

Finding Our Place In The Church

The Body Of Christ

Our Calling

Until we have found our place in the Body of Christ on earth, the Church, we will never be a totally fulfilled Christian.

God has a place for each one of us, a place of service in the Body of Christ.

Proverbs 27:8 [King James] *“As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place.”*

Nothing is more weak and pitiful than a young fledgling that has fallen out of its nest and cannot get back into it again.

This is how we are in God’s Eyes when we are out of the place that God has prepared for us.

Some translations say we are out of our “*home*”, the place where we should have security and peace of mind.

1 Corinthians 12:27 [NIV] *“Now you are the Body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.”*

We are all parts of the same body and we need to know what part we are so that we can live our lives in the place we were created by God to be living and serving. The hand cannot function well on the end of a leg or the eye placed in the sole of the foot.

We have to find out what part of the body we are and join ourselves to the other appropriate parts of the body.

Our calling is directly related to our place in the body.

2 Timothy 1:9 [Amplified Bible] *“For it was He [God] who delivered and saved us and called us with a calling in itself Holy and leading to Holiness, that is a life of consecration, a vocation of Holiness. He did it not because of anything of merit that we had done, but because of and to further His own purpose and grace, unmerited favour which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began eternal ages ago, before time began.”*

This applies to us who have been saved by accepting in faith the death of Jesus Christ in payment of our own death penalty which is all our “*works*” could earn.

Romans 3:23 [NIV] *“...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...”*

Romans 6:23 [NIV] *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

There are many Christians who are saved but do not know their calling or who have not even tried to find their calling.

Christians who have not found their calling, their place in the Body of Christ, will remain frustrated and unfulfilled until they find their place and enter into their calling in the Body of Christ.

They have an identity crisis, not knowing where they fit into the Body of Christ which is doing the work of Christ on earth today.

1 Thessalonians 5:24 [Amplified] *“Faithful is He who is calling you and utterly trustworthy, and He will also do it, that is fulfil His call by hallowing [making you Holy] and keeping you.”*

Our calling is a Holy calling, by the one who is the totality of Holiness, God.

If we respond to God’s calling, He is faithful and He will enable us to fulfil that calling.

That fulfilling is **not** dependent on our ability but on His, God’s, Grace. More about this “*grace*” of God later.

Our calling was not a “*last minute*” idea of God’s when He saw how we were “*shaping up*” in life.

Romans 8:28-30 [NIV] *“And we know [do we?] that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.”*

Our calling, our place in the Body of Christ on earth, the Church, was planned by God before He created time, at the same “*time*” as Christ’s sacrifice was planned.

Why were we saved and called?

I would like to illustrate this by sharing with you my own preparing, saving and calling by God.

God began preparing me by implanting in me through the encouragement and example of my physical father, an appreciation and passion for knowledge and truth in particular for all of God’s physical Creation, and also an enjoyment found in hard work.

This passion made up for the lack of natural gifts or intellect. God also humbled me often in my youth through poor health and failures, which prepared me to be totally dependent on Him and other people.

God then gave me training in discipline and leadership through experiencing the Outward Bound Sea School in my teens and National Service in the R.A.F. later. Next God brought me in contact with part of His Work which would involve me in sacrifice of my job, many of my friends, and having to put my family and even my marriage in second place to serving Him.

But the instant I accepted this new commitment of my life God gave me the job He wanted me to have, new friends, tenfold over and held my marriage and family together inspite of the dramatic change of lifestyle.

The passion for knowledge and truth was then transferred by God from His Physical Creation to His Spiritual Creation and a deep desire was given to me to serve others and in so doing share this knowledge and truth with them.

All these gifts from God as part of my calling were to be ineffective until through heart-rending personal experience God developed in me other essential attributes that are His.

This painful process started with my first-born child coming to the point of death through the curse of anorexia and it was only God’s direct intervention of personal healing that brought her back to life.

God next turned the great excitement and exhilaration of the birth of my first-born grandchild into sadness as she was born with massive brain damage, but Rachel is the vehicle that God used and continues to use to develop in me part of those great attributes that are Him, love and compassion.

Without these attributes all the truth and knowledge given to us cannot be taught to others effectively.

The life of Jesus Christ is a perfect living example of this: it was His great love for people and His compassion for those in need that drew the people to Him to hear His teaching.

I have honestly sought to make my calling a Holy calling. I seek to give it pre-eminence in my life. All I do, the books I read and the tapes I listen to, harmonise with fulfilling that calling I have from my Creator. I don't always do this perfectly but when I do harmonise with God's Will for me, great peace of mind envelopes me.

Ephesians 2:10 [NIV] *“For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”*

First I want to encourage you to look back over your own life and ask God to show you how He has prepared you by past experience to be saved and called to fill your part in the Body of Christ here on earth.

I then want you to follow the following steps to find and fill your place in the Body of Christ.

Romans 12:1 [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-- this is your spiritual act of worship.”*

A living sacrifice – we are called to sacrifice our lives: give our time, our energy, our natural gifts back to God from where they originated in the first place; give our bodies, mind and spirit [intellect] to God.

When we, as a living sacrifice, give our body, mind and spirit to God, He as owner of our lives accepts responsibility to maintain in good order the property He owns. Our future life in all its aspects is His to use and maintain; allowing us to relax and not worry about our future.

Matthew 6:31-32 [Living Bible] *“Don't worry at all about having enough food or clothing. Why be like the heathen? For they take pride in all these things and are deeply concerned about them. But your Heavenly Father already knows perfectly well that you need them and He will give them to you if you give Him first place in your life and live as He wants you to. So don't be anxious about tomorrow. God will take care of your tomorrow too. Live one day at a time.”*

Have you ever considered our life is made up of “hours” not “minutes”!! Life is to be shared with others, not devoured by selfishness.

How do we make this sacrifice?

(a) Re-study the first 7 chapters of Romans. The pilgrimage to a new spirit-led life, and meet the conditions laid before you.

(b) Enter the doorway to that new life by accepting **Romans 8:1**.

The result of us accepting in faith of the sacrifice of Jesus the Christ in our stead is to become now “without condemnation”, Holy. Prepared by God to then accept the Holy calling from Him.

This leads to a total new perspective on life, a new mind.

Romans 12:2(a) [NIV] *“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”*

We no longer pattern our thinking and lifestyle to that of society.

We think differently.

Religions try to change us from the outside/in. A change of dress, days for worship, rules of conduct, creeds and statements of belief.

God, through Christ [Christianity], makes the changes from the inside/out. God changes first the perspective of our minds which will then be reflected in our lifestyle.

We life and act differently.

Romans 8:5-9 [NIV] *“Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.”*

Until our mind is changed, it is hostile to God and God will not reveal His Plan for our lives to one who is His enemy, that is our hostile mind. But when our mind is renewed by the Holy Spirit through the Mercy of God, then He will reveal His Will for our lives, to us.

This change of mind does not happen overnight; and the discovery of God's Will, is progressive.

Romans 12:2(b) [NIV] *“Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is ... His good, pleasing [or acceptable] and perfect will.”*

- (a) Given the ability to know God's Will by **testing**.
- (b) **“Good”** our life will change for the better. God never wills anything bad for us.
- (c) **“Acceptable”** Faith is key to knowing God's Will for our lives. We tell God we **accept** His Will unconditionally **then** He reveals it to us; as our faith increases.

How is this faith increased?

By reading – Romans 10:17 [NIV] *“Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.”*

By serving – Luke 17:5-10 [NIV] *“The apostles said to the Lord, ‘Increase our faith!’ He replied, ‘If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it will obey you. ‘Suppose one of you had a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Would he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, ‘Come along now and sit down to eat’? Would he not rather say, ‘Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink’? Would he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.’”*

- (d) **“Perfect”** the goal of maturity which we are unlikely fully to attain in this life.

Be realistic about ourselves which we will find to be very humbling if we do it impartially. The only thing that stops us from being realistic about ourselves is pride; when we look in the mirror and exclaim *‘that can’t be me!’* But it is !!

Romans 12:3 [NIV] *“For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.”*

Humility is not a feeling, but a decision we can make.

Jesus gives us an example of this in a parable.

Luke 14:7-11 [NIV] *“When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honour at the table, he told them this parable: ‘When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honour, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, ‘Give this man your seat.’ Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, ‘Friend, move up to a better place.’ Then you will be honoured in the presence of all your fellow guests. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”*

When we are humble there is only one way we can go – up !!

John Bunyan poem:-

*He that is down, needs fear no fall
He that is low, no pride,
He that is humble can ever say
He has God to be His Guide.*

When we are on the floor we can’t go any lower.

Humility is always a decision we make.

- (a) How we think about ourselves.
- (b) Where we place ourselves in company.
- (c) How we relate to other people, look “up to” or “down on” them, mentally.

1 Peter 5:5-6 [NIV] *“Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’ Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.”*

Humility makes us all teachable, we accept God’s Word and this leads to a life that is lived by faith.

Habakkuk 2:4 [Amplified] *“Behold the proud, his soul is not straight or right within him, but the rigidly just and the uncompromisingly righteous man shall live by his faith and in his faithfulness.”*

Romans 1:17 [Amplified] *“For in the gospel a righteousness which God ascribes is revealed, both springing from faith and leading to faith, disclosed by the way of faith that arouses to more faith. The man who through faith is just and upright shall live and shall live by faith.”*

Recognise our God given measure of faith.

Romans 12:3b-5 [NIV] *“...in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.”*

Why does God give us a specific measure of faith?

Our measure of faith fits our appointed place in the body.

Our measure of faith is also a key to our finding our place in the body.

If God wants you to be a hand, He will give you *“hand faith”*.

If God wants you to be a foot, He will give you *“foot faith”*.

If God wants you to be a toe, He will give you *“toe faith”*.

So if we are supposed to be a hand and we are trying to be a foot, we are out of place and without the specific faith to operate as a hand; there is an imbalance between what we are trying to do and the faith given to us.

The reason is not because we don't have enough faith, it is because we are trying to use our faith for something it was not given to accomplish.

My hand does a wonderful job as a hand but I would be in deep trouble if I tried to use my foot to do the same job.

If a person is always struggling for faith, you can conclude they are trying to do the wrong job in the Body of Christ.

Our faith fits the place God has for us in the Church.

When we have discovered what part of the body we are, we have to always remain part of the body and be joined to other appropriate parts of the body so we can work as a whole. If we are a hand we have got to find the arm we should be attached to and work with them, for a hand cannot work without the arm, the arm cannot work without the torso and none of the body works without direct contact with the head – Jesus Christ.

Twelve times in the letter to the Hebrews the writer says *“let us”*, a corporate action; there are many things we cannot achieve by ourselves, we have to find our place in the body.

Our place in the body determines the specific gifts [charismata] we are given.

Just to seek for gifts in the abstract is unrealistic.

Never detach gifts from function.

Romans 12:6 [Amplified] *“Having gifts, faculties, talents, qualities, that differ according to the grace given us, let us use them.”*

Recap steps to find our place:

- (a) Present our body a living sacrifice.
- (b) Be renewed in our mind.
- (c) Discover God's Will for us.

- (d) Be humble and realistic about ourselves.
- (e) Recognise our God given measure of faith.
- (f) Remember our measure of faith fits our appointed place in the body.
- (g) Remember our place determines the gifts God will give us to exercise with and for the body.

Next I want to help you find your place by recognising your gifts [*charismata*] and you may be pleasantly surprised at some of the functions that The Bible classifies as gifts [*charismata*].

Now before you read any further

I want to challenge you to do something you may not have yet done or at least not done fully.

The first step towards finding your place in the Body of Christ the Church.

Lay yourself on the sacrificial altar before God and become a living sacrifice.

Say to God in this simple prayer, *“God, I accept Your Will for me in your body unconditionally. Now please show me what it is so I can get right in the middle of Your Will and function as my appointed part of the Body of Christ on earth.”*

We will all then become fulfilled Christians and have a clear identity of who we are and what God’s Will for us is.

Charismata

“Charismata” is the plural of the word *“charisma”* that is a word used in the New Testament translation as *“gifts”*. In the first part of this study booklet we studied together our calling and place in the Body of Christ on earth the Church.

We saw in scripture:-

1 To be saved is to be called

Our calling is Holy

Dependent on God’s Grace

Decided before time began

2 We are saved and called for good works prepared beforehand

3 We saw seven steps to find our place in Body of Christ

- a) Present our bodies a living sacrifice
- b) Be renewed in our mind
- c) Discover God’s Will
- d) Be humble and realistic about ourselves

- e) Recognise our God-given measure of faith
- f) Realise our measure of faith fits our appointed place in the Body of Christ on earth
- g) Realise our place determines our gifts [*charismata*] which are the tools to do the job that our place in Body demands

Always remember the gifts of the Spirit [*charismata*] are tools **not** toys for our entertainment.

What are “*charismata*”?

In the New Testament there are nine different Greek words all translated “*gift*”. [This can easily be checked by using a Young’s Concordance.]

The only word we are going to study in scripture is “*charisma*” which is the base of the much used and often misused word “*charismatic*”.

The root word of “*charisma*” is “*charis*” which is translated “*grace*” in the New Testament or “*beauty*” in secular Greek.

Which is interesting when we think that the “*grace*” [*charis*] which God offers to us, makes us “*beautiful*”, the way God sees us when we accept His “*grace*” in Christ, the Son of God.

Have you ever considered that the “*sun*” the “*giver of light*” never sees a shadow. The shadow is always on the opposite side of the object.

This then is how God sees us when we have His Son in us – no dark side, only what is bright, beautiful and graceful.

This “*charis*” grace is always a gift; it cannot be earned. Anything that can be earned is **not** grace.

A lot of people are trying to earn God’s Grace by their actions: go to church, say their prayers, read their Bible; but they have never tasted God’s Grace, because they thought they had to become good enough to receive it.

We can never be good enough, we just have to believe; that is why it is so much easier for former dyed deep sinners, like me, to accept this gift rather than those who have tried to earn God’s Grace by obeying His commands and laws and become “*righteous*” in doing so.

Luke 5:31-32 [NIV] “*Jesus answered them, ‘It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.’ ”*

The “*good*” people find it hard to stop being “*good*”.

The fact is scripture tells us that to receive the gift of grace [“*charis*”] we have to stop working at being righteous and just have faith that we will receive the gift of grace [“*charis*”] and have righteousness credited to us as a gift.

Romans 4:4-5 [NIV] “*Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.*”

The wonderful thing about this gift of grace that God is not accountable to anyone as to whom He will offer the gift of grace.

Job 33:12-13 [Amplified] *“God is superior to man. Why do you contend against Him? For He does not give account of any of His actions. Sufficient for us it should be to know that it is He who does them.”*

God’s justice is exact. He can never make a bad judgement.

When we are in God’s Grace [“*charis*”] there should be something about us that makes us beautiful and makes others want what we have.

Sadly this cannot be said about many “*religious*” people !!

“*Charisma*” changes the meaning from general Grace of God to something that is specific in manifestation or impartation or operation of grace.

“*Charismata*” is the plural of “*charisma*”.

“*Charismata*” can be divided into four different groups, and I will do this to help understanding of the whole wide range of “*charismata*” that is mentioned in the New Testament.

Group One – General basic “*charismata*”

These are gifts which all Christians have:

(a) **Romans 5:17** [NIV] *“For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.”*

Righteousness is “*charisma*” [gift] from God.

(b) **Romans 6:23** [NIV] *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

Eternal life is a “*charisma*” [gift] from God.

Note: You receive righteousness **before** you receive eternal life, for God will never give eternal life to anyone who is not made righteous by accepting the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus the Christ, in their stead by faith.

Receiving righteousness as a gift is not the end of the process for having received righteousness [“*dikaisos*”] as a “*charisma*” [gift] we have to “*out work*” this righteousness [“*dikaioma*”] in acts of righteousness to be dressed in our wedding garments at the marriage with Christ.

Revelation 19:7-8 [Living Bible] *“Let us be glad and rejoice and honour Him [Jesus Christ], for the time has come for the wedding banquet of the Lamb and His Bride [the Church – the Body of Christ on the earth – preparing to be one with Him in marriage] has **prepared herself**. She is permitted to wear the cleanest and whitest and finest of linens. [Fine linen represents the good deeds done by the people of God].”*

That righteousness [“good works” – *dikaioma*] is **not** imputed righteousness. First God gives you righteousness [“*dikaisos*”] then you work it out in acts of goodness [“*dikaioma*”].

Philippians 2:12-13 [NIV] *“Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed -- not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence -- continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.”*

God works in righteousness [dikaisos], we work out righteousness [dikaioma].

The very love that God gives us flowing out in compassion to those in need.

John 7:38-39 [Amplified Bible] *“He who believes in me, who cleaves to and trusts in and relies on me, as the scripture has said, out from his innermost being springs and rivers of living water shall flow continuously, but he was speaking here of the Holy Spirit, whom those who believed, trusted in faith in Him were afterwards to receive.”*

God’s Holy Spirit in us, that is God’s Holy Righteousness freely given to us by grace, prompts the loving acts within our lives for the welfare of others.

All the “*charismata*” of God are to be used in the service of others.

God only “works in” as much righteousness as we “work out”.

Group Two – Personal “*charismata*”

1 Corinthians 7:7 [NIV] *“I wish that all men were as I am. But each man has his own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that.”*

Celibacy is a “*charisma*” from God.

I feel John Wesley had this gift for the only major mistake he made in his life was his marriage and it did nothing to add to his ministry.

Matthew 19:10-12 [NIV] *“The disciples said to him, ‘If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry.’ Jesus replied, ‘Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men; and others have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it.’ ”*

Jesus is speaking on the same subject. In this case celibacy was not a gift but a choice and many fine people have chosen to be celibate because of the work they desired to do for God in serving others.

Some of the greatest servants of God were celibate: Paul, Jesus, John the Baptist.

When you study the life style of Paul, if he had married there could have only been two possible results: the inability to complete his ministry or the complete failure of his marriage because of forced neglect.

Group Three – Spiritual “*charismata*”

All of these are gifts of the Holy Spirit and therefore supernatural. Not the result of education, culture or natural abilities.

1 Corinthians 12:7 [NIV] *“Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.”*

The key word is “*manifestation*”. These are gifts that can be perceived by the human senses.

The Holy Spirit in us is invisible but these gifts of the Holy Spirit are ways in which the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is made known as these gifts flow out from us as believers.

Note also “*to each one*”. This indicates to me that some of these gifts should be manifest in every believing Christian.

1 Corinthians 12:11 [NIV] *“All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and He gives them to each one, just as He determines.”*

God does not intend us to live as a born-again Christian without at least one of these spiritual gifts.

These gifts are what God desires as a reality in His Church, normal day by day manifestations of His Holy Spirit at work in the Body of Christ on earth.

1 Corinthians 12:8-10 [NIV] *“To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues.”*

- (a) **Words of wisdom** – day to day use of God’s Word as a practical guide to a way of living.
- (b) **Words of knowledge** – an understanding of God’s Commands and His Nature. The deeper things about God [Theology].
- (c) **Faith** – a general belief and reliance on God in all aspects of life. Sufficient to be a living example to others, *“a man of faith”*, passionate for God’s Way and Word.
- (d) **Healings** – prayers to God that bring about His direct intervention in the lives of others to give them physical, mental or spiritual healing.
- (e) **Miraculous powers** – God manifesting His great Power through us bringing success out of what seems impossible situations, including exorcisms of demons.
- (f) **Prophecy** – forth-telling **not** foretelling, the gift of preaching that expands on God’s Word making it relevant to our day to day life.
- (g) **Discerning of spirits** – to distinguish between what is real and what is merely hysterical. Between what is genuine and what is a product of excited delusion. Between what is from God and what is from Satan.
- (h) **Tongues and interpretation of tongues.** Paul never questioned the reality of these gifts, but he was well aware that they had their dangers. Hysteria, ecstasy and a kind of self-hypnotism are very difficult to separate what is genuine God given and what is self or Satan induced.

Overall this passage of scripture gives us a picture of a Church which was vividly alive. Things happened, in fact astonishing supernatural things happened. There was nothing flat, dull or ordinary about the early Church. Paul knew that all this powerful activity was the work of the Holy Spirit who was giving each person a gift to use for the building up of others in faith, knowledge and maturity.

Group Four – Servant “*charismata*”

These are “*person*” gifts. Christ’s life in a person given to others in sacrifice.

Ephesians 4:7, 11-16 [NIV] *“But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.”* ... *“It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will*

in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work."

The ascending Christ gave gifts to His Body, the Church.

Notice the first gifts He gave was the gifts of leadership, sheep without a shepherd become scattered and lost. Leaderless people are defeated people, Satan knows this and his prime target are those Christ has placed as servant/leaders in His Church.

Remember these gifts are people given by Christ to the Church.

Christ is giving Himself in these people as a gift to the Church.

This is vividly portrayed in the Old Testament sacrifices, the sacrifice laid down its life on the altar before God. Part of it was then given back to the people for them to eat and be nourished.

Genuine and faithful apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers have personally offered their lives as living sacrifices on God's Altar, and God has then handed them back as a gift to the people to nourish and build them up to maturity and service.

It is Christ now in these people who is the real gift and who is doing the work in and through them.

This gift is The Shepherd Jesus Christ living out His life as the shepherd in these people.

What qualifies a person to be a shepherd [pastor] is that Jesus The Shepherd has given Himself back to His people through people He has chosen and placed in the Church.

These gifts are totally sovereign. They do not depend on the worldly qualification of the person involved or human election.

A Church does not elect a pastor; a Church does not hire a pastor.

If you have a hired pastor you have a hireling, not a shepherd.

John 10:11-15 [NIV] *"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me -- just as the Father knows me and I know the Father -- and I lay down my life for the sheep."*

The choice is not ours, the Church is governed from above, it is not a democracy.

The head over all things is Jesus, and He operates downwards and the first level of operation is these five gifts, of apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers.

Without this system of authority the Church would not function as God intended it to operate.

A person only becomes a shepherd [pastor] when Jesus begins to shepherd His Flock through that person, they cannot make themselves a shepherd [pastor] by taking on the name.

There are very definite standards in God's Word to judge the claim to being a shepherd [pastor].

I prefer to use the word shepherd [or Elder] because pastor is such a "*religious*" word.

Our image of a "*pastor*" is a man in a dark suit behind a speaking stand, while our image of a "*shepherd*" is that of a man in working clothes in open fields with living creatures.

The “*shepherd*” image fits that of Jesus’ Life here on earth more closely. He was a working man most often in the fields or on the highway.

Our thinking has been distorted by tradition and a misuse of words. We need to get back to the use of the words we read in The Bible as they were used in the days when it was written.

A pastor [shepherd] was a servant; an apostle was one who was sent by the Church to do a task of work in a certain place at a certain time, or with a certain message to give.

Romans 12:4-6(a) [NIV] *“Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us.”*

Note all gifts are linked with God’s Grace.

If we don’t understand “*grace*” we cannot understand the distribution of these gifts.

God is very practical. He doesn’t give us a job to perform without giving us the tools to accomplish that job.

One major problem in the Church is that many dedicated Christians are trying to do a job for God that God hasn’t given them the measure of faith [*“grace”*] or gifts [*“charismata”*] to accomplish that job.

Have you ever noticed that God seems to give these gifts to the people we think least deserve them?

Very often it is the “*religious unqualified*” who receive these gifts from God, being “*qualified*” in God’s sight.

Romans 12:6-8 [Amplified] *“Having gifts that differ according to the grace given us let us use them. He whose gift is prophecy. Let him prophecy according to the proportion of his faith. He whose gift is practical service, let him give himself to serving. He who teaches, to his teaching. He who exhorts, encourages, to his exhortation. He who contributes, let him do it in simplicity and liability. He who gives aid and superintends, with zeal and singleness of mind. He who does acts of mercy, with genuine cheerfulness and joyful eagerness.”*

Paul lists here gifts [*“charismata”*]

- (a) **Prophecy** –Greek “*prophetia*” inspired speaker “speaking forth of the mind and counsel of God to edify, to comfort, and to encourage the believers. In measure the teacher has taken the place of the Old Testament prophet [2 Peter 2:1]. The difference is that the message of the Old Testament prophet was a direct revelation of the Mind of God for the specific occasion, the message of the teacher [New Testament prophet] is gathered from the completed revelation [through Jesus Christ] contained in the scriptures”.
- (b) **Practical service** – personal abilities or crafts from sawing wood to sowing, from plumbing to pottery.
- (c) **Teaching** – Greek “*didaskalos*” to instruct or to train – an ability to express knowledge in an easily discerned way. A special ability not given to everyone.
- (d) **Exhorts** – to encourage others, by having belief in their abilities and a positive approach to life in general.
Acts 4:36 [NIV] *“Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement)...”*
Barnabas was given his name because of the gift he had obviously been given by God to encourage others.
Greek means to “*cheer up*” if depressed or to “*stir up*” if lazy.

- (e) **Contribute** – God blesses some with the gift of acquiring wealth and then expects them to share this with others in need in the Church or for supporting the Church in general.
- (f) **Gives Aid and Superintends** – leadership that is a direct help to others in a form of serving others, with others' welfare the only thought in their mind. Greek word means *“to stand out in front”*, to protect and lead.
- (g) **Showing Mercy** – Greek *“eleeo”* to feel sympathy with the misery of another, especially sympathy manifested in acts. To relate and to respond to another's hurt. This is a reflection of the mercy that God extends to us that results in our peace of mind.
- (h) **Hospitality** – Greek *“philoxenos”* made up of two words *“friendly”* and *“stranger”*. The gift of being able to make strangers welcome. To *“feel at home”*. This is emphasised as a needful quality by God in both the Old Testament and the New Testament.
1 Peter 4:9-10 [NIV] *“Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.”*
- (i) **Helps** – the gift of administration. All leaders need those whom they can depend on to help by administrating in some particular way, in any church fellowship. People who use such a gift are essential to the smooth running and effectiveness of the fellowship. Most times this is work done behind the scenes which is only noticed when it is not performed.
1 Corinthians 12:28 [NIV] *“And in the Church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues.”*

God has set each of us in the Body of Christ with a specific part to play, and has prepared us long before we were born to fulfil that part.

Therefore out of humble gratitude for all that God has done for us, let us seek that place and then use the gifts we have received to build up the Body of Christ – His Church.

Training and Equipping by God

Training and equipping; the *“religious”* word used in The Bible is disciple. The Greek word *“mathetes”* to learn by following. A disciple is not only a pupil, but an adherent, or imitator of his teacher.

John 8:31 [NIV] *“To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.”*

Faithful to the teaching of Christ.

John 13:35 [NIV] *“By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*

True disciples are recognised by their actions.

John 15:8 [NIV] *“This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”*

Equipped by Christ to bear fruit.

Acts 9:36 [NIV] *“In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which, when translated, is Dorcas), who was always doing good and helping the poor.”*

The totality of our life is to express our discipleship.

Too often the use of the words “disciple of Christ” is limited to preaching or teaching. Here we see this lady was confirming her discipleship of Christ by using the “charismata” she had received, that of serving and hospitality.

Isaiah 54:13 [NIV] *“All your sons will be taught by the LORD, and great will be your children’s peace.”*

True training and equipping must come from God; proof that it does come from God is peace of mind.

If the teaching and equipping we are receiving is not bringing peace, then we should question if it is from God or from man.

Acts 20:27-30 [NIV] *“For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the Church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.”*

A directive to those who are leaders [elders] in the Church to realise that false teachers, not from God, could make disciples of some in the Church, by distorting, Greek “disatropho” two words meaning the act of turning away, misinterpreting, corrupting, the truth.

Human discipling only produces a “sect” in the Church or a “cult” out of the Church by the translating of scripture.

Discipling is the next step on to maturity from teaching.

A teacher at school will teach a child knowledge, but it is the parent who should train a child. It is God our Father who trains us through Word [Jesus Christ] to become Christ’s disciples. It is God who also equips us to do the job by gifts, just as a human parent passes on certain talents and authority to their children.

Matthew 10:1 [NIV] *“He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.”*

Given to the disciples just before Jesus sent them out to do a job of work.

We can be taught year in and year out but unless this trains us by prompting us to acting on what we are being taught, we can never become disciples of Christ.

James 2:14-20 [NIV] *“What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, “Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that--and shudder. You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless?”*

We can really believe what we are being taught but unless this teaching turns to acts it is useless, we will never mature as God intends.

How then do we turn teaching into discipling [training and equipping]?

1 Choose to become committed to God's Will – obedience to God

John 7:17 [NIV] *“If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.”*

We then will not be deceived by false teachers seeking disciples.

John 13:17 [NIV] *“Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.”*

Act on teaching.

One young girl refusing to attend Bible study class made her excuse *“I already know more than I do”*. How true this can be !

2 Humble ourselves – by fearing God

Psalms 25:8-9 [NIV] *“Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in his ways. He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way.”*

Acknowledge and repent of our sins by humbly accepting God's Grace.

Psalms 25:12 [NIV] *“Who, then, is the man that fears the LORD? He will instruct him in the way chosen for him.”*

Fear God by treating Him as God, the One who is Sovereign. [Supreme in all things].

Some people have to learn the hard way through painful trials, because they will not learn through humility. God has to bring them to the point where they cry out from the heart *“please God, help me, for no-one else will or can”*.

3 Endurance and patience

Endurance is active.

Hebrews 12:1 [NIV] *“...run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”*

[Good News Bible] *“determination”* [Amplified] *“endurance”*.

Greek *“hupomone”* cheerful or hopeful endurance.

Patience is much harder, it is waiting passively. It is standing back and letting God take the initiative.

Psalms 40:1-2 [NIV] *“I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; He set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.”*

Waiting on God until He acts for us.

James 5:7-8 [NIV] *“Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.”*

Stand still and wait, Greek “*makrothumeo*” to be long-suffering – long-spirited [temper with a long fuse] – forbearing.

This patience is linked to faith.

Hebrews 6:11-12 [NIV] *“We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.”*

This patience brings with it promises. If we are impatient, we take the initiative out of God’s Hands and do not accept Him as Sovereign.

Hebrews 6:15 [NIV] *“And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised.”*

Many of God’s great leaders had these characteristics.

It is God as our teacher who sets the schedule.

We as God’s pupils do not decide when or what He teaches us.

All the time God is not only feeding us information He is shaping our character through endurance and patience.

4 By serving

Matthew 20:25-28 [NIV] *“Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave-- just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*

Jesus shows that the pathway to leadership is through serving, not the way the world seeks authority.

The key to having authority is being under authority.

If you want to have authority you have to become a servant – Greek “*diakonos*” an attendant, waiter, deacon; but the one who will be greatest must become a slave – Greek “*doulos*” a bond slave – a person with no personal rights.

The higher up you want to go, the lower down you have to start.

1 Peter 5:5-6 [NIV] *“Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.”*

How does God train and equip us?

1 Directly by God Himself

If God wants to start something new in His Word or in the Church, He trains and equips a person directly Himself.

Examples of this are Moses, David, Elijah, John the Baptist, Jesus, Paul.

Jesus:-

John 5:19-20 [NIV] *“Jesus gave them this answer: ‘I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these.’”*

Jesus never took the initiative Himself.

John 5:26-27 [NIV] *“For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.”*

Always the direction came from the Father.

John 14:9-10 [NIV] *“Jesus answered: Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.”*

All Jesus' words and actions were the Father working through Him.

Paul:-

Galatians 1:15-17 [NIV] *“But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not consult any man, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus.”*

Taught and trained directly by Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 3:1-7 [NIV] *“For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles-- Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power.”*

Taught and empowered by the Holy Spirit

2 By those who had been taught directly by God

Moses trained Joshua.

Elijah trained Elisha.

Jesus trained the 12 Apostles.

Paul trained Timothy [and others].

3 By a seven-stage process

A good example of this is the training of Timothy.

(a) **2 Timothy 1:5, 3:15** [NIV] *“I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.” ... “...and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”*

The bed rock of his training was learning God's Word as a child.

- (b) **Acts 16:1-2** [NIV] *“He came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was a Jewess and a believer, but whose father was a Greek. The brothers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him.”*
Gained approval in the local church which is extremely important. He had earned a good reputation by proving he was willing to serve others.
- (c) **1 Timothy 4:14** [NIV] *“Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you.”*
Ordained for a job of work and received gift [*charisma*] from God to do the work.
2 Timothy 1:6 [NIV] *“For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.”*
Encouraged not to neglect the gift [*charisma*] he had supernaturally received.
- (d) **Philippians 2:22** [NIV] *“But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel.”*
Served as an apprentice with Paul his teacher.
- (e) **1 Corinthians 4:17** [NIV] *“For this reason I am sending to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.”*
Was then able to represent Paul his teacher who trusted him and had faith in his ability to fulfil the job given him to do on Paul's behalf.
1 Timothy 1:3-4 [NIV] *“As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. These promote controversies rather than God's work-- which is by faith.”*
Instructions that Paul expected Timothy to be able to carry out.
- (f) **2 Timothy 4:1-5** [NIV] *“In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage-- with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.”*
Here Paul was encouraging Timothy as a fellow minister with his own responsibilities *“your ministry”*.
- (g) **2 Timothy 2:2** [NIV] *“And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.”*
Timothy then was given the job to train other men to teach others to start their training as God empowered them with gifts to further the expansion of the Kingdom of God.

We are all called to follow this course of training and empowering with the special gifts [*charisma*] that God has given us individually.

When we do live our lives to God as a *“living sacrifice”* [**Romans 12:1**] He will reveal our calling and empower us to fulfil that calling.

It is through recognising these gifts that we can find our place in the Body of Christ [the Church].

One of the greatest benefits I have experienced by applying the principles revealed in the scriptures that we have studied is peace of mind.

John 14:27 [NIV] *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”*