

God Has A Gift For You Romans 12:3-8

Introduction. 1). There are 2 days each year that almost every single person looks forward to with great excitement and anticipation. I think most of you could guess what those 2 days are: Christmas and your birthday. Why do we love these days so much? Well, the answer, in part, is easy. It's the gifts. We receive gifts from family and friends, gifts that say we love you, you are special to us, we think you are important and we want to show it. I can remember as a little boy those horrible, sleepless Christmas Eve nights. Will I ever go to sleep? Will the sun ever come up? The anticipation was a killer wondering what I would find in the living room on Christmas morning. Loving parents sure can make for great birthdays and Christmases.

2). There is another very special day in your life when you were flooded with gifts. Unfortunately only a few of you realize all that you received. I'm talking about your spiritual birthday, the day Jesus became your Savior and God you perfect heavenly Father. Some of you could tell me some of the gifts you received: forgiveness of sins, eternal life, justification, God as Father, Jesus as Savior, and Holy Spirit as Comforter. However, too few in the Church realize God also gift wrapped some additional presents for you, presents the Bible calls "spiritual gifts."

3). In 1 Cor. 12:1 Paul teaches, "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant, " and yet that is exactly what most Christians are. So today, let's do something about that. Let's look into the Word of God and see what our Lord says about something every single child of His has: spiritual gifts.

4). Spiritual gifts are listed in 4 places in the Bible, 2 Chapter 4s and 2 Chapter 12s:

Romans 12	Ephesians 4
1 Corinthians 12	1 Peter 4

Some have noted the gifts can be divided into 3 categories: speaking, serving, and sign. I believe a spiritual gift can be defined as "a supernatural enablement or ability given at conversion by God that equips the recipient to perform a spiritual function or assignment with efficiency and ease that strengthens the church, the Body of Christ." It is not a natural talent like signing. It is not God making you fast so that when you run, you feel His pleasure, as was the testimony of Eric Little in *Chariots of Fire*. No, spiritual gifts are supernatural in origin that are given to individuals for the good of the church.

Transition. We are going to give our attention to Romans 12:3-8, for here we find the proper attitude for exercising your gifts, and a representative listings of certain gifts and how they should operate. If you look closely, you will probably see a gift or gifts God has already given you and that He wants you to use for His glory and the church's good.

I. Be Humble In The Use Of Your Gift. 12:3

- This section of Scripture comes on the heels of Paul's "great challenge" that we present ourselves to God as a living sacrifice and that we pursue the transformed life. This radically new life will be different than our old one, especially in our attitudes, in how we think about ourselves. Paul starts with a warning:

1. Guard How You Think.

- Paul begins with a note of authority, "For I say," but he couples it with a word of humility, "through the grace given to me." Paul knew he was an apostle, but he never forgot he was also a sinner, saved by grace.

- Paul does not limit his instructions: it is “to everyone who is among you.” This is something we all need to hear.
- “not to think beyond what you should think.” A form of the word “think” (*phroneo*) appears 4 times in this verse. The transformed life will result in humility not pride, because humility is essential to our exercising our spiritual gifts in a helpful way not a harmful or haughty way. We are not to get hyped about ourselves, “super-think” about who we are and what we have.
- We are to think (pre. tense) soberly, a word that means sanely, sensibly, realistically, with balance and clear headedness. In sin we love to “over-think” about ourselves. Paul says think soberly, humbly, being grateful for the “spiritual birthday gifts” you did not earn, but that God lovingly and graciously gave you.

2. Grow In Your Faith.

- Paul says think “with sober judgment” (NIV) “as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.”
 - 1). The word *measure* can mean “standard,” and if this is correct the standard of faith is Jesus or the gospel.
 - 2). The word *measure* may also mean quantity of faith. In other words pride will be avoided when we have a proper understanding of our faith, a faith that is God’s gift (Eph. 2:8-9) and a faith that is measured out according to His sovereign plan and purpose.
- As it relates to our gifts it reminds us that He sovereignly gives to each what He wishes. We have no say in the matter. 1 Cor. 12:11 makes this truth plain, “But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing [spiritual gifts] to each one individually as He wills.” 1 Cor. 12:18 adds, “But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body [the church] just as He pleases.”
- Paul pleads with the church at Rome, almost dropping to his knees it seems in his appeal. Don’t hold an exaggerated, unbalanced opinion of your own importance and significance. Remember all that you have, your salvation and your gifts for service are only what God gave you. If you keep your eyes fixed on Jesus as our standard of measurement, pride will not sneak into your life.

Transition. Be humble in the use of your gifts.

II. Be United In The Purposes Of Your Gift.

12:4-6

- Paul is fond of using the analogy of the body, human anatomy, to describe the church. It allows him to draw attention to the head who is Christ (Eph. 5:22-24) and to the fact that the church, like a body, is characterized by both unity (one body) and diversity (many members or parts).

1. Understand There Is Diversity.

- Paul says in v. 4 “we have many members” and that all the members do not have the same function.
- In v. 5 he says “so we, being many”
- In v. 6 he says we have “gifts (pl.) differing...”

- Paul knows without diversity we would be a monstrosity, and we would not work very well. Ron Dunn, that wonderful Bible teacher who is now with the Lord put it well:
 - Look at your own body as an illustration of this. What if all your member were alike, or had the same function? What if you were all thumbs? Chaos and confusion would reign. What if you toes were eyes? All they would see is the inside of a sock!
- Rick Warren adds,
 - Organizing around the gifts of your people will allow the church to focus on ministry, not maintenance. A gifts-based ministry encourages teamwork. It also makes better use of the talent around you (and why do you think God brought this talent into your church?).
 - Building your structure on the gifts and talents within the church promotes creativity and allows for spontaneous growth. Ministries bubble up, rather than waiting on a board meeting to dissect every possibility. Decision-making becomes more efficient while the structure grows more stable. (*BP*, 8/18/03)

2. Understand There Is Individuality.

- Did you know that you are essential and indispensable to this church? Do you realize that there are certain ministries and assignments that will only happen if you do them? Why? Because there is an individuality and utter uniqueness to the body of Christ.
- V. 4 “all the members do not have the same function”
- V. 5 “So we, being many, are ...individually members of each other”
- V. 6 “having them gifts differing”
- When God saved you He gifted you uniquely and individually. You have gifts I don’t have and I have gifts you don’t have.
- No one has all the gifts and no one gift is for all. For God’s church, for this church, to accomplish all that God deserves each one of us must do what God saved and gifted us to do. We will not all look alike, act alike and serve alike. God has uniquely designed you to do what only you can do. So... what are you doing?

3. Understand We Are A Body.

- Here is the balance and focus of our unity. We are not lone rangers, an island unto ourselves. We are a body.
- V. 4 “one body”
- V. 5 “one body ... and ... members of each other”
- You need me and I need you. An eye is no good if there is not a head to turn it and feet to take it places. A beautiful face, a chiseled carved body is nothing more than a pretty corpse without a beating heart and lungs that breathe.
- Further only a foolish body attacks itself, mutilates itself, harms itself. In fact when one part hurts the whole body hurts, whether it is a stumped toe,

a stomach ache or heart pain. Immediately attention goes to what hurts to try and bring healing. Each part of the body will try to move into action and do its part to help the one who is hurting. We are a body. We belong to Christ and to each other.

- III. Be Active In The Exercise Of Your Gift. 12:6-8**
- Paul now addresses 7 of the different spiritual gifts (*charismata*), grace gifts God has given to His church. The list is not exhaustive, though these gifts in particular are essential to the health and spiritual vitality of the Lord's church.
 - Paul notes we have different gifts, and whatever gifts we have are according to grace. We did not earn them, God gave them.
- 1. If You Have The Gift Of Prophecy Then Prophecy. 12:6**
- Prophecy is the ability to declare truth. This person is an inspired spokesman for God, one who communicates revealed truth that convicts, builds up, edifies, reproves, rebukes and challenges the people of God. A person with this gift will not deviate from Scripture, but will speak in proportion or according to "the faith once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). Acts 21:9 tells us Philip had 4 daughters with this gift, and Acts 21:10 tells us of a man named Agabus with this gift as well.
- 2. If You Have The Gift Of Ministry Than Minister. 12:7**
- Ministry may be translated as "helping" or "serving." It is the word *diakonia* from which we get our word "deacon." One with this gift readily sees practical needs and goes into action to meet them. He or she has the ability to assist and support others in the church with joy, often behind-the-scenes. Phoebe had this gift (Rom. 16:1-2).
- 3. If You Have The Gift Of Teaching Then Teach. 12:7**
- If a prophet declares truth, a teacher defines truth. This gift, because of its importance, appears more often than any other in the list of gifts. Chuck Swindoll says of this gift, "Take it away, and the Body becomes prey to wolves and false instructors." The teacher instructs, explains, clarifies and makes simply and clear the truth of God's word. Some have this gift in particular for teaching children, others teens, others adults. Some are uniquely gifted and can instruct persons at any age or spiritual level.
 - Prophecy and teaching work together. Prophecy challenges the heart and will. Teaching informs and instructs the mind.
- 4. If You Have The Gift Of Exhortation, Then Exhort. 12:8**
- This gift urges spiritual growth in others. The word is *paraklesis*. It emphasizes the practical application of biblical truth to everyday life. The word means to encourage, to come alongside and urge. Exhorters warn, advise, counsel and challenge. It often takes the form of personal one-on-one ministry of one person to another. If a teacher tells us what, an exhorter will tell us how.
- 5. If You Have The Gift Of Giving, Then Give. 12:8**
- All Christians should give financially to the work of the Lord. Ten percent is a good place to start in principle, though we should not stop

there. All that we have is a gift from God. He expects us to exercise 100% stewardship.

- Yet some are uniquely gifted by God to give, and they do so generously and with pure motives (the comprehensive meaning of “with liberality”). This gift is sensitive to and provides for the needs of fellow believers and ministries with joy, generosity and integrity. This person has a God-given ability to see needs and give to meet them. This person is usually not interested in public recognition. His joy is simply in giving out of what God has given him to help others and further the work of our Lord. The churches of Macedonia (2 Cor. 8:1-5) and Philippi (Phil. 4:14-18) were filled with persons with this gift.

6. If You Have The Gift Of Leadership Then Lead. 12:8

- This is the gift of organization, administration and inspiration. This gift guides others to achieve God-given goals. This person has vision and can give direction. Like a sea captain at the helm he can steer the church in a direction that will see the church accomplish what God put it here to do. This gift is characterized by calm, clear thinking, wisdom and insight. This gift can motivate others to action and then lead them tactfully and graciously. Titus (Titus 1:5) and Timothy (1 Cor. 4:17, Phil. 2:19) exemplify this gift.
- Paul warns those with this gift to be diligent and not slack or lazy. This person usually supervises himself. He must not be lulled into a foolish lack of focus.

7. If You Have The Gift Of Mercy Then Show Mercy. 12:8

- This gift joyfully, cheerfully (*hilaroteti*) shows compassion and kindness to those who are hurting. One with this gift is quick to reach out and help those in need, who are sorrowing and in pain. Persons with this gift have amazing sensitivity. They know when to speak or be quiet, when to go or stay away, when to pray, smile, cry or just be there. Barnabas may have had this gift along with the gift of exhortation (Acts. 9:26-27; 15:36-39).

Conclusion. You may be wondering after all of this, “How can I know what my gift is?” Let me share several steps to take:

- 1). Make sure you are a Christian, for only a child of God has received these type of gifts from his or her heavenly Father (John 1:12).
- 2). Know what the gifts are. Study the 4 lists.
- 3). Present yourself to God as a living sacrifice (Rom. 12:1-2).
- 4). Pray for wisdom (James 1:5).
- 5). Jump in and start serving, seeking a place of service that brings you joy and satisfaction.
- 6). Listen for what others commend you for doing.
- 7). Don’t seek a particular gift. Recognize the gift(s) you have are a sovereign choice of God. Be content in what He gives you, for He only gives to you what is best for you.