

Romans 12:6-8 (NKJV)

6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith;

7 or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching;

8 he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

Last week we took a quick look at the gift of prophesy. This morning we will move on in the list.

7 or ministry, let us use it in our ministering;

The word for ministry is **diakonia**. This word is used very broadly. Most of the scholars I trust apply it to ministries like the ones of **the deacons** in the book of Acts. It is the process of meeting **the physical needs of the saints**. And more broadly, it is meeting the **physical needs wherever they may appear**. In fact the word used for **deacon** in Acts is actually the same word as used here in Romans. Look at the status this gift receives. **Number 2**. Looking after the **physical needs of church members** and the **physical needs of church functioning** is significant. You've got to figure that **must** be true, when the requirements for a **deacon** is nearly the same as that for an **elder**. And look at the people in scripture who were deacons. They were even fine preachers and ministers in their own right. You might look at yourself and say, I can fix things. I can deliver stuff to people who need it. But I can't really do anything important. You could not be **more wrong** in your assessment. God has great uses for servants like you. So don't sell the gift short.

So if you have the gift of ministry, or other places it might be called "helps", what should you do? **let us use it in our ministering;**

Essentially Paul is saying DO IT. Don't allow what you **can't do** to hold you back from what you **CAN DO**. Don't de-value the gift. Don't second guess it. If you can meet the need, meet it. If you can do the job, do it. Get to work. God will use it.

he who teaches, in teaching;

Now, before I go further I want to mention that **not having a gift** does not mean that sometimes God won't use you to **do the task**. Everyone needs to **teach** someone to **some degree**. Parents should teach their children, even if they don't have the gift of teaching. We are all told to admonish and encourage. Don't misunderstand this. It is just that **those with the gifts** will be the ones who seem to come by it most naturally. And their use of their gifts may seem to accomplish more with less effort. But don't think that just because you don't have a specific gift that **you will not be called upon** to do some of these activities. It is almost

certain that you will be. All of the gifts do activities that are also commanded of all believers.

Now, teaching.

What is teaching?

1 Timothy 4:13-16 (NKJV)

13 Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

14 Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership.

15 Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all.

16 Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.

Here in Timothy it may well be that he was given the gift of teaching. We can't know for sure. But look at what Paul tells him. He was continually told to teach. He was told to give attention to reading, exhortation, doctrine, meditate on them, take heed to doctrine.

Look at that. Timothy was given the assignment to teach, maybe the gift by the laying on of the hands of the eldership, but this didn't mean that everything is handed to the teacher. No. In fact it only determines where most of his work should be spent.

Let's look at another passage.

2 Timothy 2:1-2 (NKJV)

1 You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

2 And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

This all looks like **work**. This isn't something that will come without **discipline**. It won't come without **attention**. It won't come without **study**. Maximum effort is assumed and called for.

2 Timothy 2:15 (NKJV)

15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Here we see it again. The teacher has work to do. This **gift** does not eliminate **work**. It just makes his work **effective**.

The gift of teaching is taking in information and then conveying it in a way that makes sense to the hearers. The more that a teacher **studies**, the more time he

puts into **understanding** things, the more the Lord will **enable him** to convey that information in a way that it will be helpful to the listeners. This is not like the gift of prophecy. This **gift of teaching** has a huge amount of homework that comes with it. The gift of prophecy is one of immediacy. God gives a message and the person is responsible to deliver it. Look in the Old Testament. The prophets did not study the messages they were to deliver. They were simply given the messages and they delivered them if they were any good at all. And that delivery often came at a great price.

A teacher does not have the same gift. The teacher must **study and prepare**. He must do his homework. If he shows up without having studied he is not exercising the gift of teaching. Now, his style may be one where he does not need to use notes, or he may stick to his notes. But he must first have come to **an understanding** of the scriptures before he can **convey them**.

But at the same time sometimes prophecy can happen even to a person who is a teacher. Sometimes a teacher may stray from his notes at the prompting of the Holy Spirit and begin speaking truths that he has not prepared and maybe had not even considered before he began teaching. This can happen to teachers or it can happen to any believer. We cannot limit the actions of the Holy Spirit to only those who were given that specific gift.

After Christ had resurrected He showed up with the disciples walking on the Emmaus Road.

Luke 24:13 (NKJV)

13 Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem..

Now pay attention to the words expounded and opened.

Luke 24:27 (NKJV)

27 And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

Luke 24:32 (NKJV)

32 And they said to one another, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?"

Expounded and opened are synonyms of the word teach. This is what a teacher does. He takes the Word of God, understands it for himself, and makes it understandable to others.

Has God used you in such a way that, after talking about what scripture says people say, **I get it!?** **I understand it!** I couldn't understand it before but now I

do. It could be that you have the gift of teaching. I suspect that there are some here in our body who have that gift. But it may be you have not taken advantage of the opportunities in front of you to exercise it. Consider this. If God gave you this gift it is for you to **use**.

Next is exhortation.

8 he who exhorts, in exhortation

The words used for these gifts are very broad. The word used here means to **call someone to one's side**. Incidentally that is also the Greek word used to describe the Holy Spirit- the paraklete. The word is closely related to the words for advocate, comforter and helper.

We can take from this that the gift of exhortation carries with it the idea of giving people advice, relationally pleading with them to do the right thing, giving them positive words of encouragement and negative words of rebuke. It may involve warning a person about their current path. It might mean standing by someone to give them the strength to do the next thing they need to do.

Have you ever heard of a **personal fitness trainer**? These people are trained to help people get physically fit. They do an analysis of the person's physical fitness and then come up with a plan to get them to a more desired level. This person becomes a coach to the person who is trying to up their level of fitness.

Well this gift of exhortation is more about being a **spiritual fitness trainer**. Often this gift becomes focused on the need and lifestyle of the individual. They see their place in life as being a **support person** for helping others reach the level of **spiritual fitness** that Christ wants them to attain. They are go-to people for those that they minister to. People will depend on them for help because they will know they are dependable, they are inviting, they are accepting, but they are honest. They tell the truth even when those they speak to don't want to hear it. I think in our vernacular the word exhortation and the word coach might be synonyms. What we are talking about here is **personal spiritual coaching**.

Do you find that people turn to you when they are in a hard spot? Do they call you when they need help facing a trial? Do they call you when they need advice about some life situation they find themselves in? You may well have the gift of exhortation.

Now again, this is an activity that every believer is told to do. A classic example of it is in Heb 10:24 where it says:

24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,

That is exactly what the gift does. But I think the exceptional thing about those with the gift is their ability to call people close. I think this gift exhibits an unusual trait in being approachable, trustable, kind, in such a way that people are drawn to them. You will know which people are using this gift by watching their doorstep and their phone bill. They will be continually found in contact with people meeting their life needs.

The gift of prophesy has **truth** revealed to the gift bearer.

The gift of teaching is able to understand and convey **the truth** in an understandable fashion.

The gift of exhortation is enabled to help people obey and **follow the truth** they have heard.

Next the gift of giving.

he who gives, with liberality;

The Greek word for giving here means giving, sharing and imparting that which is one's own. This is different from the gift of service in that it is taking **one's own** possessions and making them someone else's. Gathering **other's** resources and distributing them may help meet the needs of the church members. In fact it most certainly will. But the method is different for the one with the gift of giving. These people are not gathering the churches resources and distributing them. They are taking **that which is their own** and giving it to someone else.

I have read that the most amazing part of this person's gift is their ability to make money. To give you must have. This teaching would say that the person with the gift of giving also has the gift of getting. And the great danger to this person would be that they would be inclined to keep that which they got. It would be easy to think that because **I earned it** that I **deserve** it. But that would be the exact wrong way to think about it.

I am not sure if this idea is correct. But it could well be. Whatever the case this person will probably make his or her spouse uncomfortable. This person will have a tendency to view all resources as spendable resources. And they should. They should give liberally.

This word for liberally means singleness, simplicity, single mindedness, and generously. This essentially means to **give** the resources as opposed to **keeping them** for ones self, and to give it in a manner that has no hooks and no selfish benefit.

Mike used to talk a lot about this sort of thing. He taught me more than anyone else about true human relations. A **hook** is an unspoken expectation of something that you hope to gain by giving the gift. It puts the other person "on

the hook". They now **owe you** something because **you gave them** something. And you can name the price at some time in the future. If they don't pay up you appeal to their guilt.

This is dishonest communication. He would often say that if you want something for that which you give, call **it a deal**. Strike the deal first. That is honest communication. It is **ok** to make deals. But they are **not gifts** and you do not have the right to **call them gifts** or think about them as gifts. There is no generosity involved. And you should name the terms before you strike the deal. Open ended deals are just manipulation.

But the gift of giving, that is something completely different. True Christian charity, Christian grace, gives with **no expectation of return**. It gives, not looking for a plaque with ones name on the pew. It isn't looking for a service in return. It isn't looking to **gain something** by **giving something**. It gives with simplicity. It gives in an example of God's love, agape love, which gives without expectation of return.

There are two applications here.

First for everyone- how do you give? In your relationships, how do you give? Is it with expectation of return? You can usually tell **why you give** what you give by **what you expect after you give** something. If you give it with the right motive you will not mind when you receive nothing for it. In fact, even if it is unappreciated you will know that you gave it for the right reason and that is enough.

But if you have **any other reaction** after giving something, you need to take a good hard look at what you are doing. You give yourself too much credit if you think you are truly giving something yet have the right to **expect** something. That is not giving in **simplicity**. That is giving in **duplicity**. If you want to see yourself as you really are, first clarify in your own mind **what you expect** and then communicate **what you expect** before you offer your contribution. That allows all to see that you are looking for some pay off for yourself and it gives the other party the opportunity to accept or reject the terms.

For those who have the gift of giving, it is even more important for you that you do not become like the rich people in the book of Acts. Your gifts should never be **to gain an advantage** over others. That is evil and it should be avoided like the plague. It is much better if you give like Christ said where the left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing. This is one example where a little schizophrenia is called for.

Oh, and by the way. Like the rest of the gifts, this is also something every believer is expected to do.

Ephesians 4:28 (NKJV)

28 Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.

Why do we work? To have something to give to meet other's needs. Isn't that a different way of looking at things? It sure is different than why the world works. But that shouldn't be a surprise when we read that we are a **part of a body**. It is only natural that what we do would be with another's good in mind.

James 2:15-16 (NKJV)

**15 If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food,
16 and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?**

James made it pretty plain. We need to look out for the needs of others. It doesn't matter who we are. It doesn't matter what gift we have. If we **see the need** and we can **meet the need** we **should** meet the need. If we don't, we do not have the love of Christ or the faith of Christ.

he who leads, with diligence;

The word for leads means "stands before others". In the New Testament it is not used for government rulers but it IS used for headship of the family. In Acts 27:11 this word is used of a helmsman- someone who steers a ship.

So this is talking about those who chart the course, those who are gifted at administering the direction for a bunch of people. Some people have this gift of making things happen. Some people can sit in a position of authority and are able to make sure that everything **that is needed to happen** to get those people to the end destination **gets done**. They are likely gifted at seeing what people are gifted at and directing them to the proper tasks.

That would explain the second half of the instruction. Maybe these people are good at delegating. They are good at getting people involved in the process.

They are good at leading. But what is the temptation there?

Wouldn't it be easy to think- my job is **telling** people what to do. It isn't my job to **do** these things. Look at me. I can get people to accomplish all kinds of things. I

am special. I get things done. I don't need **to do** these things. But look what Paul says. If you have this gift of leading, do it with diligence.

Diligence means earnestness, zeal, and sometimes haste. What this means is there can be no room in the person with this gift for procrastinating and laziness.

This person must be working **as hard as all those people they delegate to.**

As usual we have a dual application. We can apply this to people who **do this kind of work** and people who **have this gift.**

All of us do this kind of work who have responsibilities for other people. And what we see here is that we cannot afford to be lazy. We cannot afford to distribute our work to those **under us** so we can be slothful and selfish. No one is given authority for that purpose. Those in leadership whether it is over a household or over a church must spend their wakeful hours in industrious activity. If we use **our children** or **our church members** to make our lives easy **at their expense** we are violating this principle. It is our job to work hard at our responsibilities. We should be an example to those who follow us. Our work may be different, but it should be diligent. We as leaders need to decide what needs done, to plan what needs done, make a plan to do it, and get it done. It is more important than **our pleasure**, our **benefit**, our **recreation**, etc. Essentially it is like everything else in our passage- it needs to get done. Period.

As for those with the gift, understand that this may be the hardest part for you. You may be very gifted in delegation but you may find that you think that gives you a right to not be diligent. That isn't so. You are as much responsible for diligence as those that you delegate to. Maybe even more so. If those under you are working, you should be working. You are not given authority to make your life easier.

he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

The word for mercy means to actively show sympathy and to **comfort and strengthen** the person who needs sympathy. This gift has a real proclivity to reach out to those who suffer. It is a supernatural gift to meet the needs of those who are in deep emotional distress. As I have been saying, I think the first thing these people are gifted with is the ability to see suffering. Maybe they are a bit more sensitive to the suffering of others. Maybe they see things that most of us overlook. But once they see it, they then become responsible **to do** something. My guess is that it is costly for them to reach out, but reach out is what they must do. They must come alongside the one who is suffering with mercy.

And how must they do their ministry?

Cheerfulness- this is more than simply doing something because you are obligated to do so.

Proverbs 14:21 (NKJV)

21 He who despises his neighbor sins; But he who has mercy on the poor, happy is he.

I think this shows us where the cheerfulness comes from. It is a blessing from God to be able to reach out to those who need help. We are fortunate and blessed to be able to serve God in this way.

That is what the person with the gift of mercy should have. They should be viewing their opportunity to look after those who hurt as being a blessing by God. It is a way to express our appreciation for what he has done for us. And happy indeed are we when we carry out such a ministry.

Proverbs 14:31 (NKJV)

31 He who oppresses the poor reproaches his Maker, But he who honors Him has mercy on the needy.

We see here again, that, like the other gifts, this is something we are all to do. We find in the New Testament that true spirituality is visiting orphans and widows in their need.

Now think about those who have ministered to you. What did you get from those that you figured were **only there because they had to be**? If they were not sincerely cheerful to be able to be there, what did you think of the comfort they offered you? I think we would all respond in the same way. We would feel that we **were an obligation** and we really have **enough to deal with** without infringing on this person's happiness.

But how did you respond to those who you felt regarded it as **a privilege** to help you? Did that not endear you to them? Did it not make you feel that you were **fortunate** to have such people around you? That is how it should be.

I challenge you this morning to think about the gifts we covered this week and last week. I don't think this was a conclusive list. But **think about** what Paul is saying. What **need** could you have that the meeting of that need wouldn't be in one of these **gifts**?

When I visit Jonathan's work place I see tools everywhere. Why? Because there is a lot that can break in a car. A car needs to be constantly maintained.

Sometimes it needs some help in getting from point a to point b.

We'll look around this morning. We are the cars and we are the tools. Our gracious Lord did not throw us into this life and say, there you go. Now grit your

teeth and survive. No, he placed us in a **living moving body**, an organism. And he placed in that body parts that both **need things** and **can give things** that others need. We all were created to give and take. We were placed here to both fix things and be fixed. God gave you a special way of seeing. When your eyes look out over this church, you see it with a perspective that is unique to your gift. You will have promptings that are unique to the way God works through you. Our trick again, is not to pretend to be something we are not. It is not to become like someone else in their giftedness and usefulness. The trick is to play out the part that God has created **us** for.

You do not have to look far to have the opportunity to do this. God has surrounded us with this church body. He has surrounded us with believers who are not part of this body. And he has surrounded us with unbelievers. He has designed you to play a significant part in all these surroundings. Mike used to quote the saying that "Jesus in you is like Jesus in nobody else". It is true. So if you feel insignificant, odds are very good that it is simply from not being obedient. It is likely from having your eyes focused on yourself and not on your Lord and the needs of those he has placed around you. According to this principle of the body, there are no **insignificant** members. They are all important. And I think that is why Paul's instruction is essentially- **DO IT**. Do the gift. Exercise it. Follow the Holy Spirit's promptings to meet the needs of others. Write out your "**ought**" list, the list of things you feel **you ought to do** for others and put a date next to them. Give yourself some deadlines to get them done. But do them. Intentions without effort accomplish nothing and are good for nothing. We must deliver the mail. We have got to **do these things** that we are gifted to do and prompted to do. I guess the question for us this week is, will we just **do it**?