

Find Your Place in the Body



How To Find God's Plan For Your Life (Part 4)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as we look together at one of life's most important questions: "How to Find God's Plan for Your Life."

In my previous talks this week, I've outlined three practical steps you need to take if you are to find God's plan for your life. First you have to let God recreate you, make you over again, according to His pattern and His purpose. Second, you have to lay your body on God's altar as a living sacrifice, to make yourself completely and unreservedly available to God. Third, as you do this, God, on His side, renews your mind. He imparts to you a different way of thinking and looking at things; different values, standards, motives, and purposes. Only when your mind is thus renewed can you begin to find out in your personal experience what is God's will for your life. The further you progress in discovering God's will, the better it becomes. In its first stage, it is good. In its second stage, it is acceptable. But in its third stage, it is perfect, it's complete, entire, provides for every need, covers every situation.

Today I'm going to explain to you the fourth step which follows on from the three steps I've already outlined. The fourth step is finding your place in the body of Christ; that is, the corporate, committed fellowship of all true believers. We go back to Romans 12:3, the verse that we were looking at yesterday in connection with the renewed mind, and we'll read on from there the next two verses and see what follows immediately from the renewed mind, verse 3 and following:

> "For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another." (NAS)

So the renewed mind directs us to our right place in the body. We come to realize that we're just one member, incomplete on our own, incapable of functioning on our own as God intends us to function and that in order to be complete and to

function in accordance with God's purpose and God's plan, we have to become a member in a body. We have to be joined to other members by a kind of commitment that enables us to work together and not just as isolated individuals.

I've often marveled, as I've been in a plane and as the radar of the plane zeroes in one the particular airport and the beam that comes to it from the airport's radar and how, as the two lock in to one another, that plane comes down in exactly the right place at exactly the right speed and makes a safe and perfect landing. I want to suggest to you that you can think of your renewed mind like the radar in the plane. When you lock in with the Spirit of God, then that renewed mind of yours brings you down into exactly the right place in the body and you become a member of God's body, of Christ's body, the church. Compare what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:

> "For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body,' it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, 'Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body,' it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired." (NAS)

There are three things we need to see in that statement of Paul there. First of all, the choice of where we are to be in the body and what we are to be is not ours but God's. God has placed the members. It's not something we decide, it's something that God has decided and reveals to us.

Secondly, as this comes to pass in our lives, we merge our life in a larger entity, the body. And yet, we still retain our individuality. It's like a little finger that finds its place on a hand, side-by-side with four other fingers and is thus connected to the total life of an energy and purpose of a complete body. On the other hand, it is not like a drop of water that falls into the sea and loses its individual identity. As Christians, we never lose our individual identity but we become part of a larger corporate group still retaining our own individual identity, still being the particular member that God ordained for us to be. This is really a contrast between the message that the Christian faith and the Oriental cults and philosophies which are so prevalent today. I studied those for a while before I became a committed Christian and those Oriental cults, basically, treat man like a little drop that falls into the sea and loses its identity. But that's not an attractive proposition. For me, I don't want to do that. I want to retain my identity but still become part of a larger body and that's what God has provided for us in Christ.

Then the third truth that follows from Paul's words about the body is this: that corporately we are able to represent Christ in His fullness to the world. No one of us can adequately and fully represent Christ as an individual, but, when we're united to a body, then that body can totally and corporately and fully represent Jesus Christ to our world.

I want to go further with this picture of a people finding their places as members in a body. I want to take a picture from the Old Testament, the 37th chapter of Ezekiel, a prophetic vision of God's people at the close of this age, a vision which I believe is finding fulfillment in the church today. Ezekiel had a vision in which he saw God's people as dry scattered bones, but as God began to move by His Spirit, something happened to those bones. Life came into them. They began to move. And they were brought together as members of a body. Let's read this passage, Ezekiel 37, beginning at verse 1:

> "The hand of the Lord was upon me and He brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of the valley; and it was full of bones. And He caused me to pass among them round about, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley; and lo, they were very dry. And He said to me, 'Son of man, can these bones live?' And I answered, 'O Lord God, Thou knowest.' Again He said to me, 'Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.' 'Thus says the Lord God to these bones, 'Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you that you may come to life. 'And I will put sinews on you, make flesh grow back on you, cover you with skin, and put breath in you that you may come alive; and you will know that I am the Lord.' So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, a behold, a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to its bone.'"" (NAS)

That's a picture of individuals who have been scattered on their own without proper relationships, coming by the work of God's Spirit into a right and proper relationship with one another. I do believe that in many, many ways many sections of the church have been like those dry bones, just scattered

lying around, cut off, not really finding the life of the body, not really in a right relationship with one another. But I believe that one of the great things God is doing by His Spirit today for His people is to bring life to those bones and to bring those bones together and build the bones up into a structure that will form the basis for a complete body.

Think about, for instance, your arm. The basic structure of your arm consists of three bones. Their medical names are humerus, radius and ulna. Picture each of those bones on its own. A strong firm bone. And, in a certain sense, it can move around and rattle together against the other bones, but that is all it's capable of. It can't perform any really useful or effective function. Before it becomes a functioning arm it has to be united with two other bones and then, out of the union of those three bones in effective function, there comes forth an arm.

Well, that's like you and me. We can lie around on our own, we can rattle around against other bones in a meeting or a conference, but we'll never be useful and effective in the kingdom of God until we allow ourselves to be united with the other bones and then we can become a functioning arm and the arm can become part of a functioning body. I believe that's what God is saying to His people today. I believe that as our minds are renewed, that radar is going to take us to the very place and function in the body that God has appointed for us.

Let's look at one final picture of the body in Ephesians 4:15 and 16:

> "but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ..." (NAS)

Notice the purpose of God is that we grow up, that we don't remain always little spiritual infants. And the process of growing up leads us into the completed body. The next verse says:

> "...from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love." (NAS)

So God's purpose is not just isolated bones or isolated members but a complete, functioning body in which the members are united to one another in such a way that each receives, from its union with the others, that which it supplies. Bear that in mind, that it's only in the completed body that all the needs are met. And as you find your place in that completed body, you'll find that God has given you the proportion of faith that you need to fulfill your God-appointed function. Remember, faith and function go together. When you find your function, you'll have the faith that you need.

All right. Our time is up for today but I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll be explaining the fifth and final step in finding God's plan for your life.

Radio Program

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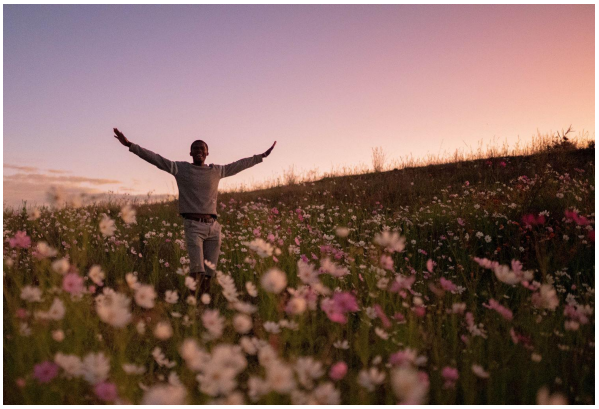

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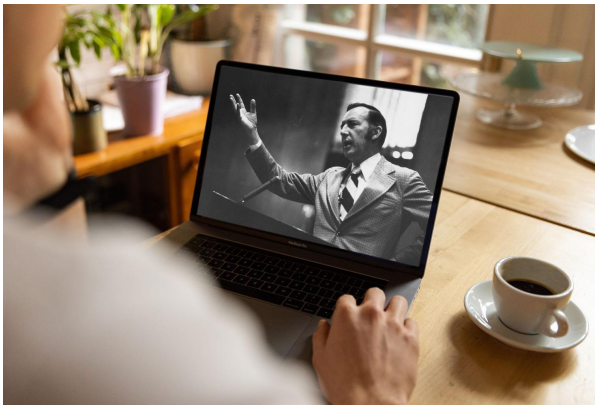

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