

## ***“EVERY MEMBER MINISTRY”***

***(Knowing, Developing & Using Your Gifts and Talents in the Church)***

### **OUTLINE OF STUDY**

- #1 “Every Member Ministry - An Overview”
- #2 “Ministry 101 – What The Bible Says About Ministry”
- #3 “Discovering Ministry’s **S.H.A.P.E.**”
- #4 “Spiritual Gifts – Unwrapping Your Gift(s)” (1)
- #5 “Spiritual Gifts – Unwrapping Your Gift(s)” (2)
- #6 “**H**earT – Taking a Spiritual EKG”
- #7 “**A**bilities – Applying Your Abilities”
- #8 “**P**ersonality – Plugging Into Your Personality”
- #9 “**E**xperiences – Examining Your Experiences”
- #10 “Dangers to Avoid in Ministry”
- #11 “Stewardship in Ministry”

## **“EVERY MEMBER MINISTRY”**

### **Lesson #1      “Every Member Ministry – An Overview”**

#### **Introduction**

1. YOU are a 1-of-a-kind, unique, special person!
2. God Himself made you that way (1 Peter 4:10-11; Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27).
3. *Every* person is a person of great worth, and *every* person has a unique contribution to make to the body of Christ – the church (Colossians 1:18, 24).
4. 1 Peter 2:9-10 indicates that we have been saved to serve (see also Hebrews 12:28).
5. REAL SERVICE or REAL MINISTRY takes place *when divine resources meet human needs through loving channels to the glory of God*. Notice:
  - (1) We need to KNOW God and His grace PERSONALLY.
  - (2) We need to SEE human needs COMPASSIONATELY.
  - (3) We need to BE loving channels GRACIOUSLY.
  - (4) WE need to FOCUS on the glory of God COMPLETELY.
6. A PRINCIPLE NOT TO FORGET: **God is as concerned about the servant as He is the service!**
  - (1) We can be DISTANT AND IMPERSONAL in our relationship with God (but should NOT). See John 17:3; Philippians 3:10.
  - (2) We can be BLIND TO others’ needs or TAKE ADVANTAGE of them and lack compassion (but should NOT). Remember the “Good Samaritan” (Luke 10:25-37).
  - (3) WE can be RESEVOIRS that selfishly cling to God’s grace instead of channels and distributors of it (but should NOT). See Ephesians 1:7; 2:7; 1 Corinthians 15:9-10; 1 Peter 5:12.
  - (4) We can be MOTIVATED by things other than the glory of God (but should NOT). See 1 Corinthians 10:31. If our motive is anything other than the glory of God, what we do will only be religious activity and NOT true Christian ministry.
7. In this introductory study, let’s briefly consider the WHY and HOW of ministry.

## **I. THE “WHY” OF MINISTRY**

1. For one thing, *ministry makes us more like Jesus*. Mark 10:45; Luke 22:27; Philippians 2:5-11; Romans 8:29. How much am I REALLY like my Lord when it comes to service?
2. *It brings glory to God*. See Isaiah 43:7; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Ephesians 3:21; 1 Peter 4:10-11. This fulfills our greatest purpose in life.
3. *It demonstrates a true knowledge of God*. Consider Proverbs 9:10; Jeremiah 9:23-24; Isaiah 66:2; Ephesians 2:8-10; Mark 12:30.
4. *It expresses love to God*. See 2 Corinthians 5:14; Galatians 2:20; Hebrews 6:10; Matthew 25:40.
5. *It brings pleasure to God, to others and to us*. Psalm 40:8; Hebrews 13:15-16; Acts 20:17-38; Revelation 22:3.

## **II. THE “HOW” OF MINISTRY**

1. *Pay attention to the needs of others*. See Acts 10:38; Galatians 6:10. The statement of John Wesley that we are to “do all the good we can, to all the people we can, by all the means we can, in all the ways we can, for as long as ever we can” is an excellent motto for all to follow as Christians. See the “royal law” of James 2:8; Matthew 7:12.
2. *Do the best we can with what we personally have*. We are NOT judged based on someone else’s talents and abilities but our own! (2 Corinthians 5:10; Matthew 25:14-30). How do we use what God has “loaned” us? See 1 Corinthians 4:1-2. We need to consider our **S-H-A-P-E** in serving (our **S**piritual gifts, **H**eart, **A**bilities, **P**ersonality and **E**xperiences – items that will be discussed in much greater detail as the study unfolds).
3. *Do each task with dedication and love* (See Ephesians 6:6; Colossians 3:23).
4. *Honestly attempt to maintain a low profile personally* (Matthew 5:13-16; 6:1-8; Galatians 1:10; Matthew 10:42). There are at least 750 Halls of Fame and 450 Who’s Who organizations in our country.
5. *Be faithful to your ministry*. See Matthew 25:21 and 2 Timothy 4:5.

## **Conclusion**

1. Is the body of Christ (the church) stronger because of you? If so, how? Be specific.
2. Do YOU have a servant’s heart? Are you willing to improve your serve? REAL service to the Lord is **S**acrificial, **E**nergetic, **R**eherent, **V**oluntary (given freely, not forced) and **E**xpressive (of love to God and others).

3. Are YOU a *consistent* servant or merely one of *convenience* (when it “suits” you)? Have you “retired” or are you A.W.O.L. from service to our God and His church?
4. The purpose of this study, “*Every Member Ministry*,” is to show the beauty and preciousness of the priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2:5, 9), and to practically show how **each** Christian has a unique role to fulfill in the body of Christ.
5. This study CAN make ministry more of a JOY in our lives!

## **“EVERY MEMBER MINISTRY”**

### **Lesson #2**

### **“Ministry 101 – What the Bible Says About Ministry”**

#### **Introduction**

1. **“IF YOU’RE NOT TRULY A MINISTER (SERVANT), YOU’RE NOT TRULY LIKE CHRIST!”** And it’s just that simple (See Mark 10:44-45; 1 Corinthians 4:1; Ephesians 6:6; Hebrews 12:28). **Every Christian is intended by God to serve (minister).**
2. Here’s something REMARKABLE to consider: **“YOU ARE UNIQUELY QUALIFIED FOR MINISTRY!”** God, in His power and providence, has made you SPECIAL! (Psalm 139:13-14; 1 Corinthians 12:18-20; 1 Peter 4:10-11).
3. These 2 thoughts for a principle that undergirds the entire study of “Every Member Ministry.” **MY MINISTRY IS DETERMINED BY MY MAKEUP.** In other words, what God made me to be determines what He intends for me to do in His kingdom. God would NOT give us talents and temperaments, gifts, passions and life experiences, and then NOT allow us ANY WAY to PROPERLY exercise them to His glory in the kingdom!
4. Someone once asked, “When you said MAKEUP DETERMINES MINISTRY, do you think that’s where Tammy Baker (of “PTL” fame) was confused?” (Well, “YES,” and a whole lot more!).
5. Ministry is the greatest work in the world! When you pursue the service of God, and know **what** to do and **how** to evaluate what you’re doing, there is a genuine sense of **fruitfulness** (John 15:8) and **fulfillment** (1 Corinthians 10:31; Ephesians 1:6). Yet most of the world, and far too many Christians, would characterize their lives as unfruitful and unfulfilling!
6. Throughout this study, we will attempt to keep a **balanced focus**. Most churches tend to emphasize more of an “institutional” (or corporate) approach where people are pretty much seen as resources to keep various programs or projects going. However, there **MUST** be more. We must also consider each individual’s uniqueness more, because **BY BUILDING UP PEOPLE, WE WILL BUILD UP THE BODY OF CHRIST!** Let me put it this way – You can build programs and projects without really building people. It can be like forcing square pegs into round holes! But when you truly build people, there will be a legitimate need for additional areas of work and for good structure in ministry.
7. There are **2 PRIMARY GOALS** that we have in this class:
  - (1) To help you better understand and appreciate your unique design (**S.H.A.P.E.**) for ministry.
  - (2) To encourage you to better utilize your uniqueness as a minister and to see opportunities of service.

## **I. THE MEANING OF MINISTRY**

1. Here's what ministry really is:

***“MINISTRY IS USING WHATEVER GOD HAS GIVEN US AS LOVING CHANNELS TO SERVE HIM AND THE NEEDS OF OTHERS TO THE GLORY OF THE LORD.”***

2. Let's break this down. Ministry is:

(1) Using whatever God has given us (see 1 Peter 4:10-11; 1 Corinthians 15:9-10).

(2) As loving channels (Matthew 22:36-40; Galatians 5:6; 1 Corinthians 13:1-3).

(3) To serve Him (Hebrews 12:28).

(4) And the needs of others (Galatians 6:10; Luke 10:25-37).

(5) To the glory of the Lord (1 Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 3:17).

3. Ministry takes place in 3 distinct, yet interrelated directions.

(1) We minister to or serve the Lord.

(2) We minister to other Christians (Hebrews 6:10-11; 1 John 3:16-18; Galatians 5:13).

(3) We minister to the lost (Matthew 5:13-16).

4. Ministry likewise involves 3 distinct, yet vitally related areas.

(1) We minister in *physical* areas or to physical needs (Matthew 25:31-46; 10:42).

(2) We minister in *emotional* areas or to emotional needs (1 Thessalonians 5:14-15).

(3) We minister in *spiritual* areas or to spiritual needs (Colossians 1:28).

5. Studying the life of Jesus will reveal that the Lord utilized each of these areas and appreciated the connection that exists among them.

6. Ministry is to be motivated by the very character of God (1 Peter 2:9-10; Romans 12:1-2).

## **II. FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS OF MINISTRY**

1. **WE'VE BEEN CREATED FOR MINISTRY** (Ephesians 2:8-10; 4:1). **WE ARE SAVED TO SERVE!**

2. **WE'VE BEEN GIFTED FOR MINISTRY** (1 Peter 4:10-11).
3. **THE BODY OF CHRIST NEEDS OUR MINISTRY**  
(1 Corinthians 12:27). When I don't fulfill my ministry in the Lord's church, YOU get cheated! And when YOU don't fulfill your ministry in the Lord's church, I get cheated. And of course, when either of us fails to minister as we ought, the LORD gets cheated! Too many church people think the church merely exists for them, so they are constantly in the "church hopper and shopper mode." Such people primarily want to be served, but have no concept of the importance of serving others.
4. **WE ARE ACCOUNTABLE FOR OUR MINISTRY** (1 Corinthians 4:1-2; Romans 14:10-12).
5. **WE WILL BE REWARDED FOR OUR MINISTRY OR REBUKED FOR OUR LACK OF SUCH** (Matthew 25:14-30).

### III. 10 UNCHANGING PRINCIPLES OF MINISTRY

There's an old bit of rhyme that says:

*Methods are many,  
Principles are few.  
Methods always change,  
Principles never do."*

1. ***The Foundation of Ministry is Character*** (Matthew 5:3-12). What you ARE adds to or takes away from what you DO. See 1 Timothy 4:6-16.
2. ***The Nature of Ministry is Service*** (2 Corinthians 4:5; John 13:1-17).
3. ***The Motive for Ministry is Love*** (See Romans 11:33-12:2). Ministry done ONLY out of a sense of DUTY quickly leads to DRUDGERY!
4. ***The Measure of Ministry is Sacrifice*** (Mark 10:45; Philippians 1:19-24).
5. ***The Authority of Ministry is Submission*** (James 4:7; Matthew 25:21).
6. ***The Purpose of Ministry is the Glory of God*** (Isaiah 42:8; John 15:8).
7. ***The Tools of Ministry are the Word of God and Prayer*** (Acts 6:4). Many are dying on substitutes!
8. ***The Privilege of Ministry is Growth*** (1 Timothy 4:15).
9. ***The Power of Ministry is the Strength of Christ*** (Romans 12:3; 2 Corinthians 3:5; Ephesians 3:20-21).
10. ***The Model for Ministry is Jesus Christ*** (Philippians 2:5-8).

## Conclusion

1. EVERY Christian is a minister. The real question is, “What kind of minister are you?”
2. If questions like the following are ones that you’ve had regarding ministry, this study is for YOU!
  - (1) “In a more specific way, how can I know my place of service in the body of Christ?”
  - (2) “I know I need to be a better servant of God, but how can I determine the areas where I’ll be most effective?”
  - (3) “To be a ‘living sacrifice’ (Romans 12:1-2) is a beautiful concept, but how can I apply this in a practical way in my daily life?”
3. **REMEMBER: “If you’re NOT truly a minister (servant), you’re NOT truly like Jesus.”**

## **“EVERY MEMBER MINISTRY”**

### **Lesson #3**

### **“Discovering Ministry’s S.H.A.P.E.”**

#### **Introduction**

1. **EVERY** Christian is uniquely gifted for ministry (1 Peter 4:10-11). We may have no idea what our best gifts, talents and experiences for ministry may be, or we may only be “scratching the surface” regarding God’s will for us in ministry. **But this is a theme EVERY Christian should carefully consider!** (See especially Philipians 2:12-13; 2 Peter 1:5-11).
2. **MINISTRY** is at the heart of Christianity (Mark 10:44-45). We **MUST NOT** come to think of “ministry” as something done only or primarily by “Ministers” (“professionals” who are fully supported by the church). **SUCH THINKING WAS NEVER INTENDED BY GOD!** See 1 Peter 2:5, 9-10.
3. Romans 12:1-8 is a very good passage of Scripture to consider as an initial procedure for discovering our ministry(s).
  - (1) Discovering my ministry is a matter of **DEDICATION** (vs. 1). This means that a firm decision has been made concerning where God and His will are going to be in our life.
  - (2) Discovering my ministry is a matter of **ELIMINATION** (vs. 2). The major reason why many Christians never really get excited about their unique ministry potential is because their life is filled up with everything else! If you are going to be serious about serving God in ministry, you’re going to have to cut some things out of your life (cf. Matthew 13:22; Hebrews 11:23-28; 12:1-2).
  - (3) Discovering my ministry is a matter of **EVALUATION** (vs. 3). Thoughtful, humble reflection on our strengths and weaknesses from a spiritual perspective and how we can best use these strengths for our Master. For example, humble reflection may lead some to the conclusion that they are good with people, or good with words, or good with numbers, or good with their hands, or good with projects, etc. Every one of us is a great mixture of some strengths and weaknesses. Some things we may be good at, while at other things we may be lousy. God has made us different so all of us have a unique place in the body of Christ. See 1 Corinthians 12:18-20.
  - (4) Discovering my ministry is a matter of **COOPERATION** (vv. 4-5). Implied in these verses are the following truths:
    - A. Every member is a minister in Christ’s body.
    - B. Every member has a different function.
    - C. Every member’s ministry is important.
    - D. Every member belongs to all the others.

(5) Discovering my ministry is a matter of **ACTIVATION** (vv. 6-8). We should NOT complain by saying, “Why didn’t God make me different?” What right does the “clay” have to argue with God the “Master Potter?” (Romans 9:20-21). God made us in a special way and the gifts, abilities and background He’s given you have a unique design and intent. What’s more, who knows what new blessings and opportunities may await those who truly seek to serve? ***In MINISTRY, it is right to say that, “FUNCTION FOLLOWS FORM.” What God made you to be as a unique individual determines the function you should have (at least initially) in ministry.***

4. **A PERSON’S MAKEUP OR S.H.A.P.E. DETERMINES THEIR MINISTRY(S).** S.H.A.P.E. is an acronym for 5 factors that influence who we are and how we should serve.

### **I. S - SPIRITUAL GIFTS**

1. See 1 Peter 4:10-11 as well as Romans 12:3-8.

2. From these passages (along with deductions that may be drawn from other Scriptures), the following principles seem to be true:

A. Each Christian has received a “gift(s)” (in the sense of non-miraculous but special “gifting” from God) for the purpose of ministry.

B. There is a variety of gifts, and they are to be treated as a stewardship from God.

C. Grace is to be distributed to others in the exercise of such “gifts,” whether the gifts are word-oriented or deed-oriented.

D. The aim of whatever “gift” is under consideration is “that in everything God might be glorified through Jesus Christ” (vs. 11).

3. Again, there is **NOTHING MIRACULOUS** about this “giftedness,” but there is a picture of the majesty and wisdom of God when you consider His will for all of us together to use our unique “gifts” together in ministry. These “gifts” seem to be related to the providence of God, so clear-cut definitions seem to elude one.

4. Spiritual gifts are often overemphasized to the neglect of other factors that also are important. The “Pentecostals” are a very good example of this, as were the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 12-14 (and their “miraculous gifts”). However, in churches of Christ, little seems to be said about “giftedness” and other factors for determining every member ministry at all.

### **II. H – HEART**

1. The Bible uses the word “heart” to represent the center of our motivation, desires, interests and inclinations. Our heart determines why we say what we say (Matthew 12:34) and do the things we do (Proverbs 4:23, KJV).

2. The question you need to ask here is, “What do I LOVE to do?” There are things all of us love and hate to do? What do you REALLY, REALLY get excited about?
3. Another word that might be used is “passion.” Some things you are passionate about, while others you could care less about. **The point is, people rarely excel in a specific area of ministry if they hate what they’re doing!**

### III. A - ABILITIES

1. Some people just seem to have great “natural” talent and ability in given areas. Some are “natural” talkers. Others are “natural” athletes. In this sense, ability in specific areas seems to be “just something we’re born with.”
2. However, there are others who through dedication and practice, refine and enhance their abilities tremendously.
3. It is NOT unusual to hear of someone who we think just was “born” with great ability in some area say how amazed they are with what God did when they turned “a little ability” (sincerely this is said!) over to Him. Consider Ephesians 3:20.

### IV. P - PERSONALITY

1. We all have different blends of personality or temperament. God has NOT used a “cookie cutter” when it comes to personality, has He?
2. He loves variety – and we SHOULD appreciate various personality types in the church. There are those who are more introverted and those who are quite extroverted. Some work best as part of a larger team, while others work best alone or with only one or two. Some people are highly organized and enjoy routine, while others are quite spontaneous and impulsive. Some seem more “cerebral,” while others are quite emotional. Some are very creative, while others are very matter-of-fact.
3. One’s personality DOES have a powerful impact on their service. For example, both Peter and Andrew were wonderful evangelists, but HOW they did it was VERY DIFFERENT. And they were blood brothers to each other and apostles of our Lord! One’s personality will cause them to express ministry in different ways.

### V. E - EXPERIENCES

1. **Remember this: GOD NEVER WASTES AN EXPERIENCE.** And neither should His people (See Romans 8:28; James 1:2-4).
2. Job experiences, educational experiences, relationship experiences, family experiences, painful experiences, ministry experiences, etc.

3. One's experiences contribute mightily to their uniqueness in the kingdom. Sadly, this often is an untapped resource of wisdom and help in churches.

**\*\*\* AS TIME ALLOWS, INVEST A LITTLE DISCUSSION TIME CONTEMPLATING THE APOSTLE PAUL'S "S.H.A.P.E." \*\*\* (Perhaps even as a "HOMEWORK" assignment).**

### **Conclusion**

1. Although there is a distinction to legitimately be made among all 5 of these ministry factors, there also is a connectedness that must be kept in balance.
2. A failure to do so CAN result in a form of ministry that fails to bring proper honor to God. For example, one who fails to utilize their experiences as God would have them isn't ministering the way they could – no matter how much ability they have in some particular area.
3. Our next several classes will explore each factor making up our unique **S.H.A.P.E.** more thoroughly.

## “EVERY MEMBER MINISTRY”

### Lesson #4 “Spiritual Gifts – Unwrapping Your Gift(s)” (1)

#### Introduction

1. *How would you feel as a parent if you gave your child a special gift(s) that they never opened and so failed to enjoy something precious because they were too busy playing with lesser “toys?”* One wonders if that isn’t the way God feels about some Christians!
2. If we are to offer God our “reasonable” (KJV, NKJV) or “spiritual” (NASB, ESV) service (Romans 12:2), then we need to understand something of the factors that make each of us uniquely qualified for ministry. And the **FACT** is, “**EACH ONE OF US IS UNIQUELY QUALIFIED OR GIFTED TO MINISTER.**” See Hebrews 12:28; Romans 12:3-8; 1 Peter 4:10-11. We ALL have the privilege and responsibility of unwrapping the special “gifts” that God has given
3. There are at least 4 primary passages that speak of using one’s “gifts” in service to the Lord:
  - (1) 1 Corinthians 12-14 – A context that largely deals with the use / abuse of miraculous gifts (like “speaking in tongues”). By way of principle, we can still learn something about non-miraculous gifts and their use today in service to the Lord (Remember 1 Corinthians 13, for example?).
  - (2) Ephesians 4:7-16 – Again, the immediate context appears to be dealing with miraculous gifts of the early church, yet there is a general sense in which these verses also may legitimately be applied to non-miraculous gifts and talents among Christians today. For example, verses 14-16 are often rightly quoted today to show the importance of unity, love and every member ministry.
  - (3) Romans 12:3-8 – Of the 7 gifts specifically mentioned in this context dealing with what is meant to be a “living sacrifice,” none have to be understood in a miraculous sense. **THIS IS SIGNIFICANT**, and points to the fact that this broader application of “giftedness” in a non-miraculous sense has a biblical basis.
  - (4) 1 Peter 4:10-11 – Just as in Romans 12:3-8, there is nothing that necessitates interpreting these verses in solely a miraculous context. The “gifts” are broken down into 2 broad areas: (1) “speaking,” and (2) “serving.”
4. If we are to truly appreciate the necessity and usefulness of every member ministry, we need to understand what kind of “**S.H.A.P.E.**” we’re in for service. “**S.H.A.P.E.**” is an acronym (as already stated) for 5 factors in effective ministry:  
**S – Spiritual Gift(s) H – Heart A – Abilities P – Personality E – Experiences**
5. This study and the next will deal with the factor of **SPIRITUAL GIFTS** more thoroughly.

## I. WHAT IS A “SPIRITUAL GIFT?” (DESCRIPTION / DEFINITION / DISTINCTIONS)

### 1. *Descriptive Words*

- (1) “Spiritual” – See 1 Corinthians 12:1. The context shows that “spiritual” here has reference to that which emanates from God Himself and is consistent with His nature.
- (2) “Gifts” – See 1 Corinthians 12:4. This is the word for “grace” (See also Romans 12:6 and 1 Peter 4:10 where the same word is used). Spiritual gifts are thus gifts graciously given to us individually by God in His providence and sovereign will.
- (3) “Ministries” or “Service” – See 1 Corinthians 12:5 (NKJV, ESV). The point is obvious: these gifts are for SERVING.
- (4) “Activities” or “Operations” – See 1 Corinthians 12:6. We are to use these “gifts” in serving others – trusting in the strength of the Lord, NOT ourselves (Ephesians 6:10).
- (1) “Manifestation” – See 1 Corinthians 12:7. We are to wisely use or display our “gifts.” They are to be “visible” in the BEST sense (Cf. Matthew 5:13-16; 1 Corinthians 13:5).

### 2. *Definition: Spiritual gifts today are NON-MIRACULOUS, and*

- a. *gifts which emanate from our gracious and sovereign God,*
- b. *given to His children individually but for the good of all,*
- c. *in order to serve others wisely and effectively*
- d. *to the glory of God.*

**NOTE:** *The Bible nowhere gives an exhaustive catalog concerning what these “gifts” specifically are. “Variety” seems to be the key!*

### 3. *Distinctions:*

- (1) Non-miraculous versus miraculous “gifts.” The purpose of miraculous gifts was to “confirm” the word (Mark 16:18-20; Hebrews 2:1-4). Because the message of God has already come in its entirety (Jude 3; 2 Timothy 3:16-17), it has also been authenticated and confirmed – there is NO NEED for scaffolding when the house has been completed. Further, if one miraculous gift exists today, then all should just as in the days of the early church (See for example, 1 Corinthians 12:8-10). Finally, even miraculous gifts (such as existed in the first century) are NO indication that one is “spiritually” minded (Cf. 1 Corinthians 3:1-3; Galatians 5:18, 25). Gifted people are NOT always mature.
- (2) “Gifts” and “fruit.” While spiritual gifts and the fruit of the Spirit may be related (Galatians 5:22-23), they are NOT exactly synonymous. Think of it this way: Spiritual gifts are PRIMARILY related to service, while the “fruit of the Spirit” is PRIMARILY related to maturity and character development. To be sure, there’s a relationship, but there NOT identical.

- (3) “Gifts” and “talent.” There is a relationship between these items, but again, they are NOT necessarily identical. We may be “born” with certain natural talents and inclinations (Psalm 139:13-16). Let’s put it this way: Maybe a lot of things are GOD-GIVEN long before they are actually GOD-DEVOTED. A “natural talent” can indeed be a spiritual “gift” that’s simply never been unwrapped and properly utilized by a Christian for the Lord. Since the apostle Paul used the word “perhaps” in regard to what he perceived to be the providential working of God in one’s life (Philemon 15), perhaps we should use “perhaps” regarding the relationship between “gifts” and “natural talent.” A talent may simply be enhanced in its ability for use in the church.

## II. FROM WHOM AND TO WHOM ARE THE GIFTS GIVEN?

1. ***The Source – God Himself*** (See especially 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 where reference is made to the Spirit, the Lord and to God).
2. ***The Extent – To Each Individual Christian.*** Consider 1 Peter 4:10 in this regard. Also, the principles involved in 1 Corinthians 12:7, 11. ***A Christian may well NOT have unwrapped their gift from God as yet (they may not be using and enjoying it in His service), but God has given YOU the ability to uniquely minister in the church.***
3. ***The Principles:***
  - (1) The church is the body of Christ, and the importance of EVERY member functioning properly is crucial (1 Corinthians 12:12-27). The church of our Lord is NOT a “spectator event!”
  - (2) When it comes to “spiritual gifts,” we need to appreciate our uniqueness – that we do NOT all have the same gifts, nor is any such “gift” universal. Some people “gifted” in evangelism can never understand why EVERYONE in the church can’t do what they do. Others are “gifted” in counseling others and “showing mercy,” yet they don’t know why EVERYONE can’t do what they do SO well.
  - (3) Even among those who share some of the same “gifts,” there is varied effectiveness. And this is largely due to other factors in ministry like **Heart, Abilities, Personality and Experiences.**
  - (4) “Gifts” and “service.” While considering our “**S.H.A.P.E.**” in service is very important, absence of perceived “giftedness” does NOT automatically relieve or excuse a Christian of responsibility in particular areas of service. For example, Christian men are to be the leaders in their homes whether they feel “gifted” in the area of leadership or not! Again, we ALL have some responsibility in the area of evangelism, even if all of us are NOT the apostle Paul! As a final example, we all have a responsibility to give lovingly and generously to God (1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 9:6-7) and to be hospitable (1 Peter 4:9), even if we could NOT honestly say that we have the “gift” of giving (Romans 12:8) or “gift” of hospitality (Romans 12:13). ***Our gifts may serve as starting areas for effective and joyful ministry, but they should NOT detract us from serving in other areas as truly needed in the church.***

## **Conclusion**

1. Are there “unwrapped gifts” from God in your life and service in the body of Christ?
2. When God gives us a task, He ALWAYS gives us the MEANS whereby to accomplish it as we trust Him. See Ephesians 3:20-21.

## **“EVERY MEMBER MINISTRY”**

### **Lesson #5                    “Spiritual Gifts – Unwrapping Your Gift(s)” (2)**

#### **Introduction**

1.     YOU are uniquely gifted and talented to serve in the Lord’s church! So says 1 Peter 4:10-11 and Romans 12:3-8 (among other passages).
2.     When you understand better your unique **“S.H.A.P.E.”** for ministry, you can be more joyful and effective in your service. **“S.H.A.P.E.”** is an acronym for 5 factors that contribute to each person’s uniqueness in ministry in the church:
  - (1)    **S – Spiritual Gifts**
  - (2)    **H – Heart**
  - (3)    **A – Abilities**
  - (4)    **P – Personality**
  - (5)    **E – Experiences**
3.     When it comes to the area of spiritual gifts, confusion seems to abound.
  - (1)    The “Pentecostals” want to stress miraculous spiritual gifts (like so-called “speaking in tongues”), failing to see that the purpose of such gifts has ceased – to confirm or to authenticate that the message was from God (Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:1-4). If miraculous **confirmation** still is being given, one **MUST** also consistently say that miraculous **revelation** (information) is being given too. **THIS IS NOT SO!**
  - (2)    Others (including some Christians) seem to have no idea whatsoever that **GOD DOES PROVIDENTIALLY GIFT INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIANS TODAY TO SERVE TO HIS GLORY**. This is clearly indicated throughout the New Testament, but again, 1 Peter 4:10-11 and Romans 12:3-8 are key verses for consideration.
4.     In our last study, we defined the spiritual gifts of today as:
  - (1)    Non-miraculous gifts which emanate from our gracious and sovereign God,
  - (2)    Given to all His children individually but for the good of all,
  - (3)    In order to serve others wisely and effectively
  - (4)    To the glory of God.
5.     In this study, we’ll deal with the **DESIGN** and **DISCOVERY** of spiritual gifts in our lives.

## I. DESIGN – WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS?

1. The ultimate purpose behind all that we do is to be *the glory of God*. See Isaiah 43:7; 1 Corinthians 10:31. 1 Peter 4:11 says that we are to properly use the “gifts” He has given us so “that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ.” See also Romans 11:36.
2. The purpose of spiritual gifts also is *to serve others wisely and effectively*. This is indicated in at least 4 of the primary passages dealing with the theme of spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12-14; Ephesians 4:7-16; Romans 12:3-8; 1 Peter 4:10-11).
3. Closely related to both of these is a third purpose, spiritual gifts are *to edify* (build up and mature) *the body of Christ*. See especially Ephesians 4:12-16 and 1 Corinthians 14:12 (though the “gifts” here appear to be in a miraculous context, the point obviously applies as well to this study). See the last part of 2 Corinthians 12:19.
4. God gives these gifts NOT primarily for our personal benefit (although we gain a sense of purpose and joy in their exercise), but to serve others wisely and effectively and to build up the body of Christ – to His eternal glory!
5. Since God in His grace, sovereignty and providence decides what gift(s) we get, we all should be thankful and NOT complain (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:18-20; see also verse 24: “God composed the body”). Consider how the principle of Romans 9:19-21 could apply. Nor should pride over “who has what” cause division and strife.

## II. DISCOVERY – HOW CAN I FIND MY SPIRITUAL GIFT(S)?

1. **IMPORTANT:** *It’s easier to discover your gift(s) through ministry than to discover your ministry through your gift(s).*
2. **REMEMBER:** *It seems that any discussion of spiritual gifts in the Bible is closely related to the area of service. The idea is, when you lovingly and humbly exhibit a servant’s heart, discovery of one’s gift(s) “naturally” follows.*
3. Getting all “lathered up” or “bent out of shape” trying to discover our spiritual gift(s) is NOT what the Lord intended. This is so for several reasons:
  - (1) It is enlightening to realize that for all its discussion of spiritual gifts, the word of God does NOT go to great lengths on HOW we can recognize or discover our gift(s). It plainly teaches that they exist and why, but does not go into great detail with our discovering and labeling them. When we properly serve, we tend to find out what our gift(s) are!
  - (2) No exhaustive list or category of spiritual gifts is given in the Bible, except in the broadest of terms. This shows the variety of such “gifts,” and also contributes to individual uniqueness in the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12). (It might be fitting to say here that things like GOSSIP, PRIDE and FAULT-FINDING are NOT spiritual gifts!)

- (3) “Spiritual gifts” are NOT the ONLY factor that should be considered in ministry. Things like **Heart, Ability, Personality** and **Experience** also are strongly related to effective and joyful ministry. All our “eggs should NOT be put in one basket!”
  - (4) Some things are COMMANDED of all that are also classed as spiritual gifts that some specifically have. For example, in Romans 12:8 at least 3 areas of special “giftedness” are mentioned that elsewhere are commanded of all Christians – exhortation, giving and showing mercy.
  - (5) We can get so caught up trying to “discover our spiritual gift(s)” that we become unbalanced and lose sight of the big picture – SERVICE out of love. The issue is NOT merely, “What is (are) my spiritual specialty (specialties)?” The issue IS, “HOW and WHERE can I BEST serve?”
4. Having said all this to aid understanding and to prevent abuse, let’s briefly highlight some general principles for discovering your spiritual gift(s) using another acronym, **S.T.A.R.T.:**
- (1) **S – STUDY.** Study passages like Romans 12, 1 Peter 4, 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4 considering His will for you and your own desires and motives. See 2 Timothy 2:15.
  - (2) **T – TALK.** Take this often to God in prayer, asking Him to make it evident what your “gift(s)” are. See Matthew 7:7-8. Then, continue to ask Him for the strength and grace to properly manage His blessings (1 Peter 4:10-11).
  - (3) **A – ANALYZE.** Contemplate (deliberate) on WHERE and HOW can I BEST serve? See 2 Peter 1:10.
  - (4) **R – REQUEST.** Request feedback from other Christians you respect and are close to as to what your “gift(s)” might be. This often gives a sense of affirmation. See Proverbs 27:17.
  - (5) **T – TRY.** By having a servant’s heart and experimenting in a variety of ministry opportunities, we tend to see the ones where the Lord can “shine” the most through us. See Titus 3:8, 14.

## **Conclusion**

1. *It’s easier to discover your gift(s) through ministry than to discover your ministry through your gift(s).*
2. Are YOU honoring the Lord through your service, and in the building up of His body – the church?

## **“EVERY MEMBER MINISTRY”**

### **Lesson #6**

### **“Heart – Taking a Spiritual EKG”**

#### **Introduction**

1. Once Christians *really* appreciate the FACT that we are ministers, and begin to have an understanding of the unique NATURE of our ministry, God can greatly work through us and we can have a greater sense of purpose and fulfillment in our lives (cf. Ephesians 4:12-16).
2. In studying Scripture, there appear to be at least 5 factors that contribute to each individual Christian’s unique **S.H.A.P.E.** for ministry:
  - (1) **S – Spiritual gifts**
  - (2) **H – Heart**
  - (3) **A – Abilities**
  - (4) **P – Personality**
  - (5) **E – Experiences**
3. The word “heart” occurs over 1000 times in the Bible. It is interesting that the terms for “heart” are rarely used of the *literal* organ (the one that pumps blood throughout our body), but in the vast majority of cases is employed *figuratively*.
4. ***When the Bible uses the word “heart” in a figurative sense, it almost always does so to represent the center of our motivation, desires and inclinations. It has to do with what we love and are passionate about.*** It’s one of those things that make us “US.” See Psalm 37:4; 111:1; Proverbs 27:19.
5. In this study, we are going to monitor our heartbeat for service by taking a spiritual EKG.

#### **I. MONITORING OUR HEARTBEAT FOR SERVICE**

1. Our heart helps determine:
  - (1) Why we SAY the things we say (Matthew 12:34).
  - (2) Why we THINK the way we think (Proverbs 23:7 KJV).
  - (3) Why we FEEL the way we feel (Hebrews 4:12).
  - (4) Why we DO the things we do (Proverbs 4:23; Mark 7:21-22).
2. It is accurate to say that our “heart” serves as an internal guidance system for our lives. Our “heart” strongly influences what our interests are, and what will bring us the most satisfaction and fulfillment. It has a great deal to do with motivation (or lack thereof).

3. Getting to the “heart” of the matter is SO important when it comes to God. Consider just a few of the ways the word of God speaks of the “heart” from a spiritual perspective:
  - (1) We need “honest” hearts (Luke 8:15).
  - (2) Our hearts must be “understanding” (Matthew 13:10-17).
  - (3) Our hearts should be “broken” over sin (Psalm 34:18; 51:17).
  - (4) We must “believe” in God with our heart (Romans 10:9-10).
  - (5) We should be “obedient” from the heart (Romans 6:17).
  - (6) We must not “regard iniquity” in our heart (Psalm 66:18).
  - (7) We should strive to be “pure” in heart (Matthew 5:8; 1 Timothy 1:5).
  - (8) We are to “sanctify” Jesus as Lord in our heart (1 Peter 3:15).
  - (9) We are to “do the will of the Lord” from our heart (Ephesians 6:6).
  - (10) We are to “love” God with all of our heart (Matthew 22:37).
  
4. *The Bible makes it clear that our “heart” was designed by God (Psalm 139:13-16), but that WE make the choice to use it for good or evil, for selfish, sinful purposes or for godly service.*
  
5. *The key to understanding your heartbeat is to ask yourself, “What do I really love to do?” “What am I passionate about?”* It is amazing how many Christians never have taken time to sort out and identify these things and to apply it in their service to the Lord!

## II. TAKING A SPIRITUAL EKG

1. Just as an actual EKG monitors the rhythm or beat of one’s heart, so there’s a place for a spiritual EKG relating to serving God. In just a moment, we’ll consider 15 basic areas that may tell you something about your own “heart.”
  
2. These “rhythms,” “beats,” or motivations are NOT necessarily sinful; they are sinful ONLY when abused, and can be used effectively and enthusiastically in ministry.
  
3. 15 Basic Areas of Motivation of Our Heart. I love to . . .
  - (1) ***Design and Develop.*** I tend to be very creative, and really enjoy making something “from scratch.”
  - (2) ***Pioneer / Trailblazer.*** I love to test and try new things. If it’s new, I’m normally one of the first to check it out. I am not afraid to risk failure because I enjoy new adventures.
  - (3) ***Organize.*** I really enjoy and find fulfillment in bringing order out of chaos and confusion. 1 Corinthians 14:40 is my “life motto.”
  - (4) ***Operate and maintain.*** People think I’m very efficient at holding things together, and it does give me a sense of accomplishment.

***\*\*Notice that we already have starters, organizers and operators / maintainers!!***

- (5) **Serve or Help.** I really get a kick out of helping others succeed and accomplish things in their lives.
  - (6) **Acquire and Possess.** Some people even jokingly call me a “pack rat” because I love to shop and collect things and get them for a great price.
  - (7) **Excel.** I really enjoy trying to be the best I can and making my team the best possible. High standards are really important to me.
  - (8) **Influence.** I am passionate about shaping the attitudes and behaviors of others. I really want to see lives changed.
  - (9) **Improve.** I enjoy making things better. Fine tuning and tweaking are what really make me feel good as things become more efficient.
  - (10) **Repair.** I love to fix what is broken, out-of-date or what fails to properly operate.
  - (11) **Lead.** I normally am considered a “natural” leader by others, and find fulfillment helping others to their goal. Most consider me kind of a “take charge” type of person.
  - (12) **Persevere.** I find fulfillment in sticking at something until it is finished. People think of me as one who “keeps on keeping on” or who “just doesn’t know when to quit.”
  - (13) **Follow the Rules.** Procedure and proper organization are really important to me. I love to operate within parameters so I know what’s “within bounds” and what’s not.
  - (14) **Prevail.** I love to fight for what’s right and to oppose what is wrong. There’s so many causes that need to be fought for or opposed!
  - (15) **Communicate.** I love to talk and visit with people, and most think I’m a “natural” conversationalist.
4. While many of these things may apply to you, the following questions will help bring the issue of “heart” into greater focus.
  5. **#1 – What Do I Really Have a Heart For?** What are the top 3 in the list of 15 that best apply to you? (Ask your spouse or a good friend if you need help, but a lot of this has to do with YOUR love and passion).
  6. **#2 – Who Or What Do I Really Like to Work With?** What age group or types of people? Some love / hate working with kids. Some people prefer working with *people*. Some prefer working with *things*. Some prefer working with *information*.
  7. **#3 – What Church Ministries or Possible Needs Excite and Concern You the Most?** See Colossians 3:23.

## Conclusion

1. A person may have a “heart” for a specific ministry, yet NOT be especially (exceptionally) gifted or talented in it, just as one may have a certain “giftedness” in a particular area where they don’t necessarily have a “heart” for it. All of the factors regarding our particular **S.H.A.P.E.** need to be properly evaluated in light of the will of God.
2. However, when you have a “heart” for a particular area of service, you can find greater fulfillment and fruitfulness in God’s kingdom.

## **“EVERY MEMBER MINISTRY”**

### **Lesson #7**

### **“Abilities – Applying Your Abilities”**

#### **Introduction**

1. Each Christian has a unique **S.H.A.P.E.** for service. Understanding these 5 factors contributes a great deal to making ministry more fulfilling and fruitful (cf. John 15:8).
2. We have studied the first 2 letters in this acronym. **S** stands for **Spiritual Gifts**. Spiritual gifts today (1 Peter 4:10-11; Romans 12:3-8) are:
  - (1) Non-miraculous gifts that emanate from our gracious and sovereign Lord,
  - (2) Given freely to all His children individually but for the good of all,
  - (3) In order to serve others wisely and effectively
  - (4) To the glory of God.
3. **H** stands for **HEART**, and refers to the center of our motivation, desires and inclinations. It has to do with what we love and are passionate about.
4. These 2 factors are closely related, yet a distinction may be drawn. For example, you may be gifted as a teacher, but if your heart is with children, and you’re “locked into” teaching an adult class (a “lifetime sentence” sometimes!), you’re probably NOT going to be as passionate in your service. Again, you may be gifted at organization, but your heart might be with overseas missions. Then you need to be organizing things like mission trips or a youth mission outreach, NOT organizing the office or teacher’s work room!
5. That brings us to the **A** for understanding our **S.H.A.P.E.** for serving – **ABILITY**. *Ability refers to the “power to act with competence; talent, skill or aptitude.”* See 1 Peter 4:11 and Matthew 25:15 in the NKJV (Some versions may have “strength” or “power”).
6. **Illustration: “The Animal School”**

The animals had a school. The curriculum consisted of running, climbing, flying and swimming. The DUCK was good at swimming and fair in flying, but he was terrible in running. So he was made to drop swimming class and stay after school to practice running. He kept this up until he was only average at swimming, but average was acceptable. The others, including the teacher, were no longer threatened by the duck’s swimming abilities, so everyone felt comfortable (except the DUCK).

The EAGLE was considered a problem student. For instance, in climbing class, he could beat all the others to the top of the tree, but he insisted on his own method of getting there (flying). He had to be severely disciplined and finally, because of his non-cooperation in swimming, he was dismissed from the school.

The RABBIT started at the top of the class in running, but obviously was inadequate in other areas. Because of so much make-up work in the areas of swimming and flying, he had a nervous breakdown and had to drop out of school.

The TURTLE was a failure in nearly every course the school offered. His shell was considered to be the leading cause of his failures so it was removed. This did slightly improve his speed in running, but sadly he became the school's first casualty when he was stepped on by a horse!

The faculty was disappointed, but all in all, it was a good school in humility. There were NO real successes. None seemed to measure up to the others, but they did concentrate on their weak points and some progress was made.

7. **POINT: (1) EVERYBODY DOES NOT FIT THE SAME MOLD. (2) EVERYBODY IS A "10" IN SOME AREA(S). (3) SOMETIMES, IF YOU'RE NOT MAKING IT IN A CERTAIN MINISTRY, IT DOESN'T MEAN SO MUCH THAT YOU'RE THE WRONG PERSON AS IT'S THE WRONG MINISTRY (FOR YOU). (4) WE ALL MIGHT IMPROVE IN OTHER AREAS, BUT NOT AT THE EXPENSE OF WHAT WE DO BEST.**
8. These points also are indicated in the "body analogy" of 1 Corinthians 12:12-27.

## **I. POSITIVE PRINCIPLES ABOUT ABILITY**

1. ***EVERY person has ability(ties)*** (1 Peter 4:10-11). NO ONE can legitimately claim, "I just don't have ANY ability." But we may NOT be precisely aware of what our abilities are.
2. ***We do NOT all have the same ability(ties)*** (Matthew 25:15).
3. ***The Lord is the Giver of ability, and we are to properly manage what He has given*** (1 Corinthians 4:1-2). Whether one seems to be "born" with a certain ability, or has what we call "natural" ability, or whether the ability has been "acquired" through practice and hard work, God STILL is the giver! ***THE KEY IS MATCHING OUR ABILITY WITH THE RIGHT MINISTRY!***
4. ***Ability is to be USED or it may be LOST*** (cf. Matthew 25:14-30). The 5 and 2 talent men show 1 Corinthians 15:58 and Ephesians 2:10 in their lives. The 1 talent man had (1) a wrong concept of his Lord (24); (2) a fear that kept him from using his ability / talent (25); (3) He failed to realize just how much his ability was useful and needed.
5. ***There is a time of reckoning coming!***

## **II. DISCOVERING AND APPLYING YOUR ABILITIES**

1. Look over the results of your spiritual EKG from the last study (the 3 or so areas that really bring your "heart" into focus).

2. Compare those areas with the 26 specialized abilities to follow. As a special help to this exercise, think for a while about what particular abilities you exhibit at home, work or school.
3. 26 Specialized Abilities
  - (1) **Entertaining ability.** Warm and hospitable, people just seem to be “at home” when they are around you.
  - (2) **Recruiting ability.** You can rally and motivate people to greater involvement.
  - (3) **Interview ability.** You have the ability to discover what others are really like, to “get to the heart of things” quickly and well.
  - (4) **Researching ability.** You have the ability to read, gather information and to collect data. Your favorite game probably is “Trivial Pursuit.”
  - (5) **Artistic ability.** You draw, paint, photograph or conceptualize well. You have a vivid imagination.
  - (6) **Graphics ability.** You have the ability to layout, design, create visual displays or banners.
  - (7) **Evaluating ability.** Analyzing data and drawing logical conclusions tend to be your forte.
  - (8) **Planning ability.** You have the ability to strategize, design and organize programs and events that seem to turn out well.
  - (9) **Managing ability.** You can supervise people to accomplish goals and coordinate the details well.
  - (10) **Counseling ability.** You listen well, encourage and guide with real sensitivity to others.
  - (11) **Teaching ability.** You explain, train, demonstrate, and tutor well.
  - (12) **Writing ability.** You have a talent for “putting things in writing.” You are effective in touching others with notes, cards or articles.
  - (13) **Editing ability.** You have a talent for proofreading or for rewriting in a way that makes the information more vivid and clear.
  - (14) **Promoting ability.** You can advertise or promote events and activities (like a salesman who could sell “ice cubes to Eskimos”).

- (15) **Repairing ability.** If something needs to be fixed, restored or is in need of “routine maintenance,” you’re a good choice.
  - (16) **Cooking ability.** You have a talent for creating meals for large or for small groups.
  - (17) **Recall ability.** You can remember or recall names and faces with great ability.
  - (18) **Mechanical Operating ability.** You have the ability to operate equipment, tools or machinery.
  - (19) **Resource ability.** You know how to wisely search and find the proper resources needed at the right price.
  - (20) **Mathematical ability.** You have a real talent for working with numbers, data or money.
  - (21) **Classifying ability.** The ability to systematize, arrange and file books, data, records and materials so they can be retrieved easily.
  - (22) **Public Relations ability.** You are able to handle complaints and criticisms with care and courtesy, as well as pass on positive feedback.
  - (23) **Encouraging ability.** The ability to make others feel valued, appreciated and encouraged. “Barnabas” is your middle name.
  - (24) **Composing ability.** The ability to write music, poetry or lyrics.
  - (25) **Landscaping ability.** You have an ability to do gardening or work with plants, flowers and trees.
  - (26) **Decorating ability.** You can beautify a setting for a special event or activity.
4. List 5 of the abilities that BEST see to describe you. HOW might these abilities SPECIFICALLY be implemented in the Lord’s work?

## **Conclusion**

1. See Acts 11:29 in NKJV. It is a “relief” to all when people of ability are serving the church! See 1 Peter 4:10-11.
2. We all need to keep in mind that **WHAT GOD WANTS US TO DO AS HIS PEOPLE, HE’S ENABLED US TO DO!** (See Philippians 4:13; 2 Corinthians 3:5; Ephesians 3:20-21.

## **“EVERY MEMBER MINISTRY”**

### **Lesson #8**

### **“Personality – Plugging Into Your Personality”**

#### **Introduction**

1. YOU are unique and special! As a matter of fact, you have an absolutely unique **S.H.A.P.E.** for service. Understanding these 5 factors contributes to making serving in the Lord’s church more fulfilling and fruitful (1 Peter 4:10-11).
2. YOU are a unique combination of:
  - (1) **S**piritual Gifts
  - (2) **H**eart
  - (3) **A**bilities
  - (4) **P**ersonality
  - (5) **E**xperiences
3. Our service as Christians IS crucial! (Romans 12:1-2; Hebrews 12:28). *To fail to see our proper place in serving the Lord in the body of Christ is to hurt our Lord and to rob the church!* (See 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Ephesians 3:21).
4. *Personality* may be defined as, “*patterns of thought and behavior that distinctly characterize an individual – in other words, the things I tend to think about and do that make me, ME.*”
5. The Bible does NOT specifically address the issue of personality types, but certainly there are people to whom the Bible ascribes certain character traits (examples: Moses and meekness – Numbers 12:3; Ruth and virtue – Ruth 3:11; Barnabas and encouragement – Acts 4:34-37). Scripture appears more concerned with WHAT we do with our minds and bodies than the intricacies of HOW they actually operate (Mark 12:30).
6. It does seem that elements of our personality are formed at conception (Psalm 139:13-16) just like being male or female occurs at that time. However, other aspects of personality are learned through environment (cf. Philippians 4:11).
7. Further, it is obvious that while Paul, Peter, Barnabas and Timothy were all faithful Christians, their personalities as revealed in Scripture are far from being exactly the same.
8. When it comes to the area of personality in Christian service, we MUST be aware of extremes. We must first be aware of the extreme that *discounts* or *neglects ANY* role of personality when it comes to serving the Lord. Such a view NOT only runs contrary to human nature, but to wisdom and the heart of Scripture! It naively assumes that personality has NO REAL ROLE in effective service. On the other hand, we must be

careful NOT to place “*all our service-oriented eggs in the proverbial personality basket.*” By this I mean, we need to be careful NOT simply to pigeon-hole or limit someone’s service capabilities SOLELY on the basis of what we perceive their personality to be like. We must NOT “box” someone in SOLELY on the basis of what we believe their personality to be. Remember: there are 4 other factors involved in service too! (Spiritual gifts, **H**eart, **A**bilities, and **E**xperiences).

9. Perhaps the most common “good” (although NOT infallible) personality test is the Myers-Briggs. An adapted and simplified form of this test forms the basis for the rest of our study of the place of personality in serving the Lord. What the following questions will do is answer the thought, “How Do I *Really* See Myself?”

### **I. EXTRAVERTED OR INTRAVERTED?**

1. This has to do with whether we tend to be more refreshed and energized from being with people (extraverted) or from being alone (introverted).
2. From a biblical perspective, the prodigal son would appear to be an extrovert, while the older brother more of an introvert (see Luke 15:11-32).
3. An individual can be mildly introverted / extroverted to extremely so (The same can and should be said for the rest of the personality indicators). **THIS SHOULD BE KEPT IN MIND TOO!**
4. To the introvert, extraverts may sometimes appear noisy, shallow, brash and loud. To the extravert, an introvert may appear to be silent, withdrawn, moody and quiet.

### **II. INTUITION OR SENSATION?**

1. This deals with the thought, “Do YOU act primarily based on “gut feeling” (intuition) or by reason / logic? (sensation)” Which seems to most often or to best describe you?
2. Again, the prodigal son might be used to illustrate one who by personality leans toward intuition, while the older brother’s personality appears to emphasize sensation The prodigal got tired of the relentless routine of the farm and visualized what it would be like to “taste the world.” The older brother liked the routine, was practical, and placed little confidence in untested future possibilities.

### **III. FEELING OR THINKING?**

1. “Do you tend to give priority to what you feel (Feeling) or to what you think? (Thinking)”
2. Again realize that a person may slightly or mildly lean more to one than the other. In other words, sometimes our feelings may guide us while on other occasions, our thinking. The question is, “Which one tends to be dominant?”

#### IV. PERCEPTION OR JUDGMENT?

1. “Do you generally observe all you can before choosing, or do you make ‘snap judgments?’” Are you more thoughtful and careful in decision-making, or do you really enjoy the flexibility and freedom of spontaneity?
2. One might again use the prodigal son to illustrate perception, while the older brother would illustrate judgment (Luke 15:11-32). Peter might often be seen as one who leans toward feeling, while Paul may often be characterized as one who leans toward judgment (this is painting with a BROAD brush and is ONLY a generalization).

#### V. SOME IMPORTANT OBSERVATIONS

1. Personality, like anything else, can be abused or it can be utilized to the glory of God (See Colossians 3:17). We can use our personality to minister to our own selfishness, or we can use it to honor the Lord.
2. To move from “understanding” something about our personality to “excusing” sinful behavior due to our temperament or personality is flat-out wrong! ***Serving*** the Lord is **NOT** optional to the Christian! To illustrate, Ephesians 5 instructs (commands) women to be “submissive” to their husbands (vs. 22), while every husband is commanded to love his wife “as Christ loved the church” (vs. 25). Different women will show submission to their husband in different ways, and different men will show love to their wife differently, but **STILL** comply with the commands of the verses! No wife or husband can say, “Well, it’s just not in my personality to submit to my husband or to properly love my wife!” ***When God commands us to do something, He also equips us with what is necessary to use in doing it!***
3. God may well take us out of our “comfort zones” personality-wise in order to mature and strengthen us (1 Peter 1:6-9; 5:10). It is difficult to imagine that being in prison was something that fit Paul’s personality well (Yet see Philippians 1:12). Further, we doubt that Joseph’s personality was “ideally suited” to being mistreated by his brothers, thrown into prison for a crime he didn’t commit and forgotten by the chief butler whom he had helped (Genesis 37-40). Yet God was at work in both of these circumstances! (Genesis 50:20; Philippians 1:12-26).
4. ***The issue of conforming to Christ DOES have an effect on our personalities!*** See Romans 8:28; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18. For example, while in one sense I (Mike) **STILL** am an ISTJ (Introvert, Sensation, Thinking, Judgment) in personality, my attitude is different in different contexts. Since high school days, most of us have noticed more than a few changes about ourselves and our personalities.
5. ***There is NO right or wrong personality tendency per say – each can be properly used or abused.*** In other words, we must NOT let our personality tendencies cause us to automatically think we are better or worse than anyone else. See 1 Corinthians 8:1; Romans 12:3.

6. ***We must not assume that our individual personality differences are more important than the things we share in Christ!*** See Ephesians 1:3; Romans 8:14-17; 1 John 3:1.

### **Conclusion**

1. May we strive for the wisdom and balance God desires in considering the role of our personalities in service to Him.
2. Whether the issue is personality, race, gender or nationality, we should NOT base our self-identity merely on the groups of people we are like, but also on our individual uniqueness, on who God would have us to be!

## “EVERY MEMBER MINISTRY”

### Lesson #9

### “Examining Our Experiences”

#### Introduction

1. It is strange how **experience** often is an overlooked factor when it comes to considering our **S.H.A.P.E.** for spiritual service (see Romans 12:1-2; 1 Peter 4:10-11). After all, experience normally plays a key role in the world when it comes to job possibilities. While recognizing experience isn't the **ONLY** factor involved when it comes to job possibilities in the world or to work in the Lord's kingdom (after all, you've got to start somewhere!), it **IS** a factor that must be considered.
2. Remember, **S.H.A.P.E.** is an acronym for 5 factors that are practical in determining and understanding our special uniqueness in serving the Lord:
  - (1) **S** stands for **Spiritual Gifts** (How has God seemed to have gifted me?)  
See Romans 12:3-8; 1 Peter 4:10-11)
  - (2) **H** stands for **Heart** (What am I really passionate about?)
  - (3) **A** stands for **Abilities** (What am I good at?)
  - (4) **P** stands for **Personality** (What am I really like?)
  - (5) **E** stands for **Experience**
3. **Experience** is defined as “*the instance or process of personally observing, encountering, undergoing or learning something.*” It is both interesting and ironic that some people (including even some Christians) get so caught up in “experiencing life” that they never really get around to “experiencing” God (at least, **NOT** deeply and richly), who gives meaning and purpose to life and experience! (See Ecclesiastes 1:12-18 and the poor example of Solomon; Philippians 3:10; 1 Timothy 6:17-19).
4. **Remember this: GOD NEVER WASTES AN EXPERIENCE!** (although we may, He doesn't). This is true in general with experience, but *especially* so with our hurts and problems that we've overcome or learned to deal with (See 2 Corinthians 1:3-5; Philippians 1:12; Genesis 50:20; Philemon 15-16). God may use our experiences to His glory so that we can teach / encourage / comfort others who are going through similar circumstances in their own lives. Who can relate better to someone who's had an alcohol problem than somebody who's dealt with that problem first-hand? Who can relate to someone who's lost a husband or wife in death than someone who's “been there?”
5. Romans 8:28 is a remarkable passage concerning the providence of God that gives the ultimate proof that **GOD NEVER WASTES AN EXPERIENCE.** 5 unshakeable convictions about His providence arise out of this verse:
  - (1) His providence is something Christians should “know” (see 8:22, 26). Here on earth, there's always a tension between what we know and don't know – but God's providential care should **NOT** be one of the things we're unsure about! **HE CARES!** (1 Peter 5:7).

- (2) God “works” in OUR lives – ceaselessly, energetically, purposefully works “behind the scenes.”
- (3) God is at “work” for the “good” – for OUR good AND for His glory (verses 29-30 elaborate on what is meant by “good” here).
- (4) God works for the good “in all things” (see 8:17, 23). Even the “negative” in this life can have a positive purpose in the ultimate execution of God’s plan. NOTHING is beyond the scope of God’s ability to work providentially! The passage does NOT say, “all things ARE good,” but that “all things WORK TOGETHER FOR good.”
- (5) God works for the good in all things to “those who love the Lord and are the called according to His purpose.” This limits or restricts the marvelous assurance of this verse TO THOSE WHO LOVINGLY AND FAITHFULLY BELONG TO THE LORD! God loves the world, but this special exercise of providential care is especially promised for those who love Him and are the “called according to His purpose” (See 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14).
6. Since **GOD NEVER WASTES AN EXPERIENCE**, let’s focus on 4 areas of life where consideration should be given as to HOW these experiences can be used in more effective service to God.

## I. SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES

Think through your spiritual life (see Philippians 4:8). In Philippians 3:2-11, Paul takes a moment to consider his “spiritual pedigree” as a Jew, yet he realizes that all those “accomplishments” were nothing without Christ! (although his background and experiences surely were things God later mightily used). WHEN have you felt closest to God? WHEN and WHERE were you baptized? HOW old were you when you came to Christ? WHAT meaningful spiritual decisions have you made? (rededication, restoration, etc.). Was a gospel meeting, seminar or revival particularly meaningful to you? WHO has been instrumental in your life from a spiritual perspective? DO you have a favorite passage of Scripture? If so, why? WHAT books, other than the Bible, have been helpful to you in drawing nearer to the Lord? DO you have a regular time for devotion to God? If so, WHEN and WHAT do you do? Has there been a Bible teacher or class that particularly helped you? **Take a few minutes to briefly write down your answers to questions like these because NOT only will it remind you of the experiences, it can give you information on ways you might be able to help and serve others.** (Space will be provided on the student copy for filling this out. It would help if you ALREADY do this from your own perspective so as to help them be able to respond).

## II. PAINFUL EXPERIENCES

Problems, hurts and trials CAN have a way of teaching us (See James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 1:6-9; 5:10). *The likelihood is small that we can be very useful in ministry unless we're able to wisely and effectively talk about these things.* Once we're honest with the pain and hurt we've experienced, we realize that everybody's hurting somewhere. God CAN use our life (especially painful, difficult times we've had) to help others! Consider HOW Paul's "thorn in the flesh" (2 Corinthians 12:7-10) speaks to ALL of us even now. Consider also Paul's statements in places like 2 Corinthians 11:23-29 and 1 Timothy 1:13-15. Whether the pain was caused by sickness, death, our own personal sin, marriage and family heartaches, financial woes, etc., **GOD NEVER WASTES AN EXPERIENCE!** (Space will again be provided for answering this on the student copy).

## III. EDUCATIONAL / FAMILY / WORK EXPERIENCES

Admittedly, a great deal could be written down by many of us concerning EACH of these areas. Perhaps devoting time to each one over several devotional times would be a good idea – it would certainly provoke humility, praise, thanksgiving, worship and probably even repentance! As it concerns education, you could ask and answer questions like, WHAT is your educational background? WHAT were your favorite subjects? Did you have a FAVORITE TEACHER and WHAT made them stand out? WHEN were you the happiest or proudest of an accomplishment and WHAT was it? Similar questions should be asked of family and work experiences. Think for a while about experiences that "stand out" in your own mind and WHY they do. From a biblical perspective, elders (as men of maturity, heart and management – Acts 20:17, 28) are men who have "experiences" that show them to be the type of men God wants (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). *But the same principle SHOULD have a unique application in ALL of our lives as individual Christians!*

## IV. MINISTRY EXPERIENCES

Our lives as Christians are a course to be run, a fight or struggle to be fought, and a sacred trust to hold on to (see 2 Timothy 4:6-8). HOW have YOU served in the past? HOW do you presently serve? Some people will not be able to write much, because they are new Christians. Others may be able to put down one or two things. Still others could jot down a number of experiences because the time and opportunities the Lord has provided. The incredible variety and range of experiences here is a reminder that Christianity REALLY is an incredible adventure for EACH member of the Lord's body. It includes things like preaching, teaching, eldering, mission work, personal evangelism, working with youth, working with the aged, encouraging, writing, praying, cooking, serving, etc.

## **Conclusion**

1. Again, let it be said: **GOD NEVER WASTES AN EXPERIENCE.** May more of us be wise as stewards (Ephesians 5:15-17; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2) in realizing that we should NOT waste our experiences as an area that can be used in service to God and others.
2. Judgment on the final day will be based on what we have done with our experiences! (Matthew 25:31-46).
3. YOU are unique and special in your **S.H.A.P.E.** for ministry!

## **“EVERY MEMBER MINISTRY”**

### **Lesson #10**

### **“Dangers to Avoid in Ministry”**

#### **Introduction**

1. It's possible to “get all bent out of shape” when it comes to your **S-H-A-P-E** in ministry!
2. By this I mean that we can understand a great deal about our own unique and special ministry make-up (our own **S**piritual gifts, **H**eart, **A**bilities, **P**ersonality and **E**xperiences) and **STILL** royally “mess up” when it comes to ministry that truly honors the Lord.
3. **Every member ministry has to do with EVERY MEMBER wisely and lovingly using their individual uniqueness in service to the Lord in order to help strengthen, beautify, build up, unify and fortify the body of Christ to the praise and glory of God** (See 1 Corinthians 12:21-26; Ephesians 4:14-16; 1 Peter 2:5, 9; 4:10-11).
4. When this is lacking, there may be a **GROSS MALFUNCTION** of the body! The church at Corinth is a classic case of this happening. They lacked **NO** spiritual gift (**EVEN** miraculous gifts – 1 Corinthians 1:5-7), yet they were plagued with all kinds of severe internal problems.
5. Surely the same tendencies and problems that weakened and divided the church at Corinth can **STILL** have a corrupting effect on churches and their ministry today.
6. In this particular study, we'll focus on 8 dangers to avoid in ministry – dangers that often may be interrelated, but will be dealt with individually in order to help us better see how they adversely affect the body of Christ and our own individual ministries when they are exist in our own lives.
7. **REMEMBER:** True motives are often difficult to discern, sometimes even in ourselves. As humans, we can be **MOST** vulnerable to sin at the points of our greatest strengths (think about David and his “heart,” Solomon and his “wisdom,” and Samson and his “strength”). How we need to practice honest self-assessment (2 Corinthians 13:5; 2 Peter 1:10), and to constantly and humbly pray what the Psalmist did in Psalm 139:23-24.

#### **I. GLORYING IN THE FLESH**

1. Out of pride and ego, there is a tendency to “take credit” for whatever good is done – when glory should truly be given to God! This is the problem of the Pharisee in Luke 18:9-14.
2. See 1 Corinthians 15:9-10; 2 Corinthians 3:5; Galatians 6:14.

3. Consider Paul's experience of both the "third heaven" and the "thorn in the flesh" in 2 Corinthians 12:1-10 as God's way of beautifully balancing privilege and humility. Most would gladly take the "third heaven" experience, but want to opt out of the "thorn." One helped Paul to keep the other in proper perspective; and so it is to be with us today.

## **II. DIVISION WITHIN THE BODY**

1. The spirit of party-ism is FAR FROM DEAD in the church! (See 1 Corinthians 1:10-17; 3:1-9; 4:6-7).
2. There STILL is a tendency to exalt some who skillfully exercise their talents and abilities. See Matthew 20:20-28.
3. **No person is to be exalted and revered above others – EXCEPT CHRIST.** Every individual Christian's gifts, talents and abilities ought to be appreciated and valued, but that is a far cry from exalting and revering individuals to a point that actually supercedes our relationship and allegiance to Christ.
4. Some individuals have abilities that DO place them in a more visible and vocal position of influence. Even (and especially) then, this must NEVER become a pretext for unduly exalting one over another in the body of Christ (See Corinthians 12:14-31).
5. The GOAL is not merely for others to see "US" or "OUR GIFTEDNESS AND ABILITIES," but that others SEE CHRIST! (Matthew 5:13-16; 6:1-8).

## **III. SELF-DECEPTION**

1. There exists the possibility that SOME might claim abilities and gifts that they ACTUALLY do NOT possess.
2. See Romans 12:3; 2 Corinthians 10:12, 17-18.

## **IV. IMMATURITY**

1. Immature Christians MAY relate to specifics in ministry the same way that young children relate to toys – "Mine's better than yours!" or "I like yours better and I'm gonna take it from you!" In other words, there can be a great deal of childish competition, comparison and conflict regarding ability, personality and giftedness in serving the Lord.
2. This existed at Corinth (1 Cor. 3:1; 13:11; 14:20), and can well exist in churches today.
3. Such immaturity fails to take into proper account that **ALL FACTORS IN MINISTRY ARE TO BE LOVINGLY AND UNSELFISHLY UTILIZED IN SERVICE TO THE GLORY OF GOD AND TO THE BENEFIT OF THE BODY OF CHRIST.**

## V. CHARACTER DEFICIENCY

1. Service to God **MUST** be rooted in moral character. If there is an obvious lack of the “fruit of the Spirit” (Galatians 5:22-23) and the “Christian Graces” (2 Peter 1:5-11), **ALL** the talent and ability in the world **WON’T MAKE UP FOR IT!!!**
2. It is significant and enlightening that the qualifications for elders and deacons **FOCUS NOT SO MUCH ON ABILITY AND TALENT AS ON CHARACTER**. This does **NOT** mean elders and deacons will be woefully deficient in ability and talent, but it **DOES** mean that they **MUST** be strong in character (e.g., 1 Timothy 3; Titus 1:5-9).

## VI. REFUSING TO SERVE

1. Not being particularly gifted or equipped in an area **MUST NEVER** become an excuse or rationalization for refusing to serve in that area (or others) when one is **NEEDED**. Consider James 4:17.
2. There are times in **EVERY** area of life when a person **NEEDS** to do something that they are **NOT ESPECIALLY COMFORTABLE WITH** – It’s outside their “comfort zone.” Think of it as an athlete being needed to play a position that is not their “natural” position for the good of the team. The same point may apply in the church.

## VII. FREELANCING

1. A “freelancer” in the church is one who acts according to personal preferences while refusing to be active and accountable to the larger believing community and its leadership.
2. **A MEMBER SEPARATED FROM THE BODY IS IN A PRECARIOUS CONDITION!** (again, 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12:3-8).
3. This can happen within an eldership. It can be done by a preacher or Bible class teacher. Any Christian can fall prey to this snare of Satan and thus hurt the service of the church to God’s glory (2 Corinthians 2:11). ***Surely there is a sense of individuality in the church where we see and appreciate one another’s strengths and abilities, but we must also know who we are in relationship to the rest of the church. BLESSED ARE THE BALANCED!*** See Ephesians 3:21 and 1 Peter 4:10-11.

## VIII. GIFTEDNESS AND ABILITY WITHOUT LOVE

1. See 1 Corinthians 8:1 and 13:1-3. In the midst of his lengthy section on spiritual gifts, 1 Corinthians 12-14, Paul through the Holy Spirit gives the beautiful treatment of love in 1 Corinthians 13. This **IS** important!

2. It is possible to wound and crush our brethren and to greatly damage our influence in the world to the dishonoring of our Lord by lacking a true sense of love in service. See 1 Corinthians 8:11 and 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.

### **Conclusion**

1. Understanding our uniqueness in ministry **MUST** be accompanied by the fact that there are indeed dangers to be avoided in our service.
2. Walking in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16-18) and producing the “fruit of the Spirit” (Galatians 5:22-23) **MUST** go hand-in-hand with expressing our uniqueness in ministry for the benefit of the church to the glory of God. When there isn’t a proper working relationship in these areas – **DANGER! DANGER! DANGER!**
3. ***In considering your own personal and unique combination of Spiritual gifts, Heart, Abilities, Personality and Experiences, HOW can YOU better serve in the church to the glory of God?***

## **“EVERY MEMBER MINISTRY”**

### **Lesson #11**

### **“Stewardship in Ministry”**

#### **Introduction**

1. What practical difference will this study of “Every Member Ministry” REALLY make in daily lives?
2. **Will our individual uniqueness in service be put to work more for the benefit of the body of Christ to the glory of God?** If this does NOT occur in our lives, this study has NOT accomplished its objective and what’s more – WE ARE HURTING THE CHURCH AND DISHONORING OUR LORD! (See Matthew 25:14-30).
3. Our expanded understanding of “Every Member Ministry” MUST result in greater deployment of our talents, gifts and abilities as part of a sacred trust we have received from the Lord Himself (1 Peter 2:9-11).

#### **I. SEEING OUR SERVICE AS A “SACRED TRUST”**

1. What will WE say when the Lord says to us, “I gave you unique gifts and abilities to use faithfully, productively, and responsibly to My name’s honor and glory. WHY DIDN’T YOU?”
2. See 1 Peter 4:10 as it deals with this very thought:
  - (1) *“As each one”* – This has to do with the EXTENT of giftedness. Stated emphatically at the beginning, the duties and functions of a steward have been assigned to **each** Christian. NO EXCEPTIONS!
  - (2) *“has received a gift”* – This deals with the FACT of giftedness. Each Christian has his own distinctive function; each one is uniquely equipped for service. God in His grace has given each of us gifts and abilities that are to be utilized in loving service to Him. NO EXCEPTIONS!
  - (3) *“minister it to one another”* – This deals with the PURPOSE of giftedness. Rendering such service to one another freely through our gifts and abilities stresses the mutual benefit to all. This is intended by God to be a reciprocal thing. It’s NOT about “flying solo,” but rather working in concert with one another. NO EXCEPTIONS!
  - (4) *“as stewards”* – This phrase speaks of the MANAGEMENT of giftedness. We are NOT “owners,” merely “stewards” or “managers” (1 Corinthians 4:1-2). There MUST be a sense of accountability in our lives – to one another, but especially to God (See Romans 12:5; Philippians 1:6 balanced with Philippians 2:12-13). NO EXCEPTIONS!

- (5) *“of the manifold grace of God.”* – This indicates the SOURCE of giftedness – God in His great grace. God has graciously equipped us for service to enable others to successfully encounter the grace of God throughout any and all circumstances of life (see also 1:6; 5:10, 12; 1 Corinthians 15:9-10). NO EXCEPTIONS!
3. On Judgment Day we’ll NOT be lauded for the magnificence of our mansions, the chrome on our cars, the size of our salaries, the far-and-wide nature of our fame. But God will be pleased and say “Well done, good and faithful servant” when we faithfully use the gifts and abilities He has “loaned” us as a trust. **ARE WE FAITHFULLY USING WHAT HE HAS “LOANED?”**
4. What God desires for Christian ministry is for fellow Christians to deploy and exercise their gifts and abilities in concert. Visualize a symphony orchestra and compare the manner in which it functions to the way in which the church is to function. The component parts of an orchestra are quite varied, yet when blended together under the leadership of a qualified director, beautiful and harmonious music results. The playing of any one instrument, obviously, sounds incomplete and inadequate because a symphony is NOT a solo. Yet, in concert, wonderful sounds are produced. **The same principle holds true for the church.**

## II. POSITIVE BENEFITS WHEN EACH CHRISTIAN SEES OUR SERVICE AS A “SACRED TRUST”

\*\*\*\*\* Based on 1 Corinthians 12:12-27\*\*\*\*\*

1. ***There will be the presence of unity and harmony*** (See 1 Corinthians 12:12). See also John 17:20-23 and Ephesians 4:1-6.
2. ***There will be the absence of favoritism, status and prejudice*** (1 Corinthians 12:13). There will NOT be some sort of unbiblical “caste” system (cf. Galatians 3:24-29). There’s no “preferred customers” or “second-class” citizens spiritually! (Acts 10:34-36).
3. ***There will be an emphasis upon each individual’s dignity and mutual variety*** (1 Corinthians 12:14-20). We are ALL connected. Body parts can’t go “on strike,” so why do some members think they can, or that they can fail to function without adversely affecting the entire body? Even the smallest members, like a toe or finger, have an important place. And so it is with the body of Christ. Notice especially verses 18-20, and how GOD set the members, each one of them, in the body as He pleased.
4. ***There will be a de-emphasis on unhealthy independence and self-sufficiency*** (1 Corinthians 12:21-25). The “Lone Ranger Syndrome” is NOT what the Lord wants in us! No organ of the body is completely independent and unrelated to the others, and it ought to be that way in the church too.
5. ***There will be mutual support of others, whether they are hurting or being honored*** (1 Corinthians 12:25-26).

6. ***There will be the exaltation of Christ as Head and Supreme Authority*** (1 Corinthians 12:27). The body has ONLY one Head, and that's the Lord. This is important for the body to keep in perspective. See Colossians 1:18, 24; Ephesians 1:21-23.
7. Put another way, 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 instructs us concerning the ***unity*** (12:12-13), ***diversity*** (12:14-20), ***harmony*** (12:21-26) and ***authority*** (12:27) that characterize a healthy church.

### **III. SOME PRACTICAL AREAS OF APPLICATION**

1. From the tops of our hard skulls to the soft soles of our feet, each part of our bodies, though diverse, is united as a whole. This same principle **MUST** become more of a reality in the church – where every member sees and utilizes their uniqueness to the benefit of the body and to the glory of God.
2. **BE SURE TO COMBAT COMPARISON!** If you're a "foot" spiritually, it's easy to look at a "hand" and think how skilled and capable they are and to minimize your own place in the body. Don't let Satan shelve your self-worth in a shoe box or sell you the idea that you aren't needed or are unimportant. **EACH** member **IS** important!
3. **IT'S TIME FOR A DECLARATION OF INTERDEPENDENCE!** Many Christians are afraid to be transparent, vulnerable, fearful to admit that we have a weakness or a need. But if this cannot be done in the body of Christ, **WHERE** can it be? Think about it. (1) Within the last month, did **YOU** express to another Christian an area of need in your life?  
(2) Have you in the last month expressed gratitude to another member of the body for what they mean to you?  
(3) Do you often have a "NO Help Wanted" sign about your neck?  
(4) If a Christian asked, "How can I help you?," would you be embarrassed or would your pride be wounded?  
(5) Do you **SINCERELY** want to help others?

### **Conclusion**

1. When the church truly understands the priority and place of "every member ministry," we will go a long way toward restoring what the Bible actually teaches about the priesthood of **ALL** believers (1 Peter 2:5, 9).
2. How we need to appreciate our special uniqueness as servants to the benefit of the body of Christ and to the praise and glory of God!