

ALIGN__3

Appreciate Your Place

In this way we are like the various parts of a human body. Each part gets its meaning from the body as a whole, not the other way around.
- Romans 12:4, MSG

The church, you see, is not peripheral to the world; the world is peripheral to the church. The church is Christ's body, in which he speaks and acts, by which he fills everything with his presence.
- Ephesians 1:23, MSG

As a Christ-follower, you are called to re-align your life so that you begin to function as part of something far bigger than yourself (the church, the Body of Christ). It's a call to become an integral and important part of what God is doing in the world. There is no greater way in which you could invest your life, nor more fulfilling way in which to live.

Welcome

Complete the following sentence: *"I've never quite gotten the hang of..."*

Word

1. It might sound contradictory, but it's so easy to focus on ourselves, even as we are serving others! Have you found this true in your own life? Share a recent example.

Read Romans 12:3-8.

2. Do you find anything striking or significant about the fact that, as we allow God to re-shape our attitudes and lives (vs 2), the very first issue addressed is our pride (vs 3)? Explain.
3. As Christ-followers, we are called to maintain a proper estimate of ourselves—both in terms of the way we view our relationship to *God*, and also in the way we view our relationship to *others*. If Christ is our "standard," or point of reference, we will remember that our significance comes, not from who *we* are and what *we* do for God (a self-focus), but rather from who *God* is, and what *He* does for us (a God-focus). Why is this distinction so crucial to keep in mind? What happens when we don't?
4. Using the analogy of a human body, we're reminded that *"each part gets its meaning from the body as a whole, not the other way around."* What are the implications of this analogy in terms of where we find our true purpose and fulfillment (verses 4-5)? In terms of our responsibility to other believers? In other words, how does this analogy square with our natural desire to be completely independent, free to do what we want when we want?
5. The emphasis of this passage is not just *that* we use our gifts to serve others, but *the manner in which* we use them. In addition to humility, what other attitudes are apparent in verses 6-8? Would you say these attitudes characterize your service?

Works

During your devotional time this week, read Jesus' parable of the sheep and goats in **Matthew 25:31-46**. How would you describe those "on the left"? What motivated them to serve as they did? What about those "on the right"? How do you account for the self-forgetful way (a beautiful lack of self-consciousness) in which they served? What was Jesus' point?

Worship

Remember last year's memory verse? **Ephesians 2:8-10** would provide a good segue, leading into a time of praise and re-commitment: "I Will Serve You" (605) [at least consider the words to the song], "Heart of a Servant" (693), "Servant Song" (694), "In My Life, Lord, Be Glorified" (309).