

Romans 12:6-8, 6 “We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; **7** if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; **8** if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.”

Welcome to week 3 of our study of spiritual gifts, “Know your role.” Taking the time to realize that all believers have spiritual gifts, and that for us to grow and be who we are called to be as the Church, we need to identify and implement our gifts.

Last week we spent a lot of time focused on very public gifts that usually come attached to platforms and peering eyes. Today we are going to spend time focusing on some gifts that might seem a bit more private and humble. The spiritual gifts of **Service & Encouragement**. Spiritual gifts that put our actions and our intentions in the practice of building others up. We are going to provide you with 7 principles that will help us walk through these 2 spiritual gifts. These aren't the loudest or flashiest gifts, but they are the heart and backbone of living and ministering like Christ. Our sinful flesh can ache for spotlights and attention, but Jesus makes it clear that when we serve and edify others we are achieving far greater heavenly acknowledgement than earthly applause.

Do you find yourself naturally serving and drawn to serve? Do you always have your hand on something? Are you the first one to volunteer? Is it hard for you to sit still while work is being done, or even when it isn't being done? Then serving may be more than just a personality trait, it may be your spiritual gift, and while it seems menial, it is great and Godly. Jesus tells his disciples that it's not their place to try and seek power and authority like the rest of the world does. That greatness doesn't lie in position and titles, but rather, greatness lies in being a servant like Him.

Principle #1: Serving is Greatness

Mark 10:42-45, 42 Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. **43** Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, **44** and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. **45** For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

The greatest among you will be your servant. - Matthew 23:11

Not that we use our gifts solely for the goal of being great, but in understanding that Jesus considers that the greatest action we can do in and for the kingdom of God is to serve. And not just in gifts or greatness, but that we are called to be servants as believers, even if it isn't our spiritual gift.

Principle #2: Jesus is the Example

John 13:12-15, **12** When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. **13** “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. **14** Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. **15** I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

Jesus used one of his last times of peace and fellowship before death to make it clear to His disciples that no one is above serving. At this point the disciples were all clear on who Jesus was, even though they would soon run away and deny. They knew they were getting their feet washed by the messiah. They knew Jesus held rank and authority like no one in this world had ever seen, yet he chose to humble himself and serve. He served them not just as a divine gesture, but to clearly make them understand that He expected them to humble themselves, serve, and follow His example. And in order for us to follow His example well, our hearts and minds have to have the perspective of Christ’s.

Principle #3: Serving is in the Perspective

Philippians 2:3-8, **3** Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, **4** not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. **5** In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:**6** Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; **7** rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. **8** And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

One of the reasons people shy away from serving and look down on it, is because it comes with a lowly connotation. How many times have you heard or said, “I ain’t your maid.” “That ain’t my job.” “You don’t pay me.” **If our perspective puts us at more value than others, we can never have the service and perspective of Jesus.** Jesus makes it clear that serving isn’t beneath us, but that it’s also our calling. **For those whose spiritual gift is serving, pride may be the only thing in the way.** But as believers we need to know that it’s our intended purpose.

Galatians 5:13-14, **13** You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. **14** For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

Principle #4: Serving Others Is Serving Jesus

Sometimes, even when our perspective is right, people can make it hard to serve. Even at our best, people can be rude, mean, ungrateful, and even combative when we are serving them. That makes it hard to intentionally live out this gifting and calling if people make us only want to serve these hands. By the way, these hands usually are running a buy one get one free special. But keep in mind, **Jesus served food to, and washed the feet of Judas.** Even Jesus had to serve

people that wounded and rejected Him. When we keep in mind though that every person we serve is us serving Jesus, it makes it a lot easier.

Matthew 25:35-40, **35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36** I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' **37** "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? **38** When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? **39** When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' **40** "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

Someone can be a complete Jerk, but we serve Jesus through serving them. We don't have to announce it to them "By the way, you suck, but i'm serving Jesus through you and not your hot garbage attitude." But our love for Jesus should make it worth it.

Colossians 3:23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters

Where serving is a gift that builds up through action, encouraging is a gift that builds up through expressions like words and thoughtfulness. The word Edify means to build up, and that's exactly what encouragers do. They see a moment to build up, and they do it. Sometimes because they see something that is broken, and other times simply to build to make something stronger. Their spiritual response is to help strengthen and give hope.

Principle #5: Encouragement is a Necessary Spiritual Gift

1 Thessalonians 5:9-11 **9** For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. **10** He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. **11** Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

Paul makes this statement because even while having salvation, it's quite possible and expected for us to become discouraged in our faith and in our lives. It's easy for people to be weighed down and attacked by the enemy, by others, and by themselves. Satan can't steal our salvation, but the discouragement we face in this sinful world can definitely dampen our spirits, hope, and joy. That's why encouragement is so necessary. Paul said you are meant for more than wrath, so keep up the encouragement. Encouragers help increase the quality of life. They are like spiritual hugs, and sometimes physical hugs too. How many of you just need a hug sometime? It's said "**We need four hugs a day for survival. We need 8 hugs a day for maintenance. We need 12 hugs a day for growth.**" I'm all about hugs and I know I need that, but we need those spiritual embraces as well.

Paul goes on to remind us that when we are encouraging we aren't just carrying out warm fuzzy feelings, **we aren't just the Christian Carebears, we are doing holy God empowered work.**

Romans 15:2-6, **2** Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up. **3** For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me."**4** For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope. **5** May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, **6** so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Principle #6: Encouragement Needs Intentionality

In order for encouragement to take place though, someone has to take the initiative to start it. Like service, we are all called as believers to encourage. While it may be a gifting for some, and a struggle for others, we are all called to do it. And if it's going to happen, it's going to require that we are aware and intentional with our execution of it. Let's look at what the author of Hebrews says across these passages.

Hebrews 3:12-13 **12** See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. **13** But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

Hebrews 10:24-25 **24** And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, **25** not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

The author of Hebrews shows clearly that we need to be intentional, proactive, and reactive with our encouragement. Encouragement is necessary, but it's not everyone's gift, or talent. So if you are an encourager, please know that what you do is not only necessary, but we need you on the front lines doing it. The Hebrews author stated that encouragement could stand in the way of a heart becoming sinful and turning from God. That encouragement could guard against sin's deceitfulness. Encouragement is powerful, but that same author states we need to be intentional about it, don't just accidentally wait for encouragement to happen, think about it. Consider it, ponder it, pray about it. How can you encourage others? We put more time thinking about where we will eat or what we will watch than we do on how we can genuinely encourage others, but they need us to rise up and bring our gifts to the table.

Principle #7: Your Encouragement Can Be Tainted, Guard It Well

How many of you can think of a time when someone said something, and you thought, "well, there's no coming back from that." Someone says something so offensive, or perverse, or shocking that whatever comes out of their mouth from that point forward is going to be tainted

by that. In the past decade we've seen politicians, actors, authors, and celebrities across the board all be taken down, canceled, or condemned because of something they said. Resulting in protests, boycotts, shunning and shaming. It's not only limited to the world, but happens just as easily in the church. Someone says something off color, inappropriate, or outright sinful, and it becomes much harder to ever listen to truth or encouragement come out of their mouths again. With some people we only have one shot to mess up before we lose all relevance and sway in their lives, so treat it with caution. The Apostle Paul tells the Ephesian church this as well.

Ephesians 4:29-32 **29** Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. **30** And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. **31** Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. **32** Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Unwholesome talk isn't just cursing or say words that we've labels as "Bad words." Unwholesome talk is anything we say that is going to damage the possibility of us being an encouragement later. Do you accept encouragement from someone who gossips about other people? Do you accept encouragement from someone you know actively lies or deceives people? Is it easy to accept encouragement from someone who says things you can't even respect as a person? That's unwholesome talk. The reason Paul says to avoid this is because of the damage it does.

He goes on to say that if it's not building others up, making them stronger, braver, more loved, more hopeful, more clear, more encouraged, then it doesn't need to come out of your mouth. He states that not only should your words be encouraging to others, but it should be encouraging to people that even overhear your words. If not, shhh. Be quiet.

When we titled this series "Know Your Role" one of the first thoughts we had was to go full 90's-2000's wrestling with it, and make some promo videos with Pastor Dj dressed like The Rock, I'd be Mick Foley, and just have some clips of him doing the old Rock Catch Phrase of "Know Your Role, And Shut Your Mouth!!!" We obviously didn't go that route, but there is some wisdom there. If you know your role is to encourage, and you can't say something encouraging, Shut Your Mouth!

Service and Encouragement are two of the most powerful spiritual gifts, but even if they aren't your spiritual giftings, please know, if you follow Jesus, they are still part of your calling.

Announce Worship (Team or Person lol)

Invitation:

As followers of Jesus, we are called to serve: Are you praying through the possibility? Has God already told you where to serve, and you're hesitant? Are you confused as to where you think you would fit? What's holding you back?

As followers of Jesus, we are called to encourage: Who in your life needs encouragement, send them a text before you leave here today! Maybe there is someone here that needs encouragement, find them, talk and hug! Maybe you need some encouragement, during our last song come to the altar and someone will pray with you or instead you can write your need on the care card that's in the back of the seat in front of you.