

A United Work

“And [Christ appointed different responsibilities and offices] . . . for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith” (Ephesians 4:11–13).

“ ‘The church must flee to God’s Word and become established upon gospel order, which has been overlooked and neglected.’ This is indispensably necessary in order to bring the church into the unity of the faith.”—*Early Writings*, p. 100.

Suggested Reading: *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 91, 92, 95, 96.

1. A Key To Progress

- a. Does Christ call us to labor independently from all others or does He want us to work in unity with those who submit to God? On what condition would the early church go forth from victory to victory? John 17:21-23.
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“As [the disciples of the early church] should continue to labor unitedly, heavenly messengers would go before them, opening the way; hearts would be prepared for the reception of truth. . . . Nothing could withstand her onward progress.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 91.

- a. John 17:21-23 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. 22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: 23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

1. A Key To Progress

- b. If the disciples failed to labor unitedly as the body of Christ, what would they be able to do? John 15:4, 5.
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“The proclamation of the gospel was to be worldwide in its extent, and the messengers of the cross could not hope to fulfill their important mission unless they should remain united in the bonds of Christian unity.”—Ibid., p. 90.

- b. John 15:4-5 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. 5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

2. Choosing Men and Women For God's Service

- a. As the membership of the early church grew, what step was taken in harmony with gospel order? Acts 6:2, 3. Who selected the men to be ordained as deacons? What moral and spiritual qualities were considered as a main requirement?
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“[Acts 6:2–4 quoted.] The church accordingly selected seven men full of faith and the wisdom of the Spirit of God, to attend to the business pertaining to the cause.”—*The Story of Redemption*, p. 260.

“[Acts 6:1–7 quoted.] The Lord here gives us an example of the care that should be exercised when choosing men for His service.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1056.

- a. Acts 6:2-3 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. 3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

2. Choosing Men and Women For God's Service

- b. How was God consulted by the congregation concerning these candidates for ordination? Acts 6:6. How should we follow the example of the early Christians in this regard? Acts 13:1-3.
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“Brethren of experience and of sound minds should assemble, and following the Word of God and the sanction of the Holy Spirit, should, with fervent prayer, lay hands upon those who have given full proof that they have received their commission of God, and set them apart to devote themselves entirely to His work. This act would show the sanction of the church to their going forth as messengers to carry the most solemn message ever given to men.”—*Early Writings*, p. 101.

b. Acts 6:6 Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.

Acts 13:1-3 Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. 3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

2. Choosing Men and Women For God's Service

- c. How were they able to have a united influence upon the entire flock? 1 Corinthians 1:10; 2:16.
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“The order that was maintained in the early Christian church made it possible for them to move forward solidly as a well-disciplined army clad with the armor of God. The companies of believers, though scattered over a large territory, were all members of one body; all moved in concert and in harmony with one another.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 95, 96.

c. 1 Corinthians 1:10 Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

1 Corinthians 2:16 For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

3. Qualifications for Good Christian Service

- a. What qualifications should prospective soul winners develop under the direction of the Holy Spirit? Matthew 9:38; 1 Timothy 3:2-7. Why is self-education necessary?
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“The work committed to the disciples would require great efficiency; for the tide of evil ran deep and strong against them.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 31.

“Those in the service of God must show animation and determination in the work of winning souls.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 418.

“Those who make no decided effort, but simply wait for the Holy Spirit to compel them to action, will perish in darkness.”—*Christian Service*, p. 228.

a. Matthew 9:38 Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.

1 Timothy 3:2-7 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; 3 Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; 4 One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; 5 (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) 6 Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. 7 Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

3. Qualifications for Good Christian Service

- b. Genuineness, integrity: 2 Corinthians 6:3; 1 Peter 3:16.
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“Paul carried with him the atmosphere of heaven. All who associated with him felt the influence of his union with Christ. The fact that his own life exemplified the truth he proclaimed, gave convincing power to his preaching. Here lies the power of the truth. The unstudied, unconscious influence of a holy life is the most convincing sermon that can be given in favor of Christianity. Argument, even when unanswerable, may provoke only opposition; but a godly example has a power that it is impossible wholly to resist.”—*Gospel Workers*, p. 59.

b. 2 Corinthians 6:3 Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed:

1 Peter 3:16 Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

3. Qualifications for Good Christian Service

- c. **Decorum, courtesy, politeness (Christian dignity):** Colossians 4:6.
Humility: Matthew 3:16; John 3:30.
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“The man of God, the minister of Christ, is required to be thoroughly furnished unto all good works. A pompous minister, all dignity, is not needed for this good work. But decorum is necessary in the desk. A minister of the gospel should not be regardless of his attitude.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 648.

“The minister of Christ should possess sobriety, meekness, love, long-suffering, forbearance, pity, and courtesy. He should be circumspect, elevated in thought and conversation, and of blameless deportment. This is gospel dignity.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 568, 569.

c. Colossians 4:6 Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

Matthew 3:16 And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove,

and lighting upon him:

John 3:30 He must increase, but I must decrease.

4. More Qualifications for Good Christian Service

- a. Tact: 2 Timothy 2:22–26. Honesty, faithfulness: Acts 6:3; 1 Corinthians 4:2.
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“If a man has tact, industry, and enthusiasm, he will make a success in temporal business, and the same qualities, consecrated to the work of God, will prove even doubly efficient; for divine power will be combined with human effort.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 276.

“When responsibilities are to be entrusted to an individual, the question is not asked whether he is eloquent or wealthy, but whether he is honest, faithful, and industrious; for whatever may be his accomplishments, without these qualifications he is utterly unfit for any position of trust.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 413.

a. 2 Timothy 2:22-26 Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. 23 But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. 24 And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, 25 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; 26 And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

Acts 6:3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

1 Corinthians 4:2 Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.

4. More Qualifications for Good Christian Service

- b. Sober-mindedness (having cautious, moderate ideas, and calm judgment): Titus 1:8; 1 Peter 1:13; 5:8. Cleanliness, tidiness, orderliness: 1 Corinthians 14:40.
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“Ministers should love order and should discipline themselves, and then they can successfully discipline the church of God and teach them to work harmoniously like a well-drilled company of soldiers. . . .

“Angels . . . turn away in grief, for they are not authorized to bless confusion, distraction, and disorganization.”—Ibid., vol. 1, p. 649.

- b. Matthew 5:7 Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

4. More Qualifications for Good Christian Service

c. Mental culture, cultured speech, correct language: 2 Timothy 2:15.

“Men have labored with a measure of success who have had little training in school or college; but these might have attained a greater measure of success, and might have been more efficient laborers, if at the very start they had acquired mental discipline.”—*Gospel Workers*, p. 92.

“Unless we can clothe our ideas in appropriate language, of what avail is our education?”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 380.

“The right culture and use of the power of speech has to do with every line of Christian work. . . . We should accustom ourselves to speak in pleasant tones, to use pure and correct language, and words that are kind and courteous.”—*Christian Service*, p. 223.

2 Timothy 2:15

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

5. Cooperation

- a. What lesson should we learn from farm work before we can expect the Lord to bless our evangelistic efforts? 1 Corinthians 3:6-9.
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“The Lord desires that the cities shall be worked by the united efforts of laborers of different capabilities. All are to look to Jesus for direction, not depending on man for wisdom, lest they be led astray. As laborers together with God they should seek to be in harmony with one another. There should be frequent councils and earnest, whole-hearted cooperation. Yet all are to look to Jesus for wisdom, not depending upon men alone for direction.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 109.

- a. 1 Corinthians 3:6-9 I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. 7 So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. 8 Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. 9 For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.

5. Cooperation

- b. In the first place, on what does the progress of our evangelistic work depend? Psalms 127:1.
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“It is not the power that emanates from men that makes the work successful, it is the power of the heavenly intelligences working with the human agent that brings the work to perfection. A Paul may plant, and an Apollos may water, but it is God that giveth the increase. Man cannot do God’s part of the work. As a human agent he may cooperate with the divine intelligences, and in simplicity and meekness do his best, realizing that God is the great Master Workman. Although the workmen may be buried, the work will not cease, but it will go on to completion.”—*The Review and Herald*, November 14, 1893.

Psalms 127:1

Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Explain the practical benefits of working unitedly in evangelistic efforts.
2. Name some steps the church must take prior to performing ordinations.
3. What qualities are essential in soul winning?
4. How can we cultivate the essential qualifications for Christian service?
5. What agriculture illustration helps us to understand evangelism?