

## **The Call to the Great Community!**

### **Lesson #9: “Build the Body of Christ by using your Spiritual Gifts!”**

**Romans 12:1-8 (Part 2 of 2) with supporting verses 1 Corinthians 12:1-11, 27-31;  
Ephesians 4:11-12; and 1 Peter 4:9-11**

**Pastor Jerry D. Ingalls**

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Today, we are focusing on how you can build the body of Christ by using your spiritual gifts. Last week we laid a good foundation that every Christian is called to live the life of devotion, which we call ministry (Ephesians 2:8-10; 4:11-16 and 2 Corinthians 5:17-20). We learned the 5-step process of discovering your ministry from Romans 12:1-8, which is the foundation of your daily devotional life, ensuring you're living a life of devotion and not just checking a box. Today, we are going deeper on the spiritual gifts themselves (as described in Romans 12:6-8), but the big point we all need to remember is that God wants to build the body of Christ in and through each of our lives. God chose you on purpose because you have good works to walk in with your life! We are better together in Christ because each of us has an important SHAPE for ministry: God has given you spiritual gifts, a heart or passions for certain people or issues, abilities to meet those needs, personality to effectively work with others, and life experiences that uniquely equip you.

A spiritual gift is one aspect to how God has shaped you for ministry; it is a special ability, given by the Holy Spirit to every believer upon being saved, to be used to minister to others and therefore build up the body of Christ. All gifts are given to help the church fulfill its purposes to the glory of God. The spiritual gifts are related to, but are distinctively different from, the fruit of the Spirit. Whereas gifts are given to equip you for your life of ministry, the fruit of the Spirit are the maturity of your personhood as a minister of the gospel. It is the Spirit of God at work in you that defines both your person as a Christian – “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” – and your work as a Christian, empowered through your spiritual gifts. In Paul's discussion about spiritual gifts, he stated in 1 Corinthians 12:1-11:

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware. You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the mute idols, however you were led. Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus is accursed”; and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit. Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

The Bible does not lock us into tight restrictions as to the number of spiritual gifts, or even their definitions. The four major lists of gifts are found in Romans 12:6-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:1-11, both of which I have already read to you, and the list continues in verses 27-31:

Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues. All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they? All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they? But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way.

The next passage of spiritual gifts is found in Ephesians 4:11-12, which I read to you last week; it covers the five-fold ministry of spiritual gifted leaders to equip the local congregations in their unique ministries; and finally, the last one is 1 Peter 4:9-11:

Be hospitable to one another without complaint. As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Here's the bottom line about spiritual gifts and why they are important to the building of the body of Christ: spiritual gifts are the temporary to build the eternal, so don't worship the gifts (nor those who are working more maturely in their gifts), but only worship the Gift-giver! Remember the admonition of James 1:14-17:

But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.

You don't need a separate "baptism of the Spirit" or a "second movement of grace" to manifest the fruit of the Spirit or use your spiritual gifts in and through your Christian life. These are your birth rite as a Christian, so learn how to grow strong in God's grace as a Christian disciple, as Paul exhorted his protégé in 2 Timothy 2:1-6:

You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 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. Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier. Also if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules. The hard-working farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops.

At conversion, you were already given everything in Christ through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Through God's grace, you have everything you need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1). You are not lacking in any way, except maybe in willingness, motivation, or obedience, but that is between you and God, and that brings us back to where we began this sermon last week, with the five-step process to mature in Christ and go forth to minister in His name.

**Step 1: Dedicate your life to God!**

*"Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship" (Romans 12:1).*

**Step 2: Eliminate competing distractions!**

*"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:2).*

**Step 3: Find your identity in God!**

*"For through the grace given to me I say to everyone 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" (Romans 12:3).*

**Step 4: Gather with the Body of Christ as a healthy, functioning member!**

*"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" (Romans 12:4-5).*

**Step 5: Live a life of wholehearted devotion by using your spiritual gifts to build the body of Christ to the glory of God – Live on Mission Today! CM! Live like a Champion Today! Live Strong in God's Grace Today! This is what I've been teaching you for years because this the life of discipleship, practically lived out in your life and through community!**

*"Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness" (Romans 12:6-8).*

In conclusion, and to illustrate this, we are now going to call forward the 15-person short-term mission team going to the Dominican Republic in support of Jim & Teresa White and Sharing the Vision. While they are coming up to be commissioned, I also want to invite you to join me in prayer for Nathan & Ethan Hughes, the sons of Jeff & Michelle. The twins traveled to Honduras on Monday and will be serving on a short-term mission team there until June 29. I encourage all of you to look for the ways you are being called to build the body of Christ.