

# Hope Church February 1<sup>st</sup> 2026

## Romans 12:3-8

### Rooted Connections: habit #7 Created to serve

Rooted connections:

- BELONG – come as you are.
- GROW – **be transformed**.
- REACH – *make a difference*.

Today we are diving deeper in the first habit of REACH – make a difference.

Have you ever stopped to think about why you're here. Not just here in church this morning, but *here* on this earth?

- God didn't create you **by accident** or **out of boredom**.
- *Every detail* of who you are and your personality and your abilities and even your story – **it's all on purpose**.
- You were created **by God for God**.
- You were created with a CALLING that's bigger than comfort or success.
- And here's the beautiful truth: **you were created to serve**.

You were made by God and for God – and until you understand that, life will never make sense.

**Rick Warren**

Serving isn't a side hustle of our faith. It's the **very reason we exist**. God designed us to REFLECT *His heart* by loving others and using our gifts and talents and abilities for His glory. When we serve, **we step into the life we were made to live**.

But we are great at making excuses not to step into the life we were created for.

- *I don't have time* – we **feel stretched thin** already. Serving sounds like one more demand on a **jam-packed schedule**.
- *I'm not enough* – there's fear and shame and a low-grade insecurity that says: I'm not good enough or holy enough or gifted enough to make a real difference.

Studies found that churches are PACKED with attenders but thin on servants. We don't have a seating problem. We have a **serving problem**. Many believers say they want their faith to matter, but *only a small group ever steps into a serving role*.

In the FIRST CHURCH, there was no such thing as a Christian who didn't serve. Being part of a church meant **actively joining in the work**.

It is into this servant-shaped faith that Paul wrote his letter to the church in Rome:

- Paul write Romans AROUND AD 57, during his **three-month stay in Greece** – most likely in Corinth.
- His plan was to *stop in Jerusalem*, then travel on to Rome, and eventually to **Spain**.
- Paul knew that going to Jerusalem would be dangerous – Jewish leaders was not too happy with him. But he chose to go anyway.
- The churches in Rome had both **Jewish and non-Jewish Christians** – there was lots of drama about who was more important. What they could eat. Which special days mattered.
- The church had **all kinds of people** in it. From slaves and joe-nobodies to people who *were rich and had a lot of power and influence in the community*.

Verse 3:

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.

- In Romans 12:1–2, Paul talks about God transforming us by RENEWING OUR MINDS.
- In verse 3, he shows what RENEWED MINDS produce: **a new kind of serving**.

- Where serving becomes a *lifestyle*. Where every person and every gift really matters to the whole church family.
- Paul makes it clear there's **no place for status games** in Jesus' family. Whether you're Jewish or not. A leader or a servant. A teacher or a helper. No one gets to *act like they're better than others* because God is the one who **defines our worth and our place**.

Verses 4-5:

For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

- In Christ – **ἐν Χριστῷ**. We're not just loosely connected to Jesus. We're deeply joined to him.
- Because we are deeply joined to him, we're tightly connected to each other's lives too.
- We're called to serve the whole family of Jesus and help grow the faith of everyone in it. Including people who *don't look like us or think like us*.

- That means **loving and encouraging** our brothers and sisters even when we're DIFFERENT in culture and language and politics and all the other things that usually DIVIDE people.
- Paul reminds us that my time and my talents and even my hurts impact you in ways you might not notice.
- He reminds us that **your time and talents and hurts impact me** as well.
- We don't GROW or STRUGGLE or HEAL on our own. We do all of that together.

Verses 6-8:

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; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; 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.

- **χαρίσματα** – spiritual gifts:
  - ⇒ Grace-given: These gifts come straight from God's kindness. Not because we earned them.
  - ⇒ **Diverse by design**: God purposely gives different gifts to different people so the whole church can be healthy and strong.

⇒ *Guided by faith*: We're meant to use our gifts by trusting God and obeying him. Not to chase our own agenda.

- ROMANS 12 gives **seven** examples of gifts, but it's not a full list of every possible gift.

⇒ Paul highlights real people who give generously.

⇒ **Real people who lead faithfully**.

⇒ *Real people who sit with others* in their pain and questions and struggles.

- The list is a snapshot of what everyday life together can look like.

Habit #7: created to serve. What kind of servants does God want us to be?

## **We need to serve like Jesus.**

- There are basically *two ways* to serve: serving yourself and **servicing like Jesus**.

- Serving yourself means you **servicing on my own terms**.

⇒ Serving only in big and flashy ways so that people will notice me.

⇒ Serving because I want a payoff – getting more likes and compliments or popularity. (It's a real pet peeve when Christians post selfies of themselves helping others.)

⇒ Letting my feelings decide who I help and how I help them.

- Serving like Jesus means I **choose to become a servant**.
  - ⇒ Quietly putting other people first.
  - ⇒ Remembering that everything I have belongs to God.
  - ⇒ Treating every task as a privilege, not just another chore.
  - ⇒ Focusing on the need right in front of me instead of my comfort or convenience.
  - ⇒ Letting God interrupt my plan. Doing the hidden jobs no one else notices. And staying humble and faithful – even when people praise me for it.

When we choose to be a servant, we surrender the right to decide who and when we will serve.

We become available and vulnerable.

**Richard Foster**

If serving-like-Jesus is the *way we serve*, Paul answers this question next: who is called to serve?

## **Every believer is called to serve!**

- You weren't put on earth just to exist. You were made to make a difference.
- You were **created to serve**. To jump in and be part of what God is doing.
- Imagine an ORCHESTRA:
  - ⇒ None of the *instruments* were made to stay in their cases and just look beautiful.

⇒ They were made **to be played**.

⇒ They were made **to join the music**.

⇒ They were made **to carry part of the song**.

- In the same way, God didn't design you to sit on the sidelines at church. You weren't created to just watch others "do ministry." **You were made to be part of it.**

The highest form of worship is the worship of unselfish Christian service. The greatest form of praise is the sound of consecrated feet seeking out the lost and helpless.

**Billy Graham**

- Paul writes in **EPHESIANS 2** that we are God's masterpiece. We were **created to do good works**.

For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

**Ephesians 2:10 New Living Translation**

- That means that God wants his love and wisdom and compassion and justice to **show up in the world through you**.
- Serving ISN'T AN EXTRA ACTIVITY for "super Christians." It's who God designed us to be.

- When we serve, we're not just filling spots on a schedule.
- We're **teaming up with Jesus** in what he's ALREADY DOING.

Restoring...renewing...remaking this world. As the Gospels say:

*Jesus did not come to be served, but to serve.*

- As you step into your role and use your gifts, the church grows stronger. The *people are encouraged.* God's **character shows up** in simple and everyday moments.

*If everyone is called to serve,* Paul answers this question next: how can God use someone like me?

## **Because God equips us.**

- Paul reminds us that the **same God who made you** is the God who called you. Is the *God who equips you* with what you need!
  - God moves us from **feeling like accidents to knowing we were made on purpose.**
- ⇒ No follower of Jesus is "extra."

⇒ Your personality and your story and even your hurts are part of how God has been getting you ready to join his work.

- God moves us from **I CAN'T** to **GOD IS WITH ME**.

⇒ God loves to work through people who feel scared and not good enough.

⇒ Feeling underqualified isn't proof that you are not called. Feeling underqualified is often a **strong sign that you are**.

⇒ In Christ we already have what we need. But God doesn't leave us there. He *keeps shaping and healing and training* us over our lifetimes.

- God moves us from **theory to action**.

⇒ The Holy Spirit bring us into action.

⇒ As we take the next small step of obedience, we often find that God equips us along the way. We don't have to be ready before we start.

⇒ Simple obedience *builds confidence and slowly overpowers* FEAR.

- Think back to the ORCHESTRA image:

⇒ Imagine a middle school band – **squeaky clarinets and off-beat drums**.

⇒ It's *messy* and it's *cute* and it's *full of energy* and it's *full heart*. Something worth celebrating. It's beautiful.

⇒ But the goal isn't to stay in a middle school band.

⇒ **God wants us to grow into a symphony orchestra.**

⇒ A community where everyone listens. Where every believer adjusts and plays their part for the good of the entire church.

- For a small church like ours, that *doesn't mean chasing perfection or putting on a flawless show.*
- It means **bringing our best.**
- It means **serving with grace.**
- It means **trusting Jesus** to turn all our different skills and abilities and sacrifices into something beautiful.

God gave us our personalities, and we must find ways to share the gospel that are consistent with whom He made us to be.

**Floyd McClung**

- Ask the Spirit to show you ONE SPECIFIC PLACE IN OUR CHURCH OR THE COMMUNITY where you could start serving. Or get more involved with this year.
- Look for the spot where **three questions** overlap:
  - ⇒ What brings me joy? What do I love to do? (PASSION)

⇒ What has God equipped me to do? **What am I good at?** (SKILL)

⇒ What does my church or community *really need right now?* (NEED)

- Where passion and skill and need come together is usually the place where you **were shaped to serve.**

Small groups and worship team and BSF and greeting and Sunday school and Wednesday nights and Open Door and Crowded table and Guatemala and missions...

Romans 12 doesn't really ask: Do you feel like serving?

Romans 12 assumes you're going to serve, and then pushes you to ask:

**So where are you actually going to start serving with the gifts and opportunities, you already have?**

### **BENEDICTION:**

As you go from here, remember:

- You were not made by accident. You were not made to sit on the sidelines. You were created on purpose. You were created to reflect God's heart in this world.
- May you see your ordinary moments as holy opportunities. Your gifts as instruments in a bigger song. Your story as part of what God is doing for the good of others.

- And as you step out to serve – in big ways and hidden ones – may you find courage when you feel inadequate.
- May you find joy when you pour yourself out.
- May you find the quiet confidence that the One who calls you also goes with you.

AMEN