

Why *MUST* a Christian Serve?

... ¹¹It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, ¹²to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³until 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. – Ephesians 4:11-13

It is the duty of those whom God has called to equip His church to do so by providing the Word of God to the Body of Christ. Then, according to gifts that the Spirit provides to every believer, the ministry is carried forth. But, not everyone buys into this. One must wonder if this is because we are more prone to think of ourselves and our involvement in ministry as “a thing we do” rather than as “who we are” in Jesus. Why must a Christian serve Christ according to his or her gift?

To Render the Body of Christ Whole

⁷Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good ...

¹²The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ ...

²⁷Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. – 1 Corinthians 12:7, 12, 27

This is the part of the answer with which we are most familiar. The church is a body. When one part, no matter how seemingly visible or invisible is not functioning or working properly, the whole is not at peak capacity. When I foolishly try to recapture my youth at the gym playing basketball, I inevitably walk away with an ache or pain. I might say “I jammed my finger,” but it is still “my” finger and it would not be at all unnatural to say, “I am in pain,” as opposed to “My finger is in pain.”

But we are accustomed to such language and illustrations and, in some ways, it only continues to reinforce the notion that my spiritual gift defines “what I do” rather than “who I am.” Why else must a Christian serve Christ according to his or her gift?

To Render Oneself Whole in Christ

We do what is good because we are cooperating with God as He renews us to be like Jesus. Jesus patterned for us perfectly something that has been marred in the best of men since Adam and Eve sinned – a life flawlessly lived out according to the will of God. To live like Christ is to live according to God's perfect design for man. In other words, to live like Christ is to live more like the people we were intended to be.

We will never be sinless in this life so long as we are shackled to this mortal body and the old man of sin who resides there with us. Sinless perfection in this life is not the point behind obedience, spiritual giftedness or our service to God. But, these things are a means to living more like Christ lived, not merely for the sake of the corporate church, but also for the sake of taking us in the direction of the righteousness of Christ.

²¹Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? ²²You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. ²³And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. ²⁴You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone. – James 2:20-24

© 2005 by R. Karl Crouch, 551 Abbeyville Road, Lancaster, PA 17603