

BECAUSE OF GOD'S MERCY...SERVE GOD'S PEOPLE
ROMANS 12:6-8

When James was seven years old, he was hit by a bread delivery truck. He survived, but he suffered an injury to the frontal lobe of his brain and a chunk of his skull was missing — an indentation that was evident for the rest of his life. He recuperated for six months at home and from then until he went to university, he had to wear an aluminum plate over the injury to his head and abstain from all sports. He had already been a loner, and the injury made him withdraw into even more activities like reading and writing. Four years after the accident, he *really* wanted a bicycle for his 11th birthday and began dropping hints with his parents. All his friends had a bike and he also wanted one. His biographer tells [the story](#):

On the morning of his eleventh birthday, in 1937, [James] wandered down from his bedroom to see what present awaited him. The family had a tradition of placing birthday presents in dining room of the house. He expected to find a bicycle. Instead, he found an old Oliver typewriter, which seemed to him to weigh half a ton. Although it was old, it was nevertheless in excellent condition.

It was not what [James] had asked for; nevertheless, it proved to be what he needed. Surprise gave way to delight, as he realized what he could do with this unexpected gift. It was not more than a minute before he had put paper into the machine and started to type. It proved to be his best present and the most treasured possession of his boyhood.

As they gave that gift to James, his parents had no idea the impact that typewriter would have on the Christian world, and how many books would be produced from the keys of the typewriter belonging to James — J. I. Packer, one of the most significant theologians of the 20th century. All because he received a gift he really didn't want.



This morning as we come to the topic of spiritual gifts, it may be that you either don't know the gift you have received from God, or are discontent with what you have received. What **Romans 12:6-8** will teach us is that the gifts we have individually received are best for us and best for the corporate body of Christ:

SPIRITUAL GIFTS ARE GOD'S GRACIOUS ENABLEMENT FOR YOUR MINISTRY TO THE CHURCH.

These verses contain three categories of gifts and two implications for our gifts:

- 1. The FOUNDATIONAL Gifts: PROPHECY (v. 6b)**
- 2. The SERVING Gifts (vv. 7-8)**
- 3. The SPEAKING Gifts (vv. 7-8)**
- 4. How to Discover Your Spiritual Gift(s)**
- 5. Where Can I Use My Gift at GBC?**

SPIRITUAL GIFTS ARE GOD'S GRACIOUS ENABLEMENT FOR YOUR MINISTRY TO THE CHURCH.

- Romans 12:3 begins an application of the truths of spiritual transformation from 12:1-2 —
 - ✓ Verses 3-5 emphasize the attitude of humility we should have in using our gifts in the Body
 - ✓ Verses 6-8 explain the spiritual gifts God gives us for serving others and their transformation
 - ✓ Verses 9-13 articulate principles that should guide our relationships in the Body
 - ✓ Verses 14-21 provide help for broken relationships and those who oppose us (and how we can be sanctified when in those broken relationships).
- As we begin thinking about spiritual gifts today, remember what God has said about our attitudes:
 - ✓ *Don't think too much of yourself and your gifts* (v. 3a). Whatever we are and whatever we accomplish, it is like Paul, a gift of God's grace and not because of our own accomplishments.
 - ✓ *Do think rightly about yourself and God's gifts* (v. 3b). God *has* qualified and equipped us to do something in the Body. We are needed and necessary for others. No one is superfluous.
 - We can't do everything, but we can do something (**function**, v. 4)
 - We can't do it alone, but we can be a part of what God is doing to build His body (v. 5)
 - We don't have every gift, but we do have some gift(s) (v. 6)
 - ✓ *Do think and work faithfully with your gifts* (vv. 3c-5). We are **one body in Christ**. Christ is One Head and He has only one body, not multiple bodies. He is the unifying reality for the church. He brings us into harmony with Him and with each other. The one whole body supersedes our individuality — so that live harmoniously together sharing common spiritual life, common ministry, common power, and a common Head. It's not about us, but Him. So v. 4 is a humble reminder "I'm one of many," and v. 5 humbly reminds, "it's about Christ, not me."
 - ✓ *Do think of your gift(s) as a grace from God* (v. 6a).
 - When Paul says, **according to the grace given us**, he reminds us that whatever gift we have is a manifestation of God's grace to us. In fact, the other spiritual gift passages (1 Pt. 4:7; 1 Pt. 4:10; and 1 Cor. 12:7) all state or infer that grace is the reason for our gifts. Our gifts are a privilege. And our gifts are never any reason for pride because they have been given in grace. Cf. v. 3.
 - Paul also notes that the gifts are **different** for each believer, but they are also expressions of grace. The differences in gifting are not the arbitrary decisions of "fate" or an uncaring giver, but of God's grace. Our gifts are a **gracious** provision from God who gives what is good for us, and glorifying for Him; don't fight it, rejoice in it.
 - ✓ Notice also that as Paul lists these seven gifts in this passage he also includes how it is to be used (or what attitude we should have in using it); we should use the gift in the way God intends us to use it, not for personal, self-serving agendas. Our gifts will only prosper and prove effective when we use them in God's ways for God's purposes.
 - ✓ What are the gifts that God has given? There are three categories of gifts and two implications...

1. The **FOUNDATIONAL** Gifts: Prophecy (v. 6b)

- There were a number of gifts that were given to the early church that were given as transitional gifts until the Scriptures were completed that are no longer in operation today. Primarily they are: *apostle*, *prophet*, and the *sign gifts* — tongues, interpretation of tongues, miracles, and healing. We will dedicate an entire message to that one topic since it is such a significant topic.
- For now, recognize that Paul separates the gift of **prophecy** from the other gifts (v. 6), suggesting it is different from the others (he clarifies even more in 1 Cor. 12).

2. The **SERVING** Gifts (vv. 7-8)

- In 1 Pt. 4:11 Peter only identifies two gifts: speaking and serving; most agree that he is referring to categories of gifts rather than particular gifts. Those two categories organize the remaining gifts.
- Here Paul identifies four serving gifts — **servicing, giving, leading, and showing mercy**. Other serving gifts (from other passages) are: faith, discernment, and pastor/teacher.
- **The gift of service**: The word is sometimes translated “ministry” and is the word from which we get our word “deacon.” It is a general and broad word.
 - ✓ It originally was used to refer to waiters, but then came to be used of anyone who did any kind of lowly or humble service. It may be that was the gift of Tabitha (**Acts 9:36, 39**).
 - ✓ In **Acts 6** the church was providing daily meals for widows; those who were tasked to care for them became the first deacons (cf. vv. 2-3) — spirit-filled men who *served tables*.
 - ✓ A similar gift is mentioned in 1 Cor. 12:28 — **helps** (the only NT use of that particular word). That word means to assist someone — it particularly refers to assistance of those who are incapable of caring for themselves — the poor, sick, widows, orphans, travelers, strangers,...
 - ✓ Service is any kind of practical help that believers can give each other that meets a need.
 - ✓ Why does it take the Holy Spirit to produce this gift?
 - Can’t anyone make a meal, make a house repair, change a tire? It takes the Holy Spirit to do these things because who *naturally* embraces humility? And it takes humility to serve others.
 - We know this is Spirit-produced fruit when someone is unusually effective in the way they serve. It’s not just a meal or a lawn mowing — it’s done at the right time without attention...
 - ✓ Many times people will assume something like, “Well I know I don’t have a teaching/speaking gift and I don’t know what else I could have so it must be helps...” as if serving others and being merciful to those in need is secondary — a “consolation prize.” One writer says, “This gift is not to be minimized. These persons are as significant in a local church as linemen are to a football squad.” [McRae] And another adds, “Many quite brilliant people seem unconstitutionally unable to perform lowly service well. There is a lot of lowly service to be done, and anyone who has the gift of doing it should rejoice at the wonder of divine grace.” [Morris, *Romans*]

- **The gift of giving:** The word “gives” means “to share with someone.”
 - ✓ There are some who are particularly (spiritually) gifted with the ability to give. But that does not mean that one has to be wealthy to have this gift (2 Cor. 8:2; 9:11, 13; Phil. 4:10-16).
 - ✓ The giving might also not necessarily be a monetary gift (e.g., 1 Thess. 2:8).
 - ✓ Even if we don’t have the giving gift, giving is still a mark of our sanctification (Eph. 4:28).
 - ✓ What one does have to have for this gift is to give **with liberality**.
 - This word can be translated as the NASB has done it with the sense that the giving is “open-handed” and “open-hearted.” It is generous giving — “can I give you more??”
 - But it can also have the idea of “simplicity,” and the sense is that the one who gives in this way gives with a single goal — he has no mixed motives or ulterior motive — he just wants to help the person in need and his only thought is of that person (Dorcas, Acts 9:36).
 - ✓ If a person has this gift, no matter how much money he has, he has the money but the money does not have him.
 - ✓ John Wesley’s principle applies: “Gain all you can; save all you can; then give all you can.”
- **The gift of leading:** The basic sense of the word is to be in front of someone, so “rule” or “lead.”
 - ✓ But it also had the idea of going in front of someone for the purpose of protection or representation (1 Tim. 3:4, 5, 12 — of both elders and deacons).
 - ✓ There is a similar gift in 1 Cor. 12:28 — **administration** — was used of steering a ship. This person provides wisdom and direction for those he leads and serves.
 - ✓ What is particularly noteworthy is how this leadership is to be given — **with diligence** = eagerness, zeal. He is truly committed to providing care for his people. He is faithful and eager to carry out his responsibilities to his people, even when they don’t want leadership (think about Israel’s history).
 - ✓ One does not need to have an official office in the church to have this gift, but the gift will likely be evident in the care godly elders provide for their people (1 Pt. 5:1-3).
- **The gift of mercy:** The one who has the gift of mercy has compassion and empathy for those who are suffering: the very characteristic of God that produced our salvation (Rom. 12:1).
 - ✓ The word has a component of feeling compassion for others — Mk. 5:19; Mt. 18:33.
 - ✓ But the word not only has the component of feeling — it is to recognize someone’s pitiful condition and then be stirred to action (Mt. 18:33). This is why so many said to Jesus, “Have mercy on me...” — they wanted Him to see their difficult position and alleviate their suffering.

- Matt. 9:27 As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out, “Have mercy on us, Son of David!”
- Matt. 15:22 And a Canaanite woman from that region came out and began to cry out, saying, “Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed.”
- Matt. 17:15 “Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is a lunatic and is very ill; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water.” Cf. also 20:30-31.

✓ What is particularly significant about this gift, though, is that it is done **with cheerfulness**. It might be translated “graciousness;” we get our word “hilarity” from this word. It is a joyous service — just as Paul and Silas sang when thrown into the depths of prison, the person with this gift sings with delight when he/she gets to be compassionate to someone in need. It is not a grim and begrudging duty, but a happy, impulsive, immediate response. This was the very attitude of the good Samaritan (**Lk. 10:37**).

• **SUMMARY** of serving gifts:

✓ **Many of the gifts are not prominent gifts** — they are done quietly and away from public view. They are designed that way so that we are not tempted to take preeminence but so that the Spirit who fills us and equips us with these gifts is seen as the originator of the gift.

✓ But even more than that, **the Spirit’s gifts are designed to make us look like the Savior** (Jn. 14:26; 15:26; 16:14). And when we serve with faithfulness, we particularly look like the Savior who did not come to be served but to serve and give His life a ransom for many (Mk. 10:45).

3. The SPEAKING Gifts (vv. 7-8)

• Here Paul identifies two speaking gifts — **teaching, exhortation**. Other speaking gifts are evangelism, pastor/teacher (Eph. 4) and word of faith/wisdom (1 Cor. 12).

• **The gift of teaching**: This is the person who has the ability to interpret and then present the truth of God’s Word in an understandable way. He will also be discerning about what others teach.

✓ The gift of teaching is essential because it is the primary means that God has designed for His people to grow to spiritual maturity.

○ Acts 2:42 They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Cf. also 4:2; 5:42.

○ Acts 15:35 But Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, teaching and preaching with many others also, the word of the Lord. Cf. also 18:11.

○ Col. 1:28 We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. Cf. also Eph. 4:11-14.

✓ The pastor will also have the gift of teaching (**Eph. 4:11; 1 Tim. 3:2**), but not all teachers will have the gift of pastoring. One of the fundamental means by which the pastor shepherds the church is through his ministry of teaching. The elder’s job is to help people renew their minds thru teaching.

✓ Don’t confuse a job as a teacher with the spiritual gift of teaching; there is a significant difference between being an effective biology teacher and an effective Bible teacher.

- **The gift of exhortation:** To “exhort” means “to call to one’s side.” It has two ideas:
 - ✓ The exhortation can refer to the action of calling someone to prepare for spiritual battle: he advises, pleads, warns, and strengthens. He may call someone to repentance for a sinful habit or he may appeal to him to continue in obedience and not return to sin.
 - ✓ The exhortation may also be more of consolation: someone who is weak needs to be strengthened and encouraged to continue on the path of faithfulness. He needs to be reminded of the provision of God to sustain him in his weakness.
 - ✓ The person with the gift of exhortation has an ability to use the Word of God to stimulate others to action — “I see that; I’ll do it...”
 - ✓ The distinction between teaching and exhortation is that in teaching the teacher transmits knowledge while the exhorter stimulates his hearers to action. The exhorter confronts those who are wayward and walks alongside those who are weak and hurting and helps them the first to resume his walk with Christ and the second to continue in his walk with Christ.
 - ✓ We see both of these aspects in **1 Thess. 5:14**. Also Heb. 10:24-25.
- This passage demonstrates that there are both speaking and serving gifts — some have one, others have another, and others some blending. The point is we need each other. *I need you*. We are no good without each other. We are dependent on each other, and God provides for us through each other.

4. How to Discover Your Spiritual Gift(s)

- Discovering the identity of your gift is not nearly as important as practicing obedience when commanded; for instance, virtually all the “gifts” are commanded elsewhere of all believers:

- **Service** — Gal. 5:13 “For you were called to freedom, brethren; only *do not turn* your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love **serve one another**.”
- **Teaching** — 2 Tim. 2:2 The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, **entrust** these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.
- **Exhortation** — Heb. 10:24-25 and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but **encouraging** one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near.
- **Giving** — 2 Cor. 8:1-4
- **Leading** — Titus 3:8, 14 This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God may be careful to **engage** in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men....And let our people also learn to **engage** in good deeds to meet pressing needs, that they may not be unfruitful.
- **Showing mercy** — Matt. 5:7 “Blessed are the **merciful**, for they shall receive mercy.”

- **We know our gifts by what we do**; so jump into a ministry and see where you are effective. Now here is what happens: as you are being obedient to do all these things, you will find that in some places, you are able to carry out these responsibilities in a way that indicates you have giftedness:
 - ✓ You give with liberality and without concern that others know.
 - ✓ You lead faithfully, even when some reject your overtures of service and care.
 - ✓ You are joyfully (happily) merciful towards others.
 - ✓ You teach and are given teaching opportunities because others recognize your effectiveness.
 - ✓ You serve — and serve, and serve and do not grow weary or despondent over the needs — and others see and affirm how effective you are in caring for others.
 - ✓ You exhort — call others to obedience or encourage someone who is weary and they respond.
 - ✓ Those are all indications that you are being particularly effective and you have that gift.
 - ✓ So the first way to discover your gift is just to be busy doing various forms of ministry and seeing where you are joyfully effective.
- **We know our gifts by our godly desires** — what do you want to do?
 - ✓ When one walks in obedient submission to the Lord, delighting in Him alone, then our desires will be aligned with the Lord's and He will give us what we want (Ps. 37:4).
 - ✓ What do you want to do? Some yearn to evangelize. Some want to serve as elders — leaders and pastor/teachers. They are not condemned for that desire, but told it is a good thing (1 Tim. 3:1).
 - ✓ You will learn, in part, what your spiritual gift is by following your godly desires.
- **We know our gifts by the affirmation of others**: how do others affirm you when you serve? We can help others discern their gifting by thanking them and giving honest appraisal of their service — I was well-taught, I was ministered to, you are a gracious giver, you told me what I needed to hear, even though it was a hard thing, and I wanted it...

5. Where can I use my gift at GBC? There are always needs; here are some current needs:

Teachers

- ✓ Good News Club (Fall and Spring) *
- ✓ AWANA (teachers and substitutes) *
- ✓ Children's Sunday School (and substitutes) *
- ✓ Children's Church (and substitutes) *
- ✓ Home group leaders *

Technology (Worship video/audio; website & social media)

Counselors for counseling ministry (ACBC certification)

Door Greeters & Safety Team

Visitor follow-up

Nursery helpers (SS and worship)

Wednesday night meal help

Hospitality team (setup, teardown, cleanup)

Musicians / Singers *

Facility maintenance (including setups, teardowns, and lockups)

Door-to-Door Evangelism

CBCD Conference Support

* Requires six months as a regular attender (and background checks when working with children).

BENEDICTION: Romans 11:33-36