

## **Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time***

### **How to Function in the Body**

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 1359

Our Father, we really do thank You today for this morning and this opportunity of another day to use for Your glory, to be fruitful in that You might be praised. We thank You for those who have come this morning, anticipating further exposure to truth, a further understanding of the basics of the Christian experience.

And we pray, Father, that You'll reward them with a joyous time, that You'll make them happy and blessed because they've been here that they might go out and bear fruit. We thank You for calling us together into the body of Christ to minister to one another, to serve You and to reach the world with the news that has so changed our lives. May our study this morning help us to better be able to do that. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

All right, we're talking about how to function in the body. This is our session number three, if you want to pull that sheet out and look along with it. How to function in the body of Christ. Now there's a very important verse in the Bible that would be the place to start and that would be 1 Corinthians chapter 12 in verse 13. "For by one Spirit were we all baptized into one body." The moment you received Jesus Christ as Savior, you were placed into the body of Christ. "Whether we be Jews or Greeks, bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."

When you became a Christian, you were placed...and that's what the baptizing of the Holy Spirit means. You were baptized or placed in to the body of Christ. It's like baptism means dipping somebody under, or putting somebody into. You were put into the body of Christ. You became a member of the body of Christ. That's synonymous with the concept of the church. You became a member of the church of Christ. You may not join a local church yet, you may not have an official membership in a local church, but the moment you were saved you became a member of the church of Christ's body. And that's one of the terms used for the church.

The Bible uses several terms for the church. It calls us a flock; Christ is the Shepherd. It calls us branches and He is the vine. It calls us subjects of a kingdom and He is the King. It calls us children in a family and He is the Father. There are many metaphors for the church. But one of them, and the very unique one, is the concept of the body, that we are members of the body of Christ. Now when we came into the family we came into that body. And 1 Corinthians 12:14 says, "The body is not one member but many." So we're all part of the body of Christ.

Now, this occurs at your salvation. So point number one is to understand your salvation. It's very important that we understand what took place when we were saved. Maybe a simple way to approach this would be to have you turn to Ephesians and look with me at chapter 2. Chapter 2 verse 11 says, "Wherefore remember that you in time past were heathen in the flesh."

Now, that's specifically directed to the Christians who were Gentile Christians. Verse 12 says, "That at that time you were without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world." Now that is a picture of an unbeliever, without Christ, without God, without hope, without promise, empty.

But, verse 13, "Now in Christ Jesus ye who once were far off are made near by the blood of Christ." You once were far off from God, without God, without Christ, without hope, without promise. But in Christ you have been made near. "For He is our peace who has made both one and broken down the middle wall of partition between us."

It's as if you and God were rebels and Christ took the hand of God and your hand and brought them together. And, often, you know, someone who is mutually loved by two people can succeed in doing that. Sometimes you have a mother and a father who become estranged, and a child who is loved by both of them can be the catalyst to bring them back together.

There's a great story that came out of World War II. The French and the Germans were fighting. The Germans occupied a farmhouse and the French were trying to take the farmhouse and they were shooting across a field at each other. And all of a sudden one of the soldiers screamed out, "Hold your fire," because there was a little baby crawling across the field. Somehow it had gotten out of the farmhouse. And, of course, the Germans saw the little baby and had the same response. And the interesting result of the story was that all the firing ceased and some newspaper reporter, when he wrote down the interesting article in relation to that incident, said that a babe had brought peace.

In a real sense, that's precisely what happened with Jesus Christ. He came into the world to bring peace between those who were enemies, God and man. And the reason we are enemies with God is because He is holy and we are sinful. And that estranges us. And Christ comes and takes the two parties and brings them together. He is our peace. And the metaphor here is it's like breaking down a wall that was between us. And it's not just talking about us and God but between Jew and Gentile.

Now further on, it says in verse 16, "He desires to reconcile both Jew and Gentile unto God in one body by the cross." So Jew and Gentile are brought together and then both of them in the church are brought together with God, and the cross accomplishes this. The cross is the thing, the act which took away sin. And sin was the wall; sin was the barrier between us and God. And so when the cross is accomplished and we put our faith in Christ, the barrier is removed, we are brought to God in one

body.

And so the church is all one. Whether you're a Baptist, a Presbyterian, Episcopal, whatever denomination you might be, if you love the Lord Jesus Christ and you've been born again, you're one in the body of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 6:17 it says, "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." So all those who are joined to Christ are one in Christ.

Now over in chapter 4 of Ephesians verse 17 tells a little bit about our life before we were Christians, "This I say therefore and testify in the Lord that you henceforth walked not as other Gentiles walked." How do other Gentiles walk? How do unsaved people act? "In the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their heart." They are past feeling. In other words, their consciences no longer really control them. They have seared their conscience; they've disobeyed it so long it has little effect.

So that's the picture of an unsaved person. He walks like the heathen in the vanity of his mind. He's guided by his own thoughts. His understanding is darkened; he can't really know the truth. He is alienated from the life of God, spiritually dead. His heart is blind. He has no feeling toward God, et cetera. He gives himself over to evil things, to wild kind of living, uncleanness, greediness and all that. "But you have not so learned Christ."

When you receive Christ a whole new life begins. And all of that ceases to exist in the newness of life in Christ. So there's a tremendous transformation. One other passage in Ephesians 2 to look at it, chapter 2 verse 1. Ephesians 2:1 says, "And you hath He made alive who were dead in trespasses and sin." Before you were a Christian you were dead. Not physically dead but spiritually dead. And when we talk about spiritual death we mean an inability to respond to God.

I remember one day when I was sitting over in my office, a little boy came running in and said, "Please come down the street. My mother needs help, our baby sister just died." And down here on Roscoe Boulevard about a half a dozen houses or so, I hurried down the street and went in. And there was a little baby, beautiful little baby, I guess maybe about four months old, lying on the bed just as blue as it could be, stone-cold dead. And the mother was just sobbing and sobbing and sobbing. And there was no explanation, as far as she knew, as to how the baby died.

And she would kiss the baby and hold the baby and nothing she could do would make that baby live because physical death is an inability to respond. And it served to me as a good illustration because probably the strongest of all affections in human terms would be the affection of a mother for a child. That's the most basic kind of affection, the strongest kind of tie, that mother tied to that very life that came out of her own womb. But all the love she had and all of that energy that she was giving to that little child was totally unreceived because death is an inability to respond. It doesn't matter what the stimulus is, it can't respond.

Spiritual death is the same thing. It is to be unable to respond to God. It is to have God doing things and God moving and totally be indifferent, unresponsive to what God is doing. That's spiritual death, the inability to respond to God. And that's precisely what Paul is saying. Before you were a Christian you were dead in trespasses and sins. Your life was characterized by the flesh, by the desires of the flesh, the desires of the mind, verse 3 says.

You walked according to the course of the world. Whatever the world said you did. You followed the prince of the power of the air, Satan, and you were totally tuned out to God, as if you were physically dead and couldn't feel the stimulus of a physical factor, so spiritually dead you can't feel the stimulus of a spiritual reality.

That all changed. Ephesians chapter 2 says in verse 4, "But God who is rich in mercy for His great love with which He loved us." And, of course, the whole change was begun with God, it was His love and His mercy, "even when we were dead in sins has – " what? " – made us alive." What's the one thing a dead man needs most? Life. And that's precisely what God gives.

And what does he mean by life? It simply means that he turned on your spiritual sensitivities, and you became aware of God. You were able to sense God. You now walk in the presence of God. The Scripture starts to mean something to you. Prayer means something to you. A whole new dimension opens up of existence, and that's because you became alive spiritually. That is you opened up to be able to sense God.

So, your salvation then is an awakening into the realm of the presence of God. When you were saved you came alive. Now part of that new life includes you being incorporated in the body of Christ, a very important concept. So your salvation then was a great transformation. You belonged to the world, you were insensitive to God.

All of a sudden, by the transformation of salvation, you have been placed in the body of Christ. You've been saved from deadness unto life. And you can sense God, you can feel God, you know God, you walk in eternal life. And, incidentally, eternal life isn't a length of time. Eternal life is a kind of living. And that is the new life that comes in Christ. So you understand your salvation and what it did.

Now secondly I want you to look a little bit at this idea of understanding your position. Now that you are in the body of Christ, now that you are Christian, what does that mean? Now listen to me. What it means is that you are in Christ in the truest sense of the word. Your position to begin with (a) is you are in Christ. Now, I mean that in the most realistic sense. When God looks at you He sees you, as it were, incorporated in Christ. And you're like an embryo; you're like a fetus in a womb; you're like a child not yet born.

Everything about you is in Christ. And that's why God can input righteousness to you because He sees you in Christ. That's why God can forgive your sin because He sees you in Christ. That's why Romans 8 says you are a joint heir because everything that comes to Christ comes to you because you are in Christ. So when you became a Christian you were made to be identified uniquely in the person of Jesus Christ. That's a tremendous concept.

In 2 Timothy 1:9 it says, "Who has saved us, God who has saved us, called us with a 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 but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ." God even had you in Christ before the world began. He saw you that way even then, now manifest since Christ has come.

In Ephesians chapter 1, I think it's verse 6, it says this, "God has predestinated us – " verse 5 " - to the adoption of sons by Jesus Christ who Himself according to the good pleasure of His will to the praise of the glory of His grace – " listen "– through which He has made us accepted." How? How has God made us accepted? "In the beloved one." The only way God can accept you is in Christ. And when you become a Christian and you receive Christ, you literally become in Christ. You literally move into Him, as it were. And His personality shelters you so that God sees you in Christ.

Ephesians 1:17 is really a prayer that you would understand this. He says, "I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, that the eyes of your understanding would be enlightened, that you would know what is the hope of His calling and the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and set Him on His own right hand in the heavenly places."

Now what he is saying there is, "I pray that you will understand what it means to be in Christ." It is to inherit all that is His, "of the riches and the glory." It is to inherit all of His, verse 19, "of the power, the mighty power which raised Him from the dead." Every possession of Christ and every empowering of Christ becomes ours because we're in Christ. It's a tremendous concept. And, of course, this is why we say a believer, for one reason, cannot lose his salvation. Because that would be to have Christ lose His salvation. And He's God; you're in Christ. There is security there, you see. Your identification is in Him.

In Ecclesiastes, there is an interesting verse. There's a lot of interesting ones, but one for our thoughts, Ecclesiastes 3:14. I just point this out because I want you to understand how complete you are in Christ, "I know that whatsoever God does, it shall be forever." Now, that's a good principle. If God does anything it's a forever thing. "Nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it. And God

doeth it that men should fear before Him.”

Now when God does something there is nothing that can be added to it and there is nothing that could be taken away from it. That's true of anything, and it's even true of your salvation. If God saved you, that settles it. It's total, it's complete, you're not half-saved, three-quarters saved or saved to a point and you've got to add a few little items along the way. If you're saved, God did it. You can't add anything to it; you can't take anything away from it. You became a total Christian the moment you believed.

You know, when a baby is born into the world it isn't born like a polliwog. It doesn't come in and, all of a sudden at three months, ping, sprouts a right arm, and then all of a sudden, at six months a leg pops out, and pretty soon you've got a little toad-type thing. No. Babies come into the world. From the time they're the tiniest little thing they have all the parts, right? They have all the parts, the parts just get bigger. That's all.

When you become a Christian you're not a spiritual polliwog with just a squiggly little tail and as you mature you pop out the new parts. You're a total Christian. The only question is the process of growing. Do you see what I mean? It's only a process of developing what you already are because you are complete in Him. Colossians 2:10 says, "For you are complete in Him." Second Peter 1:3 says, "You have all things pertaining to life and godliness." You lack absolutely nothing, there are no ingredients you don't have, there is nothing missing, you are a totally perfectly formed baby in Christ.

Now, you need to grow and you need to mature those parts to bring them to a place where they can really operate for maximum effect, but no parts are missing. You are totally complete. That's a very, very important concept. Now because we are in Christ God sees us then in fulfillment of all of His requirements. Christ came and fulfilled the whole law. Since you're in Christ, in the eyes of God you also fulfill the whole law.

Now to give you an idea of how this works, there is a white sheet that I handed you, and it's called "Practicing your position." And I want to show you something that's just very important about it and then you can take it and study it. This also is in the book, *The Church, the Body of Christ*. So if you have the book you'll have it there, too. You'll notice on the left side of the columns you see all of the things that you are in Christ. They're all there.

You are spiritually alive to God, you're dead to sin, you're forgiven. How much forgiven are you? He's forgiven you all your trespasses. You're righteous, you're a child of God, you're God's possession, heirs of God, blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies. You're heavenly citizens. You're servants of God.

You have new life, you're free from the law, crucified to the world, you're a light to the world, victorious over Satan. You're cleansed, you're holy without blame, you're free, you're in Christ, you're secure in Christ, you're possessors of peace, you're one, you're in grace, you're in fellowship, you're joyful, you're Spirit indwelt and led.

You're Spirit gifted, you're empowered for service and you have love. Now that's pretty exciting, isn't it? That's who you are. In the eyes of God that is your position. Now, the other column tells you how to live up to your position. That's your practice. Since you're spiritually alive to God, live the life. Since you're dead to sin, don't give sin any place. You see, what you are positionally before God, how God sees you, may be different than how you behave.

I remember when I was a little kid, some neighborhood kid, he got me in some bad influence, you know. He got me to think it was kind of neat deal to smoke a cigar, see. So I smoked a cigar and I thought, "Boy, this is really living," you know. Big time deal. So then he decided that he'd show me how I could steal things in the dime store. I was really a great kid. I just got in bad company. Sure, right? But anyway, so we wound up stealing some stuff from Sears.

As we were leaving the store we got caught by the store detective. And they put us in jail, the city jail, while they called my father who was playing golf with some deacons. And poor guy, he didn't know what was going on. Anyway, he came to the jail. He thought it was a mistake. And he had the deacons with him. They were coming back. "It couldn't be my son." So anyway, he comes around. I'm in the cell there sitting there. So my dad arrives and he bails me out of there.

And, you know, I remember going to church...and my dad was a preacher so everybody knew who I was and the word got around about me being in jail. And it didn't do a whole lot for my family's image. But anyway, people used to say to me, "Oh, how could you do that? Don't you know who your father is?" My mother would say, "Don't you realize...don't you realize how you've dishonored our family?" "How could you a pastor's son do that?" people would say.

Well, you see, the point was I wasn't living up to my position, you understand? And because of who I was, there was a certain level demanded of me and I wasn't living up to it. That's true spiritually. You look at column left, that's who you are. Do you live up to that? Well that's what you're supposed to do. Now, the Scriptures give us both sides. There are many scriptures on our position and there are many on our experience, or our practice. And we need to have both. You need to be consistent.

I have a friend who...well, he just got traded to the Washington Redskins. Before that he played football for the Miami Dolphins. His name is Marvin Fleming, used to be a high school athlete here in L.A. at Centennial High School. And he played for about five or six years under Vince Lombardi at the Green Bay Packers. And he used to say what was amazing about the years that Lombardi was coaching...and those were the years they won all kinds of championships...was that people played

beyond their abilities.

There was something about putting on a Packer uniform that threw out of you more than you even had. There was something so dignified about being a Green Bay Packer that you just lived up to the name and the reputation. There used to be, in the great years of the New York Yankees, the same feeling, where they said just to put a Yankee uniform on made you a whole different ball player. Well I think, in a sense, that's the idea of being a Christian. There is a certain position that we have as Christians that we are to live up to. And the tragic thing that occurs in a Christian's life is often your practice doesn't match your position, you know.

And what the Holy Spirit is saying to you is, "What are you doing acting like that? Don't you know who you are? Don't you know who your Father is?" So your practice needs to match your position but your position is perfect. You are in Christ and your position secures you forever. I just finished the manuscript for a book, *The Keys to Spiritual Growth*, and in the whole first section we make this clear distinction that spiritual growth has nothing to do with your position. Your position is already perfect. Spiritual growth occurs in the area of your practice to match your position. So that's a very important thing.

All right then, understanding your position. Your position, first of all, is in Christ. Secondly, since you are in Christ you are also in the body of Christ, the church. You have a very important position there, very important. And I want to give you a little idea of that by using this overhead. Of course, at the center of the church is Christ, the Spirit of Christ. Christ rules in the church through evangelists and pastor teachers.

And this is giving you the organization of the church in a circle fashion. The Spirit of Christ rules through evangelists and pastor teachers, their ministry is to equip the saints. The saints then are equipped by the leaders of the church to minister. When the saints minister, the body of Christ is edified or built up and the result of that is that the elect are added, people are saved.

Now, this is basically a simple look at the structure of the church. The heart or the head of the church, Christ, the Spirit of Christ. Through the evangelists and pastor teachers or the elders of the church, the saints are equipped. Once the saints are equipped they begin to minister. Once they begin to minister the body gets built up, and when the body is built up the elect are added, people are saved. Now that's the structure of the church.

Now at this point as a new Christian you fit right in here. You are a saint. And your task is to be equipped, to submit to teaching, as we said yesterday, and the Word of God, and study. Be equipped so that you can minister. For when you minister the body will be built up and other people will be saved. Now that's a simple look at the organization of the church. Our part then is to submit to teaching and leadership.



Now, let me take it a step further and show you how the body of Christ works with another little chart that we have here. Now, we'll let that represent the body of Christ. And everybody in the body of Christ, of course, has a place, and all these just represent different parts of the body of Christ, different individuals. Now this is what we call unity. We're all one in Christ. Everybody is in the body of Christ. We're all a part of His body.

But within that body we come to a concept that I want you to look closely at. I think you probably have it there on your list. We come to the concept of gifts. Though we are all one there are diversities of gifts within the body. And you can see that by the little diagram the idea is that every one of us has a certain place to fill in the body of Christ and to minister. See the little arrows going back and forth. We are all able to minister back and forth the various spiritual gifts that we have.

Now when some of us don't do that, when we don't study the Word of God and we don't recognize our obligation to other Christians in the body, then we cease to minister. And when we cease to minister the body of Christ becomes crippled. And then the testimony of Christ in the world is hindered because the world doesn't get a true picture. So where there is unity in the body of Christ there is also diversity because there are different gifts and there is also, thirdly, mutually, or the multiple sharing of those various gifts. Now that just gives you an idea of how the body of Christ works.

Let me just talk about that for a minute. We all are possessors of spiritual gifts. When you were saved, the Spirit of God deposited with you certain abilities. And you'll notice on your sheets, you have one large yellow sheet which gives you the principles of the operation of spiritual gifts and you have a small white sheet which defines those gifts for you. So you can just hang on to those, and we want you to become familiar with how spiritual gifts work and what the spiritual gifts are so that you can have an easy time determining what yours are.

Nobody is in the church just to sit there and take it in. We're all there to mature so that the saints can minister. Remember that little part on the diagram? So that we can minister to one another. The word "minister" means serve. We serve one another with our gifts. Now there are a multiple of gifts just running down the list that you have there.

You have the gift of prophecy, teaching, faith, wisdom, knowledge, discernment of spirits, mercy, exhortation, giving, government, ministry, miracles, healings, tongues, interpretation, the last four being temporary sign gifts. But those were the gifts given to the early church. The top group continue even through today. And those gifts were given for mutual ministry by the saints. And it's very important that we accept the ministry that we have been given by God.

Now, we believe that every believer has certain gifts. First Corinthians chapter 12 again describes this whole idea. It says this. "Now there are diversities of gifts but the same Spirit and there are differences of administrations but the same Lord. There are diversities of operations but the same God who works all and all."

What he means there is there are different gifts, step number one. Now I may have the gift of teaching, the gift of preaching. And you may have the gift of giving, you may have the gift of faith, you may have the gift of showing mercy, you may have the gift of helps. You may also have the gift of teaching. So there may be various gifts, and surely there are among us.

Now a gift is a...listen...it is a God-given channel through which the Holy Spirit can minister. It is not a human ability. You can't say "My gift is playing the piano." That's not a spiritual gift, that's a talent. Or, "My gift is writing, I can write." No, that is not your gift, that's an ability that you have, that is not a spiritual channel through which the Holy Spirit ministers.

You may use your writing to express your gift. Maybe you have the gift of showing mercy and you can write lovely letters that are kind letters that help people through times of trouble. Maybe your gift is the gift of exhortation and you can write letters that exhort. Or maybe it's the gift of teaching and you can write books that teach. But, don't confuse physical abilities and mental abilities with gifts. They're different things. Is that clear? If not, you can ask a question on that in a little while.

But you have spiritual gifts. Now, they're not only different gifts, and every believer has them according to verse 11. "All these works the one and very same Spirit dividing to every man severally as He wills." The Spirit determines who gets what. You can't seek for it, you can't earn it, you can't wish for it and receive it, God will give it to you if that's His plan. And He puts the gifts together the way He wants for the building of His church. But they're not only different gifts; verse 5 says there are differences of administrations. There are different ways that those gifts are administered.

For example, in our church we have many people with the gift of teaching, many of them. But not all of them stand up here and teach because there are different ways that the same gift can be administered. Just using Brad as an illustration, Brad appears to have the gift of teaching. I think he feels that he does and I think we do to. The way he administers that gift is in a small class of people. I have the gift of teaching. But the way the Spirit has chosen to administer that gift is to a large group of people, so that you have the same gift but different ways that it can be used.

So you don't need to feel that, if you have the gift that somebody else has, you've got to do the same thing they do. No, there's just as many diverse administrations as there are gifts, and probably more. And there are diversities of operations. But everybody in the body of Christ has a gift. And I would be convinced in my own heart from the study of Scripture that everybody in the body of Christ, most likely, has more than just a gift, although I can't be dogmatic. There may be somebody somewhere

with only one.

But it seems to me that a plurality of gifts seems to be the norm rather than just one. And the gift at any given point that is used most dominantly may be the one that is most needed in a given situation. But all of us have spiritual gifts and those are abilities through which the Holy Spirit can minister to His body. My gift isn't for me, it's for you. My gift of teaching doesn't do me any good, it does you good. Your gifts do me good. You see, it's an interchange. So those are very important.

Now, in addition to spiritual gifts and the recognition in the body of Christ that you have to function in that area...you need to know your gift and you need to use your gift...there is also the area of fellowship. It's very important that we understand that we are to fellowship. Now, when we talk about fellowship we don't always have everybody thinking about the same thing, so let me just mention what it means. We not only are to minister to one another in spiritual gifts, we're not only to share those gifts, but fellowship means that we interchange a mutual concern and care for each other.

For example, the New Testament says, "Confess your faults one to another." You could just go through the New Testament, find all the "one anothers." Edify one another. Rebuke the one who sins. Exhort one another. Restore one another. Love one another. Pray for one another. Build up one another. All of those "one anothers" are the responsibility of a Christian to his brother and sister Christian. So we not only are to minister our gifts but we are also to express that mutual fellowship back and forth one to another, a very important thing.

So, when you became a Christian, you entered the body of Christ. You are in Christ, positionally, so that everything is secured. And you are perfect positionally. Your practice needs to come into harmony with that. When you became a Christian you were not only in Christ but you were in the body of Christ. And as a member of a body you have to function together. A body that doesn't cooperate with itself is spastic and it's a dishonored body. We look at it and we feel pity for it.

A body that cooperates is a beautiful thing. We look at an athlete who is well coordinated and skilled and we say, "Isn't that a tremendous thing to see the development?" And we are excited about somebody who is that well coordinated. Well, it's true in the spiritual realm as well. Our testimony in the world depends upon what kind of presentation we make of the body of Christ to the world.

A functioning body that's cooperating where the foot and the hand are doing the things they're supposed to do and not standing around saying, "I wish I were the nose," so forth and so on, that's the problem of 1Corinthians 12. So where there is cooperation there will be witness and effective ministry.

And then, in addition to the mutual gifts that we use in the body, we are responsible for one another to make sure we're living the kind of lives we should. We want to build each other up, pray for one

another, counsel one another, rebuke one another if need be, confess our faults to one another, etcetera, et cetera, et cetera. Those are the responsibilities of the believer in the body.

Now the key, the last little thing on your note there, the key to everything, I believe, is love. Where love exists in the body of Christ, all these ministries will work. And I would add love only exists where there is humility. Love only exists where there is true humility. And we really need to have a sense of humility, and it only comes, I think, from knowing God, knowing Christ. And when we see how glorious they are we'll understand how low we are and that's the beginning of real humility. And where we're humble we're able to minister to other people.

I know we've tried to cover a very, very broad subject in this idea of how to function in the body and it's very difficult to cover it total. But I hope maybe just a little bit of it has helped. Let me take it a step further and offer this thought. In the life of the church it is important that all of us have a ministry, using our gifts and using the responsibilities of fellowship. Sometimes that ministry will be within the organization of the church, sometimes it will be without it.

In other words, some of you may teach a Bible study that's just an independent Bible study. You meet together on an evening in your home and you have a Bible study. Others of you may teach a class right here at the church. Either way, but be ministering if that's your gift. Some of you may be helping in some ministry officially in the church, like working with convalescents and helping in the convalescent ministry. Or you just might be helping in other ways certain Christians that you know, in certain rather catch-as-catch-can ministries. Either way, all I'm saying is that your ministries can be within the structure of the church or without the structure of the church, however the Spirit of God directs.

But it's important to recognize that the church has needs and that the Spirit of God leads the church to develop certain ministries and certain patterns of ministry, and we need help from the people who make up that assembly. And so, from time to time, you will be hearing that maybe there's a training class for somebody who would like to work with children, or a training class for somebody who would like to work with youth, or a training class for somebody who would like to be in a convalescent ministry if they have the gift of showing mercy or the gift of helps. Or maybe somebody to help in administration of something and do some projects if you have the gift of administration, or whatever.

You'll hear about this from time to time, and if the Spirit of God speaks to your heart and challenge you to do that, that's a good thing to do. But it can be within the structure or without. I think it's good also to offer yourself to the local assembly that you're in, whatever one it is, to say, "You know, I feel that these are the gifts that I have. And if the Spirit of God can use me in this ministry here somewhere, I'd like to make myself available." We have people that do that all the time. They'll come in and say, "I have certain gifts and certain talents, can you use me? And if you can, I'll be really happy to work."

And much of the ministry of Grace Church goes on with laymen. In fact, most all of it does with lay people. We were talking the other day about a follow-up visitation ministry and we're talking about a certain approach to it where a church just hires a whole bevy of people to go out and do all the visitation. And sometimes they'll have as many as 25 people on a full-time salary just visiting people. Well there's really no need to do that if all of us, as Christians, accept the fact that visitation is just part of pure religion, James said, and we go and we share in the lives of the people we care for and we love.

And so we would rather see the lay people doing the ministries that God has given them, then go out and hire a lot of professionals to do it, so we wouldn't do that. But it's important that we be available to the local church, to minister and serve within that local church as best we are able. Okay? And that's really a brief introduction to how to function in the body of Christ. I might add one other footnote and that is be sure you pray for your leaders. Very, very important.

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