

## **Finding Your Place in the Body**

God has called us to a life of purpose and meaning. When He saved us and ushered us into His Kingdom He further equipped us with new abilities in order to serve in that Kingdom. Indeed Jesus says:

"By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples." John 15:8

The Apostle Paul sets the example when he writes:

"I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus...I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus". Philippians 3:12,14.

He then goes on to exhort us to follow his example:

"Let us therefore as many as a mature, have this attitude." Philippians 3:15.

God has called us to new life in His body (Colossians 3:15). His Holy Spirit has given us a place in His body ( I Corinthians 12:18). He calls us to be members and exercise gifts in sacrificial service to others in this body. It is a life of tremendous significance since we are entering into the very work of God! (Col. 1:24,25,29). But as we endeavor to find our place in His body we find it is also a life, which will call us to radically overhaul our personal goals, values, perspectives and aspirations.

Once one becomes a follower of Christ, one will never be the same again. This booklet is designed to help you begin the exciting adventure of FINDING YOUR PLACE IN THE BODY.

### **Study #1: Membership and Gifts**

Read I Corinthians 12:4-31.

1. What is the purpose of spiritual gifts?
2. What does it mean to be a member of the body?
3. Are you a member of the body? Explain.
4. What is the relationship between the members?
5. How have you experienced the benefits of being a part of the body where different people are able to minister in different ways? Give some specific examples.
6. What is the danger of too much focus on "my spiritual gift"?
7. What are some ways this could be avoided?

### **Study #2: Bonding**

I. Read Galatians 5:13-24

1. What is to be our motive for service to those in the body?

2. What are some ways our flesh fights against this type of sacrificial ministry?
3. What are some ways people might minister "in the flesh" as opposed to "in the Spirit"? (You might think of motives as well as actual activities.)
4. What would be some tendencies you might have to watch out for in this area?
5. What will be the result? (Cf. 5:15, 26)

II. It seems that the Corinthians were doing this by seeking gifts with a view toward self-promotion rather than serving others in the body. I Corinthians 12 and 14 is Paul's strong rebuke to such attitudes. In between I Cor. 13 once again points to the key ingredient for meaningful ministry in the body. Read this chapter.

1. How well have you bonded to the visible body of Christ? (If you have a problem with this you might look at I John 4)
2. What are some barriers preventing you from more effective ministry?
3. What do you plan to do about these? Could others in the body help you? HOW?

### **Study #3: Gifts**

1. The following list is composed from the lists in Romans 12:6-8, and I Corinthians 12:8-10. The general categories of speaking and serving come from I Peter 4:10,11. Once you have looked over the list proceed to #2.

#### GIFT MINISTRY OF GIFT PERSON

Speaking gifts:

teaching

prophecy

exhortation

word of wisdom/knowledge

distinguishing spirits

tongues/interpretation

Serving gifts:

helps

giving

leadership

mercy

faith

healing

effecting miracles

2. After looking over the list, in the middle column, write down how you have OBSERVED the gift exercised in a ministry in the body. You may not have observed some; indeed about some there is dispute over whether the gift has ceased. Don't worry about this. Just confine yourself to those you have observed. In the last column write the name of the person you have observed in the ministry.

3. Have a time of prayer over your completed list. Answer the following questions.

A. Is there any ministry which you see lacking in the body for which God has given you a burden? If so make this a prayer focus and approach someone who may help you make a start.

B. Is there any person God has burdened you to help in his/her ministry? Approach this person to ask how you can help.

#### **Study #4: Confirmation**

I. The call of God on the apostle Paul (who was known a Saul before his missionary journeys) can be instructive as we see how a person gets into ministry.

Read Acts 9:23-30, 11:19-26 and 13:1-4.

1. How was Barnabus significant in helping Paul get into the ministry?

2. We could look at Barnabus as a mentor to Paul, helping him to learn the basics of the ministry. Often God uses a more experienced believer to help train us in particular ministries. Who might God have as your mentor? Approach this person and ask for help in being trained and getting started in the ministry.

3. Paul's ministry was CONFIRMED by other people. First Barnabus, who saw in Paul a diamond in the rough and recruited him for the work, and later the entire leadership at Antioch confirmed his calling to ministry. Sometimes a person may have a deep burden only to find God has not gifted them in that area. Confirmation is important for us to be certain of the ministry to which God has called us. What are some steps you could take to see if God might give confirmation to your ministry?

II. Often God may use two (or more) gifted people in complementary ways. For example Barnabus seemed to be an encourager (His name upon becoming a Christian means "son of encouragement"), whereas Paul seems much more to be a fiery prophet type. God used both to accomplish his purposes.

1. Who are some people (ministries) who would complement your ministry? (You might look back to study #3)
2. What might be some ways friction might arise between you and those, which have complementary gifts? (see Acts 15:36-40 to see how this often may happen)
3. What are some ways you can avoid this and promote unity in ministry in the midst of diversity of gifts?
4. Who can you begin to recruit to help you in your ministry?