

# PROGRESSING TOGETHER



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## CHRISTIAN SERVICE



We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us.

If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

Romans 12:6-8

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## CHRISTIAN SERVICE

### Introduction

*"He died for all, that those that live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again."*

(2 Corinthians 5:15)

The life of the Christian has some tremendous advantages and privileges. However, at the same time the believer in Christ faces great challenges and responsibilities. You have already understood this as you meditated on these truths in previous lessons. You have seen what this means with respect to persecution, to spiritual warfare and your relationships with other people. A Christian lives for God and for other people. This is how we show our love for Christ and our commitment to the Kingdom of God. The Bible makes it very clear that as God's people we are redeemed in order to worship God and to serve our neighbor. Worship comes first but then we are called upon also to serve our God. If Jesus Christ is Lord by virtue of being our creator and savior, he holds the full right to call us into His Service. In the lessons that follow we shall seek to understand why we should serve God, what Christian service entails and how we can attain the designation of being called a faithful servant.

<b>Lessons:</b>	
<b>1</b>	The motivation behind Christian Service - Why serve?
<b>2</b>	The model for Christian Service - Who is our example?
<b>3</b>	Principles of Christian Service - Who is qualified to serve?
<b>4</b>	Objectives and extent of Christian Service - What is our goal?
<b>5</b>	The power behind Christian Service - How does God equip His servants?

We often think of service in terms of menial tasks. It all depends on the cause we serve and on the character of the Master. In these two aspects the Christian is in the best possible position. He serves the most noble of causes and the Master he serves is the best there is. Truly our whole being should be offered to the Lord and to His service. "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward" Col 3.23-24

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## CHRISTIAN SERVICE

The MOTIVATION behind Christian service; Why serve?



**Read carefully Romans 12.1-21; 1 Corinthians 6.19, 20; and 1 Peter 2.9,10**



What is the motivation for Christian service and for what reason does God call us to serve Him? It is obvious that God is greater than any human being and therefore we could say that He has the right to demand service from His subjects. Some think that service is a partial payment for all that He gives to His creatures day after day. Another way we might think of service is as a way of getting from Him what we really want: "we get Him to do what we can't do for ourselves". For some, Christian Service might be termed as an expression of their love for God. The questions that follow will help us to understand why we serve God and what this means to each individual believer.

- ① ✍ In 1 Corinthians 6.19-20, On what basis does the Apostle Paul say "*you are not your own?*" What are the implications of this statement?

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- ② ✍ Romans 12.1 uses the word "*therefore*" and goes on to call the believer to present his body as a living sacrifice which is acceptable to God. Can you explain why Paul uses the word "*therefore*"?

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In verse 2 Paul instructs us to do 2 things, one negative and one positive. Explain these two things in your own words.

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What is the purpose of these two actions?

③  A key element of Christian Service relates to our attitudes. What is the attitude that is underlined in Romans 12.3 and why is it important?

Can you think of other attitudes referred to in the Bible that contribute significantly to the quality of our service?

 Read as well the rest of the chapter especially the verse 16.

④  One part of Christian service is directly related to the Body of Christ, the Church.

 The Holy Spirit distributes spiritual gifts to enable us to serve the Lord. Everyone has received different gifts. Make a list of ways to serve the Church according to the gifts mentioned in Romans 12.6-9.

Service given	How it is exercised	A practical example taken from your own life
Prophecy	<i>according to faith</i>	<i>sharing in a meeting</i>
Serving		
Teaching		
Encouraging		
Giving		
Leadership		
Showing mercy		

 There are other lists of spiritual gifts in 1Cor 12.4-11,27-31 ; Eph 4.11-16.

⑤  Christian Service also relates to the wider scope of the Kingdom of God. Jesus tells us that we should let our light shine in a dark world. (Matthew 5.16) The New Testament abounds with exhortations to the People of God to be witnesses of the Gospel.

 1 Peter 2.9-10 gives an excellent summary of this calling: Re-write these verses in your own words.

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**CHRISTIAN SERVICE****The MODEL for Christian Service; Who is our example?****Read John 10.1-29 carefully**

Models or examples carry strong messages. They show us how we are to act in a given situation and inspire us to imitate them. The highest model of Christian Service is Jesus Christ himself. One of the best-known figures of speech Jesus used to describe his ministry on earth is that of the shepherd. In the passage cited above he calls himself the Good Shepherd. The shepherd theme appears frequently throughout the Bible. One reason for this is that people are so similar to sheep in their weaknesses and helplessness. In Matthew 9.36 we read of Jesus viewing the multitudes and feeling compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. Our role as Christian servants is clarified by meditating on this powerful model. Everyone needs a shepherd.



- ① As Christian servants we relate to people. After the priority of knowing God, what is required of a shepherd (or servant) with respect to his sheep? (verse 14). According to you, how would this relate to Christian Service?



- ② A primary responsibility of the Christian is to seek the lost. Since Christ is the Savior, how would you define the Christian's calling according to verse 16? (Also compare with Luke 15.3-7).



- ③ Sheep (people) in general have vast needs, be it in the material or psychological or spiritual realms. Christian Service demands that we live for others the way Jesus did. What did Jesus mean by verse 11?

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How could this be applied to you personally in any area of service?

Why do "under shepherds" (Christian servants) have such a difficult role?

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④  Jesus talks in this chapter about caring for the sheep. Before going to heaven he told Peter to, "*Feed my lambs*". (John 21.15)

 How can you follow the example of Jesus? Think of those with whom you are in contact.

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⑤  One obvious problem with sheep is their manifest inability to perceive danger. What did Jesus mean by the verses 9, 10 and 12?

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Who is the thief and who are the wolves?

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Verses 27-29 point out that the Good Shepherd guarantees the security of his sheep. To what degree are Christian servants responsible for the safety of the sheep?



In the remoter areas of the Atlas mountains of Morocco shepherds still care for their flock today in the same manner as at the time of Jesus. They take their sheep out during the day for grazing and return them to a sheep fold at night. The walls of the sheep fold are made of thorns and brush and cactus. Neither predatory animal nor thief can penetrate them. The only access is by the doorway. Here the shepherd himself lies down at night and becomes "the door". Any danger threatening the sheep must first encounter the shepherd who is committed to defending his flock with his life.

**3**

## CHRISTIAN SERVICE

### PRINCIPLES of Christian Service; Who is qualified to serve?



#### Read 1 Timothy 4, 2 Timothy 1 and 2 carefully



Let's examine some of the fundamental principles involved in fruitful service. Our focus will be the life of Timothy to whom the Apostle Paul wrote two letters. Timothy is referred to as Paul's "*son in the faith*". Later he became the Apostle's faithful colleague and after that assumed the responsibility as pastor of the church in Ephesus. Timothy was of a timid nature, but his whole life was dedicated to the service of others and of his Lord.



① In 1 Timothy 4.1-6, Paul mentions first of all several dangerous false teachings. What must Timothy do to fight them.

In 1 Timothy 4.6-8 we read about some disciplines of a Christian servant. Identify these four aspects of Christian service and explain why they are so important.



② In the last lesson we looked at the high model of our Lord. 1 Timothy 4.12-16 Paul gives a number of exhortations to church leaders. Draw up a full list of these qualifications and grade yourself on a scale of 1 to 5, using 5 as the highest level. Then get a trusted brother to grade you on the same qualifications. Compare the results.

Qualifications of a servant	Your grade	The grade given by the brother
<i>V 12 set an example for the believers in all things</i>		
<i>V13 be devoted to public reading, preaching and teaching the word</i>		

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③ Every believer is called to be a servant of Christ. Many are called to live for Christ right where they live. Others are called to assume specific responsibilities. Still others are called to serve in a foreign culture. Whatever our task may be, we need the strength that only God can provide.



Complete the following as drawn from 2 Timothy 1.7-8:

God has not given us a spirit of ( \_\_\_\_\_ ), but of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and of \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_. So do not be ashamed of \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_to our Lord, nor of me, his prisoner. But \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ with me for the Gospel in the \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ that God provides.

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④  Do you sometimes think that a servant of Christ has an easy life? The Apostle Paul instructs his disciple Timothy to be prepared for suffering.



Why do Christian servants suffer hardship (2 Timothy 2.3-10)?

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How can we prepare ourselves for this?

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How can we maintain a positive attitude when the struggle is difficult? Look at Paul's attitude and example in 2 Timothy 4.14-18.

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⑤  Reread 2 Timothy 2.19-22. In verse 21 Paul gives a principle which is fundamental to Christian service.



What is this principle?

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What does this principle mean for you in actual practice?

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Why is this principle so crucial in Christian service?

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**CHRISTIAN SERVICE****The OBJECTIVES and EXTENT of Christian service. What is our goal?****Read Philippians 1-2.11, Matthew 28.18-20 carefully**

As servants of the one true God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) it is very important that we understand the objectives of our service. What are we aiming at? How will we know if we are in fact being effective servants? Are there measuring sticks? Nothing is more frustrating than being engaged in some activity and yet not knowing if we are achieving our objectives. There are many specific and worthy objectives that could be cited, but what we want to underline in this lesson are the primary objectives for Christian service. Can you think what some of these might be?

- ①  The first chapter of Philippians outlines and exemplifies the goal of Christian service. According to verses 20 and 21 what is the primary objective of Christian service?



Read as well the Apostle's magnificent statement in Galatians 2.20.

- ②  Intercessory prayer is also part of Christian service (Ph 1.3-11). Why is this important?

 Read Paul's prayer for the Philippians (1.9-11) several times and itemize the major requests formulated.

V9	That their love may abound
V9	In...
V9	and in...
V10	
V10	
V11	

 What is the "fruit of righteousness" in a believer's life? Be specific. (see also Phil 2.15.)

- ③ ✍️ Paul was put in prison because of his fearless preaching of the Gospel to Jew and Gentile. To whom did he witness while in prison? (1.13)

What were the intense desires of the Apostle's heart? (1.18,23-26)

Can you think of anyone who does not need to hear the Gospel?

- ④ ✍️ One part of Christian service is undertaken in the Body of Christ, which is the Church. How would you summarize the exhortations of Philippians 2.1-5?

What is the logic or importance of being of service to other Christians?

How can we resist the temptation of trying to take advantage of others?

- ⑤ 🕯️ Sharing the message of Christ with people from our own culture is easier than speaking to those whose world view and language is very different from ours. It is well known that people from another culture have a different vision of ethics (good and evil), different priorities in life and the reality of the world. In Matthew 28.18-20, Christ's last words before he ascended to heaven include a call to cross-cultural witness.

✍️ What declaration does Jesus make in verse 18?

✍️ List the different parts of the commission in verses 19-20a.

Go (to all nations)
Teach them to obey all that Jesus commanded

 What promise does Jesus give in verse 20b?

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Was this charge given to the eleven disciples, the church or to each believer?

 What is your perspective on Christian service? By this I mean how do you think of it with respect to yourself? A common attitude in the church is to consider it the affair of a few specialists. The Bible makes it plain that every Christian is called to participate. Others think of it as a drudgery that must be endured as part payment for their salvation. This reminds me of the two workmen at a building site who were asked what they were doing. One said he was shoveling dirt and gravel eight hours a day. The other man when asked lifted his eyes from the ground toward the construction and said, "I'm building a cathedral". How do you see your role?



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## CHRISTIAN SERVICE

The POWER behind Christian service. How does God equip his servant?



**Read Acts 1 and 2, John 15.1-17 carefully**



Christian service is impossible without divine enabling. As His servants, we are born of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3.5), and we are to walk in the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5.16) and we are to bear fruit by the Spirit who indwells us (Gal 5.22, 23). The prophet Zechariah gives a clear indication of this principle when he says: *"Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord Almighty"*. (Zechariah 4.6)

Most of us try so hard to accomplish by human effort what only God can do. After all, bringing people to repentance and faith, and then instructing them in the way of Truth, is a superhuman task requiring divine strength. It is in this sense that we speak of "spiritual power"; i.e. obtaining the necessary capacity, wisdom and grace so as to make a lasting impact for good in the lives of others. The command therefore comes to each servant, and for that matter each believer, "be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5.18). May God give each of us understanding as to what that means for each one of us.



Be sure to read and meditate on the two passages cited above before proceeding with answering the following questions.

① Acts 1.8 is a direct promise of power made to Christ's disciples. To what purpose?



Why the reference to three spheres of witness?



Find these three zones on a map of Palestine in your Bible.

② Who preached the great sermon on the day of Pentecost?

Trace the experience of this Apostle in Acts 1 and 2 with respect to the Holy Spirit in his life.

What difference or transformation can we see in him through the Spirit's presence?

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③  What is the theme of John 15.1-17?

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How do you explain the command to "*remain in me*"?

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Why is this so crucial? (verse 5)

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In verses 1-11 the believer is shown three aspects of "remaining" in Christ (v7,10 & 12). What are they?

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What promises are given to those who remain in Christ in these ways?

④  The filling of God's Spirit equals power for service. There are three main steps to know that filling. They are:

 **STEP ONE:** Affirm your faith in Christ. (Acts 4.12 and 1 John 4.13, 14)

 **STEP TWO:** Confess all known sin and ask for His forgiveness (1 John 1.9)

 **THIRD STEP:** Ask God to grant us His Spirit and filling (Luke 11.13).

 With this in mind, read John 15.16. Find the things that God has already done for His servants and describe those that He wants to do for them.

⑤  The Evil one hates fruitful Christians because they disturb his control in the world. Thus we should be conscious of the fact that he tries to find a way to rob us of the blessing and power of the Holy Spirit.

 Meditate on verses 6, 7, 10 and 12 in John 15 and list the priorities which, if neglected in a servant's life, will bring spiritual weakness.

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 Jesus in his parable of the sower refers to a common problem that causes fruitlessness. What is it? (Matthew 13.7, 22)

 Much more could be said about the "Spirit's filling for service". We have merely introduced some of the issues via this course. For a profound treatment of the subject, I am strongly recommending that you read Ralph Shallis' book, "From now on".

 A serious young Christian was talking with his pastor on the filling of the Spirit of God. In a rather desperate tone of voice the young man exclaimed, "Pastor, what is the use of telling me to be filled; I am as full of cracks as that basket." So saying he pointed to a tattered wastepaper bin at hand. Praying for God's help in answering the young man, a flash of inspiration illuminated the Pastor's mind: "You say you are as full as cracks as that basket? My brother, if that basket, so filled with holes, be lowered into the sea, it will be filled and will remain full. If it then abides in the ocean it will remain full, it cannot be emptied. The basket only loses its contents if it is lifted from the sea. If you abide in Christ you will always be filled with the Holy Spirit". Surely, therein lies the secret of all continuing blessedness and the fullness of the Spirit's power. (Daily Bread, 14 Dec. 1960)