

**Use Your Spiritual Gift**  
**Romans 12:6-8**  
March 16, 2022

**Context**

*Theme of Romans:* The gospel of God (1:16-17)

Chs 1-11      The gospel as the power of God for salvation – The indicatives

12:1-15:13    The gospel and the transformation of life – The imperatives

- 12:1-2      Consecration
- 12:3-8      Humble service
- 12:9-21     Love

15:14-16:27   Conclusion

The context of spiritual gifts is the diversity of functions arranged by God in the body of Christ (verses 3-5).

*Question:* How is the Christian's use of a spiritual gift different from an unbeliever's use of a skill God has given them?

**1. Prophecy**

6 "...if prophecy, in proportion to our faith;"

When the foundation of the church was being laid by the apostles and NT prophets (Eph 2:20), Christ gave further revelation through prophets.

- **Eph. 3:4–5** “When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and **prophets** by the Spirit.”
- **1 Cor. 14:29–30** “Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. If a **revelation** is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent.”
- **Acts 11:27–28** “Now in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. And one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world (this took place in the days of Claudius).”
- **Acts 21:10–11** “While we were staying for many days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. And coming to us, he took Paul’s belt and bound his own feet and hands and said, “Thus says the Holy Spirit, ‘This is how the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.’”

The function of both OT and NT prophets was to proclaim God's Word. They could say, "Thus says the Lord!" Sometimes they brought previous revelation (such as the Law) to bear on people's lives. Other times they were the mouthpiece for new revelation from God.

Prophets fulfilled an important function in the apostolic period

- **Acts 13:1** "Now there were in the church at Antioch **prophets** and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul."
- **Acts 15:32** "And Judas and Silas, who were themselves **prophets**, encouraged and strengthened the brothers with many words."
- **1 Cor. 14:3** "...the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation."
- **1 Cor. 14:24–25** "But if all **prophecy**, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you."

With the close of the apostolic period and the completion of Scripture, the Spirit ceased gifting people to miraculously speak new revelation from God. However, He continues to gift believers to proclaim the written Word of God, for the salvation of unbelievers and the edification of believers.

The gift to proclaim the Word of God is not only for preaching to the entire congregation, and therefore is given to both men and women.

- cf. Philip's four daughters who prophesied (Acts 21:9)

Do not be misled by Pentecostal and charismatic teachers who claim that prophets can speak new revelation from God that contains error

- **Deut. 18:20–22** "But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.' And if you say in your heart, 'How may we know the word that the LORD has not spoken?'—when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously. You need not be afraid of him."

Our text instructs that the gift of prophecy is to be used "**in proportion to our faith**"

1. This may connect closely with the idea of God assigning each believer a "measure of faith" for the exercise of his spiritual gift (verse 3). Those who proclaim God's Word are to do so in dependence upon the power of the Holy Spirit.
2. Or, this may have the idea brought out in the Legacy Standard Bible, "in agreement with the faith." The words one proclaims must be in agreement with the Christian faith, the Scriptures.
3. Both ideas are taught in Scripture

## 2. Service

7 “if service, in our serving...”

Gifts of service are distinguished from gifts of speaking in **1 Pet. 4:10–11** “As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: **whoever speaks**, as one who speaks oracles of God; **whoever serves**, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

Service encompasses every sort of practical help that Christians can give one another in Jesus’ name.<sup>1</sup>

Service should not be an occasion for pride (verse 3), but is to be done in the sacrificial humility taught by our Lord and Savior (Mark 10:45).

## 3. Teaching

7 “...the one who teaches, in his teaching;”

This is a gift for interpreting Scripture; for connecting Biblical truths with one another; and for clearly explaining Scripture’s meaning, significance, and application.

This gift is not only for teaching in public, but also for teaching in informal settings, such as one-to-one discipleship.

- **Matt. 28:20a** “teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you...”

## 4. Exhortation

8 “the one who exhorts, in his exhortation...”

- NIV “if it is to encourage, then give encouragement”

At times, the ESV also translates the verb, ‘exhort,’ as “urge” (Acts 9:38), “encourage” (Acts 14:22), “appeal” (Rom 16:17), “comfort” (2 Cor 1:4), “beg” (2 Cor 2:8), and “entreat” (2 Cor 10:1).

A closely related word is used of Christ and the Holy Spirit in the following verses:

- “Helper” (John 14:6, 26; 15:26; 16:7)
- “advocate” (1 John 2:1)

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<sup>1</sup> John MacArthur, *Romans 9-16*, 172.

## Examples

- **Acts 11:22–24** “The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he **exhorted** them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose, for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith.”
- **Acts 14:21–22** “When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, **encouraging** them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.”

This gift is for urging fellow believers to live out God’s Word.

## 5. Giving

8 “...the one who contributes, in generosity...”

- NASB “the one who gives, with generosity”
- NET “if it is contributing, he must do so with sincerity”

This gift is for giving financially or materially

Such giving is to be...

1. Wholehearted
2. Not with ulterior motives
3. Not for thanks or recognition, but for the good of others and for the glory of God
4. Giving *of* oneself, not *for* oneself.

## Example

- **2 Cor. 8:1–4** “We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among **the churches of Macedonia**, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints—”

## 6. Leadership

8 “...the one who leads, with zeal...”

- NASB “he who leads, with diligence”

- A standard Greek lexicon defines ‘zeal’ as “**earnest commitment** in discharge of an obligation or experience of a relationship, *eagerness, earnestness, diligence, willingness, zeal.*” It goes on to say that this word was used “often in Greek and Roman literature and inscriptions of **extraordinary commitment** to civic and religious responsibilities...and also of concern for personal moral excellence or optimum devotion to the interests of others.”<sup>2</sup>

This gift is for leading a church, or leading other believers in some area of ministry.

Those who lead are to be earnestly committed to it, that they may persevere when the going gets tough or when the temptation arises to slack off.

## 7. Mercy

8 “...the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.”

God’s mercy is also called His compassion or pity. It is His goodness shown to those in misery or distress, irrespective of what they deserve. Mercy moves God to rescue such individuals out of trouble. God’s mercy means He is not apathetic, but deeply cares when His creatures are in misery or distress.

This gift endows a believer with special sensitivity to suffering and sorrow, with the ability to notice misery and distress that may go unnoticed by others, and with the ability to help alleviate such afflictions.<sup>3</sup>

This gift may be used in caring for the sick, the elderly, the disabled, the poor, those who are suffering, etc. It involves showing sympathy.

Mercy is to be shown “with cheerfulness”

1. Not grudgingly or merely out of a sense of duty
2. The Swiss Reformed scholar, Frederic Louis Godet, commented that cheerfulness makes the visitor a sunbeam penetrating into the sick-chamber and to the heart of the afflicted<sup>4</sup>
3. **Prov. 17:22** “A joyful heart is good medicine,  
but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.”

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<sup>2</sup> BDAG

<sup>3</sup> MacArthur, 177.

<sup>4</sup> Frederic Louis Godet, *Commentary on Romans*, 433.

## **Conclusion**

*Question:* How do the spiritual gifts in this list complement one another?

God's will for us as believers is not that we would simply attend the church's services and engage our heart and mind in corporate worship. While such worship is at the heart of our life as Christ's church, God's will is that our worship would extend into service in the church. Without such service, our worship is, in a sense, lifeless.

We are to offer our bodies as living sacrifices, consecrating ourselves unto the Lord's service, which is our spiritual worship (12:1).

We are to be transformed into the image of Christ by the renewal of our minds with the Scriptures (12:2).

We are to have a humble view of ourselves (12:3).

As we follow these instructions in 12:1-3, we will be able to use whatever spiritual gift we have received, in dependence on the power of the Spirit, for the upbuilding of Christ's church and the glory of God!