

LESSON 5

How to Serve Others with Your Gifts

Romans 12:3–8; 1 Corinthians 12:12–17

For by the grace given to me, I tell everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he should think. Instead, think sensibly, as God has distributed a measure of faith to each one. Now as we have many parts in one body, and all the parts do not have the same function, in the same way we who are many are one body in Christ and individually members of one another. According to the grace given to us, we have different gifts: If prophecy, use it according to the proportion of one's faith; if service, use it in service; if teaching, in teaching; if exhorting, in exhortation; giving, with generosity; leading, with diligence; showing mercy, with cheerfulness,

Romans 12:3–8.

Class Overview: Every Christian has been uniquely equipped by God with gifts to serve others and build up the church. From Romans 12:3–8 and 1 Corinthians 12:12–27, we learn that the body of Christ functions best when every member recognizes their place, values others, and serves in love. These gifts are not about position or prestige—they are about participation. God has arranged each part of the body with purpose, and when every believer uses their gifts with humility and love, the church grows strong, unified, and effective in its mission. This lesson challenges us to identify our God-given gifts and put them to use for the good of others and the glory of Christ.

Class Objectives:

By the end of this class, you should be able to:

1. Understand the source of spiritual gifts
2. Recognize the unity and diversity of the Body
3. Serve in love for the common good
4. Develop practical habits of service

5. Encourage and affirm one another's gifts
6. Live out the challenge of service

Introduction:

IT FEELS LIKE WE'VE HAD A LOT OF FUNERALS IN OUR CONGREGATION SINCE THE PANDEMIC that began the decade. I know that in my preaching, I have conducted more funerals in the last five years than in the first 10. After one of our church members passed a few years ago, I watched something remarkable happen. The family had been through a long and exhausting week, and the church gathered to provide a meal. What struck me wasn't just the food itself, but how everyone contributed in their own way. Some cooked, some set up tables, and some cleaned afterward. None of the work was glamorous, but every part mattered. Together, they served with love, and in that moment, the church looked exactly like what God designed it to be: one body, many members, each using their gift for the good of others.

Moments like that remind me that ministry is not the job of a few; it's the calling of all. God has placed within each believer unique abilities, passions, and opportunities to serve. Romans 12:6 says, *According to the grace given to us, we have different gifts.* Paul reminds us that the church functions like a body; different parts, each with its own role, working together under one head, Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12–27). When one member serves faithfully, everyone benefits; when one member withholds their gift, the whole body feels the loss.

Too often, we underestimate what God has placed within us. We assume that ministry belongs to those who preach, teach, or lead, but Scripture tells a different story. Every Christian is gifted. Every Christian is needed. And every gift, whether public or private, visible or unseen, matters deeply to God.

As we study this lesson, we'll see that serving others through our gifts is both an act of humility and an act of love. God gives the gifts, but He calls us to use them, not to glorify ourselves, but to build up the body and advance His mission.

So, here's the question we'll explore: *How can we discover and use our gifts in ways that strengthen others, honor God, and bring unity to the body of Christ?*

God Gives Gifts to Every Child of His

In Romans 12:3–6a, we find an important reminder about perspective: *for by the grace given to me, I tell everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he should think. Instead, think sensibly, as God has distributed a measure of faith to each one.* (v. 3). Before Paul ever lists spiritual gifts, he calls for humility. Serving others starts not with pride over what we can do, but gratitude for what God has given.

The phrase “God has distributed” reminds us that spiritual gifts are not earned; they are entrusted. They are given by grace, not merit. None of us can boast, because every ability, opportunity, and resource comes from the same source: God. And that means every Christian has a gift. There are no “ungifted” believers. Every member of the body has something to contribute to the health and growth of the church.

Paul writes in verse 4, *now as we have many parts in one body, and all the parts do not have the same function, in the same way we who are many are one body in Christ and individually members of one another.* This image of the body is brilliant. Just as your hands, eyes, and ears have different functions but all serve one purpose, so too, in the church, the diversity of gifts serves the unity of mission. The variety of gifts reflects the creativity and wisdom of God Himself.

I once worked for a congregation where one of the most faithful servants was a quiet man who kept the baptistry up. He made sure the water was clean and the heater worked. He never stood on the stage, never led a prayer, but his gift made baptism as comfortable as possible. Another sister spent hours each week writing notes to new Christians. Neither sought attention, but both were indispensable. Their gifts, though different, flowed from the same Spirit and served the same purpose: to build up the body of Christ.

That's what Paul means when he says in verse 6, *that according to the grace given to us, we have different gifts.* God designed the church to

function best when everyone recognizes and uses what He's given them. The danger arises when we start comparing, wishing we had someone else's gift, or assuming our contribution doesn't matter. But comparison destroys ministry. God doesn't expect you to serve with someone else's gift; He calls you to be faithful with your own.

So, what does this mean for us? First, it means **humility**, remembering that our gifts are grace, not status. Second, it means **responsibility**, realizing that unused gifts are wasted opportunities. And third, it means **joy**, because serving in the way God designed you brings deep satisfaction and purpose. When each member uses their gift, the body becomes a living testimony of God's wisdom and love.

Different Gifts, One Body

In 1 Corinthians 12:12–20, Paul expands on the metaphor of the body, writing, *for just as the body is one and has many parts, and all the parts of that body, though many, are one body, so also is Christ* (v. 12). It's a simple image, but it carries a simple truth. The church is not an organization or a social club; it is a living organism. Each member of the family is a vital part of that body, joined to Christ the Head, and connected in purpose and function.

In verse 13, Paul explains the unity behind this diversity: *for we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all given one Spirit to drink.* No matter our background, personality, or ability, we were all brought into the same family through the same Spirit. That's what makes the church beautiful. God takes people who have nothing in common by the world's standards and weaves them together in perfect unity through His Spirit.

Paul then uses a touch of humor to make his point. He says, *if the foot should say, 'Because I'm not a hand, I don't belong to the body,' it is not for that reason any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, 'Because I'm not an eye, I don't belong to the body,' it is not for that reason any less a part of the body* (vv. 15–16). You can almost picture the conversation, a talking foot jealous of a hand, an ear feeling overlooked compared to the eye. But Paul's point is clear: every part is essential.

We live in a culture that celebrates some roles while overlooking others. The same danger can creep into the church, where preachers, teachers, or leaders are viewed as more “important” than those who quietly serve behind the scenes. But in God’s design, there are no unimportant parts. The preacher may proclaim the gospel, but someone else greets visitors, cleans the building, manages technology, prepares communion, or comforts the grieving. Each one contributes to Christ’s mission.

Paul concludes in verse 18, *but as it is, God has arranged each one of the parts in the body just as He wanted.* That’s the key, God arranged it. You are not in the body by accident. Your gifts, your story, your abilities, they are intentional. God placed you where you are for a reason. And verse 19 drives it home: *if they were all the same part, where would the body be?* In other words, uniformity is not the goal, unity is.

Practically, this means we should celebrate our differences rather than compete with them. The church doesn’t need everyone to be the same; it needs everyone to serve. When one member suffers, the whole body hurts; when one member thrives, the whole body rejoices (v. 26). That’s the beauty of the body of Christ: unity in diversity, held together by the Spirit, working together for God’s glory.

Serving in Love for the Common Good

After describing the diversity of gifts within the body, Paul moves to how those gifts should be used. In Romans 12:6–8 he writes, *according to the grace given to us, we have different gifts: if prophecy, use it according to the proportion of one’s faith; if service, use it in service; if teaching, in teaching; if exhorting, in exhortation; giving, with generosity; leading, with diligence; showing mercy, with cheerfulness.*

Notice the emphasis: whatever your gift is, *use it.* Paul doesn’t just list abilities; he gives instructions for how to use them: with faith, with generosity, with diligence, with cheerfulness. Spiritual gifts are not decorations to admire; they are tools to employ. God did not give us gifts to store on a shelf but to put into motion for the good of others.

The same theme appears in 1 Corinthians 12:25–27, where Paul says the purpose of our different roles is *that there would be no division in the*

body, but that the members would have the same concern for each other. The goal of our gifts is not competition but compassion. When we serve with love, the body is strengthened and unity deepens.

This is why spiritual gifts cannot be divorced from love. Right after describing the gifts in 1 Corinthians 12, Paul flows straight into 1 Corinthians 13: the great love chapter. The connection is deliberate. Without love, even the most impressive gifts mean nothing. You can teach with brilliance, serve with energy, or give with sacrifice, but if love is absent, it profits nothing (1 Corinthians 13:1–3). Love is the motivation, the safeguard, and the measure of all ministry.

I once knew a man whose gift was encouragement. He wasn't flashy or loud, but every week he found someone to lift up: a teenager, a widow, a tired parent. He'd shake hands and quietly remind people that they mattered. He was one of several who helped shift the congregation's tone. You could feel the warmth of love growing in the body. His gift wasn't about recognition; it was about building others up for the common good. Even after I moved to another congregation, he remained a constant source of encouragement to me. Every year, he would drive from the next state over to be part of our annual men's retreat. When he passed away suddenly several years back, Christians from all over the Midwest were impacted.

That's how God intends His church to work. When each person uses their gift, not for attention, but for love, the church flourishes. The teacher builds faith through knowledge. The servant meets needs with compassion. The encourager restores hope through words. The giver supplies resources with joy. The leader guides with diligence. Each role, motivated by love, blesses the whole body.

So, what does this mean for us? It means we should:

- **Use our gifts:** Don't wait for perfect conditions, start serving where you are.
- **Serve with the right heart:** Love must be the reason behind what we do.
- **Honor others' gifts:** Celebrate what they bring rather than comparing or competing.

- **Keep the mission in focus:** Our gifts are for the *common good*, to glorify Christ and build His church.

When we serve in love, the church becomes a living picture of Christ Himself, diverse, unified, and overflowing with grace. Every act of service, no matter how small, becomes a declaration of love for God and for His people.

Practical Application: **How to Serve Others with Your Gifts**

Discovering and using your spiritual gifts isn't a mysterious process: it's a matter of faith, humility, and love. God has already given you what you need to serve. The key is to recognize it, develop it, and use it for the good of others. Here are some practical ways to put this lesson into action:

1. Discover Your Gifts Through Service

Spiritual gifts are best discovered by doing, not by waiting. Get involved in something: teaching, serving, visiting, mentoring, giving. As you step into opportunities, you'll begin to recognize what energizes you and blesses others. Gifts reveal themselves in motion, not in theory.

2. Ask Others What They See in You

Sometimes others can see your gifts more clearly than you can. Ask a trusted Christian friend or leader: "Where do you see me being most effective in serving others?" Their insight can help you identify how God has uniquely shaped you.

3. Start Small, But Start

You don't have to overhaul your life or take on a significant ministry role. Begin with one consistent act of service, a class to help with, a person to visit, a note to send, a meal to prepare. God often turns small acts of faithfulness into greater opportunities.

4. Use Your Gifts with the Right Attitude

Paul says to use your gift *with diligence, with generosity, and with cheerfulness*. The heart matters as much as the action. Serve not for recognition, but for love. Remember that unseen acts of service are often the ones most honored by God.

5. Celebrate the Gifts of Others

Instead of comparing or competing, thank God for the variety of gifts in the body. Express appreciation to those who serve differently from you, the teacher, the encourager, the organizer, the giver. A healthy church celebrates the diversity of its members' ministries.

Challenge

This week, prayerfully identify one area of ministry where you can actively use your gifts to serve others. Commit to one concrete act of service that strengthens the body of Christ, whether that means helping, teaching, visiting, or simply encouraging. Then take a moment to thank someone else for the way they're using *their* gift.

Conclusion

The beauty of the church is found in its diversity: many members, many gifts, yet one purpose. God designed His body to thrive not when a few do much, but when everyone does their part. As Paul writes, *"From Him the whole body, fitted and knit together by every supporting ligament, promotes the growth of the body for building itself up in love by the proper working of each individual part"* (Ephesians 4:16). The church grows strongest when every member serves.

We've seen that our gifts are given by grace, meant for the good of others, and powered by love. They are not trophies to display or talents to compare, but tools to use. Some gifts are public, others quiet and unseen, but all are necessary. The person who teaches from the pulpit and the one who comforts in the hallway are equally vital to the body of Christ.

The question for each of us is simple: *What am I doing with what God has given me?* Every gift matters, and when we withhold ours, the body suffers. But when we serve with humility and love, something extraordinary happens: Christ's character is displayed through His people. The church becomes a living, breathing picture of grace in action.

So, the challenge this week is clear: thank God for the gifts He's given you, commit to using them for His glory, and look for someone else's gift

to affirm. When each of us serves with love, the body is strengthened, the mission advances, and God is glorified.

For Discussion

1. Can you recall a time when someone's act of service, even a small one, made a major impact on your life or faith? What did it show you about how the body of Christ works together?

2. Why does Paul begin his teaching on spiritual gifts with a call to humility? How does humility change the way we view our own gifts and the gifts of others?

3. Paul compares the church to a body with many parts. What are some practical ways we can value "less visible" members and roles in the church?

4. What happens when people serve without love? How does love keep our service from becoming self-centered or competitive?

5. Of the five application points (discover your gifts, ask others, start small, serve with the right attitude, celebrate others' gifts), which

one do you need to act on most? What's one small way you can begin this week?

6. How would your local congregation change if every member used their God-given gifts faithfully? What part can you play in helping that vision become reality?
