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# Reference Point

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### ***Librarianship as a Calling and a Ministry***

*“For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to us.” Romans 12:4–6 (NIV)*

This passage goes on to describe the different gifts in the Church. There are gifts of prophecy, service, teaching, encouragement, giving, leading, and showing mercy. This does not seem to be an exhaustive list since other gifts are mentioned by Paul in Corinthians. In addition, Peter teaches that we should use our gifts to serve others. Certain parables imply that it is our responsibility to develop our gifts.

The Puritans taught that there were two callings. The first calling is a general call to follow Christ, and it is the primary calling. The second calling is the calling to serve God and neighbor in our vocation. This could involve paid employment or volunteer activities. Some believers think that only those who serve in paid positions in the Church have a special calling to their work and that other types of employment, though often important, are not a calling.

I like to think that librarianship may be considered a divine calling for several reasons. First, God has led me by His providence to become a librarian. Why do I believe this? One of the reasons is through life's circumstances. God has provided the opportunities to become a librarian. I have had opportunities to do other things but believed God wanted me to pursue the vocation of librarianship.

Second, God has gifted me in certain ways that are helpful in carrying out the duties of a librarian. For example, I have a great interest in and ability to do research. This interest and ability have made it possible for me to instruct others in the process of research. In addition, I have certain teaching abilities that have equipped me to instruct others in the use of library resources.

Third, the role of librarian has allowed me to serve both God and neighbor, advancing the Kingdom of God through my work as a librarian. For example, in working with students, I am investing my life in the lives of those who will serve God around the world.

Last, it is personally beneficial to see one's work as a calling and a ministry. It shapes the attitude of the worker. One understands that one is not just working for financial rewards, but is using practical, God-given gifts to serve others. In addition, seeing one's work as a divine calling provides meaning and significance to one's work. It motivates this librarian to do his very best work for the Master.

—John E. Shaffett

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