



February 29 & March 1, 2020  
Pastor Ellis White

## Get in the Game: Play Your Position

1 Corinthians 12:12-31

Good evening/morning and welcome to Chapel Hill! My name is Ellis and I am the Pastor of Weekend Services here. And if you are new, I want to offer you a very warm welcome. We are so glad you are joining us as we wrap up our Get in the Game sermon series.

If you were here the last two weeks, you heard Pastor Mark milk his one personal sports story for all it's worth. Now, I admit, I attend all three of our services every weekend, but I felt like I heard him tell his West Valley Rams football story at least a dozen times! I have a few sporting stories of my own, but, if you didn't already know, or hadn't already guessed, I don't come from round these parts. I come from the south... of England. And in the south of England, one of the sports we play is rugby.

I first started to play rugby age 11 and as with starting any team sport, I needed to decide what position I wanted to play. Rugby teams have 15 players on them, and there's none of this silly offense and defense teams that you have in football; like any proper sport, all rugby players play both offense and defense. But a rugby team is divided roughly in half, with one half called forwards, and the other half called backs. Loosely speaking, the forwards do all the hard work, and the backs get all the glory. Naturally, I wanted to be a back.

Backs are required to be slim built, fast, have great ball-handling skills and wonderful hair. Sadly for me, I was chubby, slow, couldn't pass the ball more than 10 yards, and back then, had terrible hair. So I became a forward. Over the years, I played a number of different positions as a forward, and by age 15 I was pretty happy with my position as blindside flanker.

Sadly, aged 15, my new coach—Mr Phelan—moved me back to a former position I had played: prop. Now if forwards do the hard work, then props undoubtedly do the hardest of all. There is very little glory in playing the position of prop. They are a bit like inside offensive linemen in football: you never notice the work they do, until they don't do it, and then you criticize them. To say I was sad to move to that position would be an understatement. And yet, that year, in this new position, I became the only boy on my team to go on to represent my country. Clearly, Mr Phelan saw something in me at age 15 that I didn't.

The last two weeks we've been preaching on this topic of "Get in the Game." Pastor Mark has shared with us that we all have a decision to make as Christians: will we stand on the sidelines and treat our faith as a spectator sport, or will we get into the game and actually start playing it, just as Jesus intended for us to do. Last week he shared from the first letter Paul wrote to the early church in Corinth; he explained that Christians who get in the game are powered by a secret sauce—the Holy

Spirit. And if you were here, you got to experience a really powerful time where we invited to Holy Spirit to come and fill us.

This week, I'm going to continue on in that same passage that we were looking at last week, but we are going to be talking about what position we play in the team. So, I'm in 1 Corinthians 12, starting in verse 12, and the verses will be up on the screen so you can follow along.

“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.”  
(1 Corinthians 12:12–13 ESV)

## 1. You Have a Position

I want to make three main points today. The first is this: You Have a Position.

In the passage we read, Paul uses an illustration for the church—the human body. He says that just as the human body is one, so is the church—we are all united together by the same Spirit through the same baptism. But also, just as the human body is made up of many members, so is the church. There are many different members in the human body—hands, feet, ears, eyes, nose—and in the same way there are many different members in the church. Each member has a different role to play, but together, united by the Spirit, we make up the body of Christ—the church. And without the members of the body all working together, the body wouldn't function.

In many ways it's like a sports team. There are many different positions on a sports team, like I was explaining with rugby earlier. There are backs and forwards, but within that we have fullbacks, wingers, centers, flyhalves, scrumhalves, flankers, locks, props, and the one that always gets a laugh in America: hookers. Each position has a different role to play, and requires different characteristics, but together they are united together into one team. And the team wouldn't function to its full capacity if all the members of the team weren't playing their role.

And the church is like a team. Every member of the church has a position to play within the church. And if everyone is playing their position well, the church will reach its potential to impact the world for Jesus, but if even one person is sitting on the sideline, or only giving it half the effort, the whole church is held back from reaching its potential. Every single one of us has a position to play in the church, and every single one of us contributes to the overall effectiveness of the church. You have a position to play. Every single one of you. That's point 1—you have a position. The second point is this: You must discover your position

## 2. Discover Your Position

We have all been made by God in such a way that we fit a certain position. At the end of the chapter we began reading, Paul goes on to say:

“Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?”

(1 Corinthians 12:27–31 ESV)

Paul tells us that God has appointed many different people to positions in the church. God is the one who has designed us to play a certain role. And no one plays all the roles. Each of us have a unique fit. So God is the initiator, but our role is to discover what position God has crafted us for.

When I was 18 years old, I got the opportunity to go on a 2 week outreach trip to western rural Kenya. This trip gave me the opportunity to get in the game. I got to lead worship; I got to pray for the sick; I got to help put together skits for visiting schools; and I got the chance to preach in a Kenyan church. I literally got in the game. And as I did, it became more and more apparent what I was gifted at, passionate about, and suited my temperament.

However, the most transformative experience for me was an exercise that we did as a whole team. Each person was asked to spend time in solitude over the course of a few days and ask God to reveal to them how he had gifted each one of the other 25 team members. We then had to hand in our thoughts on 25 slips of paper to the trip leaders who collated them by each person’s name and distributed them again.

I received an envelope with 25 hand-written, prayed over, statements about how God had gifted me. As an 18-year-old, who really didn’t have a clue about what I was going to do with my life, this was one of the most powerful, affirming and life-altering experiences I’ve ever gone through. As I read through the comments of those 25 people, I began to see common threads: leadership, teaching, worship leadership, wisdom. In fact this week I dug out that envelope, and I was moved to tears as I read those words and recognized how faithful God has been in using those gifts in my life to minister to others.

The experience I had in Kenya enabled me to better understand what my position might be in the church, and I think it was because I did two things. And I think these two things apply generally to all of us, and so in order to discover your position, I want to offer these two pieces of advice. The first is Start Serving.

#### A. Start Serving

When I began discovering my position, I just started playing on the team. I didn’t sit back on the sidelines and let others do it. I just started to serve. I saw needs and filled them. I said yes to opportunities. And as I began to do that, I began to see what I excelled at, and what I didn’t. And I was grateful that there were lots of opportunities for me to serve, and we at Chapel Hill have lots of opportunities for you to serve. There are many ways you can just start playing the game.

Our Guest Services team needs greeters and ushers for every service, who are willing to create an amazing atmosphere for all those who come through our doors on a weekend. Our children's ministry needs teachers and helpers for both our elementary and nursery kids, who are willing to spend time playing with kids and sharing about Jesus with them. Our facilities team needs help with landscaping, security, food services. Our local outreach team has many ways for you to engage practically in serving others from serving the homeless, to sorting through clothing that's been donated, to welcoming refugees. And our tech team needs slide operators and video operators as we move towards live-streaming our services.

All these positions and many others are on the serve page of our website. There are so many ways you can just get in the game at Chapel Hill. And I believe that when you do, you will begin to discover what your position might be. So first, Start Serving. The second is Start Listening.

### B. Start Listening

I went through that amazing exercise with people on my Kenya team 13 years and it was transformative. I listened to what they said and it helped me to understand better what position I was being called to play. And you can do the same thing. If you are in a LifeGroup, you could ask your group to go through the same exercise, or if you are married, have your spouse do it. Alternatively, you could attend our Custom Made class where you can listen and reflect and even receive personalized coaching on how God has shaped you for ministry—how he has gifted you, what passions you have, what skills you have, what temperament you have and what experiences you bring.

I believe that we are best able to discover what our position is in the context of community, rather than in isolation. I believe that if we are willing to listen to input from others, whether from those who know us or from taking a class designed to help us discover our position, that we will be much more likely to know what our position is on the team. So, to discover your position, Start Serving and Start Listening.

Nevertheless, once you have discovered your position on the team, I think every single one of us struggles with living into that position in some way. That's the third point, I want to make: Live Into Your Position.

## 3. Live Into Your Position

In the passage we began reading earlier, Paul goes on to talk about what I believe are the two most common struggles we have with living into our position: envy and pride. Let's look at them each in turn. First: envy.

### A. Envy

I know that in my Christian journey I have frequently looked at the roles others are playing in the church and felt inadequate. In fact, it's one of the reasons I have quit social media. I found myself driven to comparison so often with other churches, ministries and pastors. I found that I

was continually looking with envy at how God was using other people and it was bad for my soul. Paul writes about it in verse 14 of the passage we have been looking at:

“For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.”  
(1 Corinthians 12:14–20 ESV)

Paul is continuing to use the image of the body to help us see that it is crazy of us to envy other parts of the body. Why? Because without our position in the body, the whole body would malfunction. Yes, we may look at other parts of the body and wish we could be them, but God has created a unique role for us, that is vital and important for the overall body.

Around 7 years ago, I listened to a message by a well-known preacher entitled: It’s Not a Competition, It’s a Calling. When I first heard that message it became my mantra for a season. You see I had started to feel like I was in competition with some of my colleagues and I knew it was creating division in my heart and it was having a negative impact on my service. So I began repeating that phrase every time I felt the envy come up. Because the reality is, God’s got a calling for each one of us that no one else can steal. There’s no competition for places on God’s team, everyone has a unique role to play. Your role is just as vital as mine or as that well-known preacher’s.

So as we live into our position I believe that we can struggle with envy, but on the flip side, we can also struggle with pride.

## B. Pride

I know that I get to do some pretty cool stuff as part of my role in the church. I get to do some things that I love to do, such as lead worship and preach. And that in a church like this, the role is relatively high-profile. And if I’m honest, one of the things I have to wrestle and struggle with is a sense of pride. I joked earlier about wanting the position in the rugby team that got the glory, and honestly, I have the same struggle in my position in the church. Paul recognized this would be an issue too, that’s why he said this in verse 21:

“The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor.”  
(1 Corinthians 12:21–23a ESV)

Paul is here writing to those in the church who might be prone to think that they are more important than others in the church; to people who think that their position is the important one and others are

insignificant. And I know that for anyone who has a role in the church, especially a high-profile role, it can be easy to believe that you are more important than those with a lower-profile role. That's something I've learned a lot about over the years, and something I'm still learning.

I remember when I first started leading worship, I didn't really know or care what the sound person did. I never really interacted with them, asked their opinion on things, or gave them feedback. I just figured they sat there and twizzled a few knobs. It was total pride in my heart. Over time, God began to convict me of this, and I began to realize that I could do nothing as a worship leader without a sound person. Not only that, but if I didn't build a loving, trusting relationship with the sound person, I could not thrive as a worship leader. And so I began to intentionally love our sound people by getting to know them, asking about their lives, asking to help them whenever I could, asking them for feedback on the music, and generally, treating them as more important than myself.

It can be easy to develop pride in your position, and if so, it can create division between you and others and ultimately harm the effectiveness of the church. We must root it out and treat others as better than ourselves.

So you all have a position to play, and I would encourage you, if you haven't already, to discover what that position is by serving and listening, and then live into it, by removing envy and pride from your heart. As we close today, I want to lead us in a time of prayer where we can reflect on what your next step might be as a result of this series. Perhaps you know you need to just start serving and get on our website and find a position. Maybe you need to register for Custom Made to discover more clearly your unique position. Maybe you have recognized envy or pride in your heart of which you need to repent. Whatever it might be, I want to offer you the chance to do so as we close in prayer.