bury our talents?

What happens to those that fully utilize their talents as we are instructed to do so according to Matthew 25:14-30?

Does the reward come from the fact that we “earn” it by using those talents?

1 Corinthians 12

1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant: 2 You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led. 3 Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit. 4 There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. 6 And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. 7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: 8 for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, 10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills. 12 For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free--and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. 14 For in fact the body is not one member but many. 15 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? 16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body?

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Lesson 3: Members in the Body

(1 Corinthians 12; Romans 12)

We have talked about the kind of servant attitude that is required for a good leader. We have talked about being good stewards of the gifts that we are blessed with, and now we will turn our attention to the individual members of the body of Christ.

Which member in the body is more important? The eye or the ear? The preacher or the grass-cutter? The song-leader or the man that passes the trays during the Lord's Supper?

Why isn't one more important than the other, according to the passages selected for this study?

How good is a body when a part is missing? Is it complete or whole?

Have you ever broken a limb, or maybe even just hurt it pretty badly? Does it affect the rest of your body? How?

17 *If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling?* 18 *But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.* 19 *And if they were all one member, where would the body be?* 20 *But now indeed there are many members, yet one body.* 21 *And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."* 22 *No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.* 23 *And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unrepresentable parts have greater modesty,* 24 *but our representable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it,* 25 *that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another.* 26 *And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.* 27 *Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.* 28 *And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.* 29 *Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles?* 30 *Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?* 31 *But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.* NKJV

When a tooth aches or is hurting; does it affect anything besides itself? If a member of the body is hurting, should it affect the whole body? Or if a member of the Lord's body is rejoicing, should the whole body rejoice?

Why doesn't the whole body always rejoice when one member rejoices or suffer when one member suffers?

According to our text, are members of the body that seem to be weaker necessary? Explain what kind of members those would be.

Who composed the body? Think it is composed just the way that He wants it? Does God's wisdom always make complete logical sense to our human understanding? If we all had our way, we would all be the head.

Should we be satisfied with the role that we play in the body and just stay in that role the rest of our lives? "I'm an eye and I'm always just going to be an eye." Is that the kind of attitude that we should have? Or should we be working to be more?

1 Timothy 3:1-7

3:1 This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. 2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; 3 not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; 4 one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence 5 (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); 6 not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. 7 Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

NKJV

Titus 1:5-9

5 For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you-- 6 if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination. 7 For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, 8 but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, 9 holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.

NKJV

LESSON 4: Qualifications of Elders

(1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9)

These two texts from 1 Timothy and Titus give us all we know about the qualifications of elders. We must remember that the Holy Spirit makes elders (Acts 20:28) and not us. When we look for elders we are not looking for men we think are qualified. We are looking for men God deems qualified. The only way we can know this is by looking at these qualifications here.

These qualifications can be broken up in different ways. We're going to break them up into qualifications which should apply to every Christian (i.e. "not greedy of money"), and qualifications which are specific to this particular work (i.e. must be a man, 1 Timothy 3:1; Titus 1:6).

List below all the qualifications and try to determine which ones should be said of all Christians and which ones are specific to this position.

Acts 20:17-35

17 From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church.

18 And when they had come to him, he said to them: "You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you,

19 serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews;

20 how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house,

21 testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

22 And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there,

23 except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.

24 But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

25 "And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more.

26 Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men.

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Lesson 5: The Work of Elders

(Acts 20:17-35)

The elders have an awesome responsibility. Their work is not easy as is made evident by the multitude of serious qualifications that we looked at in the last lesson. So what is it that they do?

Is the eldership just a figurehead position? Do they do any real work or do they just place their votes on certain positions?

What makes their role so important? What is at stake?

How do we know exactly what they are supposed to do? Where's the job description to be found?

Are elders to be dictators or servants?

According to Acts 20:28 (listed on next page); what are elders to shepherd? Does that make it a little more meaningful or a little more important when you consider how it was purchased or by whom?

27 For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.

28 Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

29 For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.

30 Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.

31 Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.

32 "So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

33 I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel.

34 Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me.

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

Can you think of a more important "job" than caring for someone else's soul and helping them get to Heaven?

What does the writer warn the elders about in this text? Are these threats only from without?

Do you think the fact that wolves can spring up from within makes it all the more necessary for the elders to know the flock?

Take a moment to consider what you think the job or the task of an elder includes. Make a list below of what you think an elder should be doing:

Acts 6:1-7

6:1 Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a murmuring against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.

2 Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables.

3 Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business;

4 but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch,

6 whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.

7 Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

NKJV

Lesson 6: Deacons

(1 Timothy 3; Acts 6)

The only organization for the church we read of in the New Testament is bishops (or elders) and deacons (Phil. 1:1). The bishops were to shepherd or oversee the sheep in the flock (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2). In this lesson we will examine the work of deacons.

Diakonos, the Greek word which is translated "deacon" in our Bibles, simply means "a servant." We understand that these men are ordained in the churches to serve.

This passage in Acts 6 may give us a good indication of the kind of work deacons performed in the church. We do not know if the seven men were actually deacons (they are not called deacons in the text), but they were appointed for the purpose of serving the church. We should consider a few questions:

For what purpose were these seven men chosen? What was the problem?

Why did the apostles not take care of this problem themselves?

It is my belief that the apostles' were acting in the place of elders in the Jerusalem church (if they were not, in fact, elders themselves, 1 Peter 5:1). Does this account help us to distinguish between the work of elders and the work of deacons? In what kind of work should elders be involved? What about deacons?

1 Timothy 3:8-13

8 Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money,

9 holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience.

10 But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless.

11 Likewise their wives must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things.

12 Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.

13 For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.
NKJV

Qualifications: The qualifications for deacons are given in the same chapter as the qualifications for elders (1 Timothy 3). There are some similarities and differences between the qualifications for elders and deacons. List the qualifications for each position side by side and note what is the same and what is different. Think of possible reasons for some of the differences.

What is the significance of these qualifications? Why are they necessary for the work a deacon is to perform?

1 Timothy 4:6, 12-16

6 If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed.

12 Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

13 Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

14 Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership.

15 Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all.

16 Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.

NKJV

2 Timothy 4:1-5

1 I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom:

2 Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;

4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

5 But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

NKJV

Lesson 7: Preachers

(1st and 2nd Timothy; Titus)

Whose job is it to teach? All Christians! Well then what do we need a preacher for? Are there different kinds of teaching? Can all be elders? Can all be teachers? Can all be preachers? Is it a role that is dealt with in the New Testament as a “formal position” in the church?

What does the term preacher mean?

What is a preacher to do? What are his responsibilities?

Did I say his? Can women be preachers? We may mention or discuss in passing (will be dealt with in greater detail in the next lesson or two).

Are pastors and preachers the same thing? (see Ephesians 4:11)

Is there a difference between preachers, evangelists and ministers?

LESSON 8: Restrictions on Women

(1 Timothy 2; 1 Corinthians 14)

Thus far we've looked only at what a select group of individuals in the body do. Only a few can serve as an elder. Elders must be older married men with children. Elders must also be able to teach. Not everyone can be appointed deacon. Deacons must be married men with children. And preachers must be men who are able to teach.

So where does that leave the rest of us? What about young men? What can they do? What about old men who are not married, or who are married but don't have children? What about men who are not able to teach? *And what about the women?* It seems they have nothing to do at all! They are left out of all the "formal" leadership roles in the church. It does not seem fair.

There has been pressure in recent years to expand the role of women in the church. We need to look at arguments used in favor of this, but we first need to look at the restrictions on women in leadership roles to consider what they are and why they are given.

How is a woman to learn (v. 11)?

What is a woman not permitted to do (v. 12)?

Why is she restricted (vs. 13-14)?

What is the meaning of verse 15?

1 Timothy 2:11-15

11 Let a woman learn in silence with all submission.

12 And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.

13 For Adam was formed first, then Eve.

14 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.

15 Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control.
NKJV

“Furthermore, if by holding to traditional positions, we prevent women from exercising their God-given talents, might we not also be held accountable for that? ...there are already in many congregations women who are more educated, more knowledgeable in Scripture, and more gifted as adult teachers than most of the men... If men refuse to learn from such women purely on the basis of gender, are we not collectively burying their talents—gifts given them by God—at considerable loss to all?”
(taken from a website for a church of Christ)

Women in the early church...

- *Labored in gospel (Phil. 4:3)*
- *Taught (Acts 18:26)*
- *Prophesied (Acts 21:9; 1 Cor. 11:5)*
- *Served as deaconess (Rom. 16:1)*
- *Served as apostle (Rom. 16:7)*

Galatians 3:26-29

26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

NKJV

Arguments for expanding roles of women:

1) Gifts given to women. Among the arguments used in favor of women preachers, elders, etc., one of the most popular is that God has given women special gifts just as he has given abilities to men. And if God has given a woman a talent that can be used in some kind of formal leadership role, how can we say it's wrong. Is there anything wrong with this argument? How would you respond to this argument?

2) Women in the early church. Some argue from the Bible (left) that women had leadership roles in the church. Do these passages provide evidence of this?

3) Equality in Christ. This passage in Galatians 3 is a critical text for those who believe women's roles should be expanded. It is argued that our oneness in Christ abolishes all differences in roles. Does this passage support this argument?

Lesson 9: Invaluable Role of Women

(Luke 8:1-3; Romans 16; Philippians 4:2-3)

Luke 8:1-3

1 Now it came to pass, afterward, that He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with Him,

2 and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities-- Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons,

3 and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who provided for Him from their substance.

Romans 16:1-2

1 I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea,

2 that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also.

Philippians 4:2-3

2 I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.

3 And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life.

It seems like most class material for “roles in the church” deals a lot with men and what they do for the Lord. Can women play an important part in the work of the church?

What kinds of activities can women do to further the work of the church?

Do you think that there are things that women do better than men when it comes to the work of the church? Are women better suited or better qualified to handle certain activities or responsibilities?

Is the “church of Christ” wrong in “restricting” the role of women when it comes to public acts of worship? Don’t women make good public speakers? Is the church keeping them from using their “gifts”?

Can you think of some women in your life that have made an important contribution to your spiritual welfare? List them below or on the back...

1 Corinthians 7:1, 6-9, 17-24

7:1 Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman.

6 But I say this as a concession, not as a commandment.

7 For I wish that all men were even as I myself. But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that.

8 But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain even as I am;

9 but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

17 But as God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk. And so I ordain in all the churches.

18 Was anyone called while circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Was anyone called while uncircumcised? Let him not be circumcised.

19 Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters.

20 Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called.

21 Were you called while a slave? Do not be concerned about it; but if you can be made free, rather use it.

22 For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord's freedman. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ's slave.

23 You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.

24 Brethren, let each one remain with God in that state in which he was called.

LESSON 10: The Gift of Being Single

(1 Corinthians 7)

Jesus was single. He never married. Never had children.

Paul was single. He never married. Never had children.

Do you have to be married with children to serve the Lord? Enough said.

Yet we often think otherwise. You can't serve as an elder. You can't be a deacon. What can you do? What *should* you do? We'll answer those questions in this lesson.

What does Paul mean when he says, "It is good for a man not to touch a woman?" (v. 1)

Why is this a "concession" not a "commandment?" (v. 6)

What is the "gift" he's referring to in verse 7?

Explain the meaning of verses 17 and 24 in your own words.

What is more important than circumcision? (v. 19)

Why should a slave not be concerned about his situation? (v. 21)

Is Paul saying that if you're a slave you should not seek your freedom? (v. 21)

1 Corinthians 7:29-35

29 But this I say, brethren, the time is short, so that from now on even those who have wives should be as though they had none,

30 those who weep as though they did not weep, those who rejoice as though they did not rejoice, those who buy as though they did not possess,

31 and those who use this world as not misusing it. For the form of this world is passing away.

32 But I want you to be without care. He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord--how he may please the Lord.

33 But he who is married cares about the things of the world--how he may please his wife.

34 There is a difference between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she who is married cares about the things of the world--how she may please her husband.

35 And this I say for your own profit, not that I may put a leash on you, but for what is proper, and that you may serve the Lord without distraction.

NKJV

Why should a married man act as if he is not married? (v. 29)

Why should someone who is in sorrow act as if he's not in sorrow? Why should someone who is happy act as if he's not happy? Why should someone who owns something act as if he didn't possess?

What does Paul mean in verses 32-33? Is he saying married people don't want to please the Lord? Is he saying single people have no care for the things of the world?

What is the distraction Paul speaks of in verse 35?

Now let's make this practical for today. Obviously, our situation is different. We don't have to be concerned about the same things these Christians were concerned about. But there are principles which carry over to today. Are there any advantages to being single today in serving the Lord? If so, what are they? Is singleness a gift from God? Try to list five general or specific areas in kingdom-work where a single person can thrive.

1 Timothy 4:12

Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

Titus 2:1-10

1 But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine:

2 that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience;

3 the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things—

4 that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children,

5 to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.

6 Likewise, exhort the young men to be sober-minded,

7 in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility,

8 sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you.

9 Exhort bondservants to be obedient to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all things, not answering back,

10 not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.

Lesson 11: The Gifts of Youth and Age

(1 Timothy 4:12; Titus 2)

Do we ever get too old to be effective in the Lord's work? Are we able to retire from doing the work of the Lord?

According to our text, what is an important role that older Christians play?

Which role is more important: an older person teaching or a younger person listening to wise teaching?

Why is the teaching of an older Christian so important?

Can young Christians be effective in the Lord's work? What can they do?

Which is more encouraging: a two-year old saying a prayer and reciting their books of the Bible, or an older person who is weak and unable to walk well that is still coming out to every service?

LESSON 12: Discovering Talents (two class periods)

(Exodus 3:10-11; Judges 6:14-15)

There is work for all of us to do! Hopefully we've made that very clear in the first eleven lessons.

But we need to make this practical. What is my role in the body? Am I exercising my gifts and talents as I should? Do I have to wait until I'm given a formal leadership role to exercise my talents? What if I'm not ever qualified to exercise formal leadership in the church?

What we're going to do in these last two lessons is first of all see what our role in the body should be (Discovering Talents), and then implement a strategy to get us busy doing what we should (Setting Goals).

What do we mean by the title of this lesson: *Discovering Talents*? Does that mean we must discover what we already do well? Does it mean we must find those things we feel qualified to do?

Did Moses feel he was qualified to be the deliverer of God's people?

Was he qualified? Did he turn out to be a good leader?

Did Gideon feel he was qualified to save his people?

(Judges 6)

Was Gideon qualified?

Is this just an example of false humility?

Exodus 3:10-11

10 Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."

11 But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?"

Judges 6:14-15

14 Then the Lord turned to him and said, "Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?"

15 So he said to Him, "O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house."

Esther 4:13-14

13 And Mordecai told them to answer Esther: "Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king's palace any more than all the other Jews.

14 For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

Nehemiah 1:1-4

1 The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. It came to pass in the month of Chislew, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the citadel,

2 that Hanani one of my brethren came with men from Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews who had escaped, who had survived the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem.

3 And they said to me, "The survivors who are left from the captivity in the province are there in great distress and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem is also broken down, and its gates are burned with fire."

4 So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

Talent often lies buried within us. Discovering a talent can sometimes be a long and even painful process. We're going to suggest six steps you can take to discover your talents:

- 1) Recognize a Need
- 2) Accept Stewardship
- 3) Look for Role Models
- 4) Pray
- 5) Seek Good Counsel
- 6) Trial and Error

Recognize a Need

Unfortunately, God is not going to send you a vision to let you know what you need to be doing. You can't even wait for someone to come and ask you to do something (formal leadership). It all begins with seeing a job that needs to be done.

Read the whole context of the passage from Esther. Did Esther know God had made her queen for the purpose Mordecai suggested?

Read Nehemiah 1:1-2:8.

What need did Nehemiah recognize?

Did God explicitly tell Nehemiah that's what he wanted him to do?

How do you think Nehemiah came to the conclusion that he should be the one to take on this job?

List some other examples in the Bible of people who recognized needs (without Divine intervention).

Make a list of jobs that need to be done here (jobs that don't require authority).

1 Peter 4:8-10

8 *And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins."*

9 *Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.*

10 *As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*

1 Corinthians 4:1-5

1 *Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.*

2 *Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.*

3 *But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself.*

4 *For I know nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord.*

5 *Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God.*

Luke 12:48

48 *For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.*

Accept Stewardship

Once we see a need, we must then accept our responsibility. This is one of the most difficult steps.

We've already covered the Parable of the Talents (Mt. 25:14-30), but it might be good to review that and be prepared to comment on it in class.

What does Peter tell us we should do with our gifts?

What possible "gifts" is he referring to specifically?

What does it mean to be a steward?

What is the manifold grace of God referring to?

What is required in a steward (1 Cor. 4:2)?

What is Paul talking about in verse 3?

Who is the judge of faithfulness?

What are the hidden things of darkness? What are the counsels of the hearts?

Whose praise do we seek?

What is God's standard of judgment (Lk. 12:48)?

1 Corinthians 11:1

1 Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.

Philippians 4:9

9 The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

Philippians 2:25-30

25 Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need;

26 since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick.

27 For indeed he was sick almost unto death; but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

28 Therefore I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful.

29 Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such men in esteem;

30 because for the work of Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life, to supply what was lacking in your service toward me.

Look for Role Models

Role models are critical in this process of discovering gifts. They help provide a vision of what we can become.

On the practical side, role models give us ideas of different ways we can serve. We see people with talents that are similar to our own using those same gifts in the Lord's work.

But they also supply motivation. They help spark the fire in us to develop our talents and gifts in the Lord's work. Their sacrifice and service inspire and motivate our hearts.

What are the five titles or descriptions Paul gives Epaphroditus in Phil. 2:25?

Why was Epaphroditus distressed?

How sick was Epaphroditus?

What does Paul tell them they should do with men like Epaphroditus (v. 29)?

Make a list of five role models from the Bible who impress you as a personal example? (Hebrews 11 has some great ones!) Try to think in terms of people you can imitate in practical ways.

Make a list of the five people who have had the greatest impact on your life spiritually (not from the Bible). What are the key traits you seek to imitate in your own life?

Nehemiah

1:11 O Lord, I pray, please let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant, and to the prayer of Your servants who desire to fear Your name; and let Your servant prosper this day, I pray, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man." For I was the king's cupbearer.

2:4 Then the king said to me, "What do you request?" So I prayed to the God of heaven.

5 And I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, I ask that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, that I may rebuild it."

Proverbs

1:30 They would have none of my counsel and despised my every rebuke.

27:9 Ointment and perfume delight the heart, and the sweetness of a man's friend gives delight by hearty counsel.

11:14 Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety.

15:22 Without counsel, plans go awry, but in the multitude of counselors they are established.

Pray

Prayer was critical in Nehemiah's process. Read the passages to the left (and all of his prayer in chapter 1) and suggest ways Nehemiah used prayer.

What are some specific ways we should use prayer in discovering our talents and gifts and then using them?

Seek Good Counsel

We must always evaluate any counsel we receive with the Bible. Good judgment must also be used when considering the source of the advice we hear (see Rehoboam, 1 Kings 12). But good counsel is a gift from God and we must pay serious attention to it.

What are some possible responses to wise but unsolicited advice (see Prov. 1:30; 27:9)?

How important is good advice (see Prov. 11:14; 15:22)?

Where can we find this wisdom (outside of the Bible)?

What kind of wisdom should we seek? What are some specific areas where we might need good counsel? How does good advice help us to discover our talents and gifts?

Matthew 25:24-27

24 Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed.

25 And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.'

26 But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed.

27 So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest.

Trial and Error

We look for jobs to be done. We accept our personal responsibility to do those jobs. We look for role models to follow. We pray for wisdom. We seek good advice and counsel. But after we've done all of that, we just have to roll up our sleeves and get to work!

At last, this is the only way we will ever know if we have a talent or not. And sometimes it is only after a long series of failures that we actually find our role in the church.

What excuse did the one talent man give his master?

What are we often afraid of when trying new things?

What was the master's reply to this excuse?

Think of Bible characters who were not successful the first time they tried to do something.

List some jobs in the Lord's service which cause fear and anxiety.

Should you give up on a job after failing once or twice?

How does the Lord measure failure?

LESSON 13: Setting Goals

(Philippians 3:12-14)

Philippians 3:12-14

12 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.

13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,

14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Stephen Covey, famous for among other things writing *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, says that one of the seven habits is to “begin with the end in mind.” I can’t think of a better way to begin talking about goals than that. In order to set a goal, you have to have an end in mind. You have to know what you want to attain. We as Christians have an end in mind, HEAVEN! With that end in mind we can set some goals that will help us “attain” Heaven.

Paul has that same end in mind according to our text in Philippians 3:12 where he says, “I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.”

Why does Paul continue to press on? Can we ever quit pressing on? Can we reach that goal of Heaven without continuing to work as a Christian until the day that we die?

What are some things that Paul had to do in order to lay hold of that prize, according to the text?

Isn’t James 4:13-17 (next page) contradicting what we are trying to do in this lesson? Isn’t James telling us that setting goals or planning for the future is prideful or arrogant?

James 4:13-17

13 Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit",

14 whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.

15 Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that."

16 But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.

17 Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.

Doesn't Jesus tell us something similar in Matthew 6:34 where He tells us not to worry about tomorrow? Isn't He just telling us to live in the moment and whatever happens, happens? Does that sound like goal planning?

In setting our goals, according to James, what is one major factor that we have to take into consideration?

What do we hope to get out of setting goals? Why are they necessary?

List five important goals in your life?

Are any of them spiritual in nature?

Many businesses write Mission Statements to lay out what their focus or direction is. If you had to write a mission statement for yourself what would it say?

Can writing this mission statement help you determine what your goals are? Doesn't this mission statement give you a clearer focus of the end?

If you begin by keeping the end in mind, you are a lot more likely to see that end come to fruition.