

Romans 12:3-8 “Spiritual Service”

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Thesis: In light of God’s forgiveness, restoration, and life in Christ, it is only reasonable that God’s people would choose to live for Him. We serve God by serving others. When you engage in spiritual service, you’ll grow, others grow, you are satisfied, and God is glorified. The Church is like a human body in the sense that when all the parts are functioning together, the body is healthy and strong. Let’s consider the why and how of spiritual service. In churches all around the world, people are not using their God-given gifts, and are not fulfilling God’s purpose in their lives. Let’s discover how to use God’s gifts for His glory and your growth.

Subject: Spiritual service

Object: Use God’s gifts for His glory and your growth

1. Why we serve [1-2]

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God

A brief reminder of the context: Paul has been setting forth in the first eleven chapters, an airtight case why everyone needs a Savior, how to receive salvation through faith in Christ, what it means to be set-apart to God, and the Sovereign

God's plan for restoration of His people. **In light of God's love, goodness, mercy, forgiveness, restoration, and life in Christ, it is only reasonable that God's people choose to serve Him.**

As your thinking about God, His kingdom, this life and the life to come is transformed, God's will becomes a greater reality in your life. Through God's word, and by His Spirit you learn to serve God by serving others, for His glory with the gifts that He has given you. This is the most God-glorifying, Christ-like and satisfying life.

2. How to serve [3-8]

³For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. ⁴For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, ⁵so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. ⁶Having 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; ⁷or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; ⁸he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

Be humble [3]

³For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

See yourself as God sees you: no one is more important than others and no one is unimportant. Your talents, skills, and strengths are gifts from God related to His grace not your merit [6]. Even the faith to recognize and use your spiritual gifts is a gift from God. Whatever gifts you have, you received them from God. So there is no reason to boast [1Cor. 4:7].

Jesus' only autobiographical statement was that He was humble [Matt. 11:28-30]. The only One who is truly worthy to be served, came to serve not to be served [Mk. 10:44-45]. When none of the disciples would offer to wash the feet of their peers, a task which we might equate to cleaning toilets and emptying trash, it was Jesus who washed their feet. This was the only recorded time where Jesus told His disciples that He was giving them an example to follow, and they were to do as Jesus had done to them [Jn. 13:1-17].

God has graciously given gifts to build-up the Body of Christ. A spiritual gift is given to each of us so that we can help each other for the common good of building-up the Body [1Cor. 12:7]. Whenever we see serving others as beneath us, or conclude that our service is unimportant, we hinder our growth, the growth of others, and weaken the Body of Christ.

Be united and diverse [4-5]

For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, ⁵ so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.

No gift is self-sufficient and no gift is unnecessary

The body is diverse and comprised of *many members* thus there are different gifts and *different functions* or roles [4] [1Cor. 12:12-31]. Despite the diversity of *being many* we are united as *one body in Christ* [5]. Jesus is the reason for the

unity. When we are connected to Jesus, we experience unity with others. Each part of the body functions interdependently. The body is healthy when each part functions as part of a united whole.

There is a tendency to want someone else's gift, rather than recognizing the value and beauty of the gift(s) that God has given you. Similarly, you can think that your gift is unnecessary or that one gift is independent of others. That type of thinking is dangerous and harmful to self and others. C.S. Lewis observed in his masterpiece, "The Screwtape Letters" that it is one of the enemy's tactics to cause us to think we're not needed.

Be useful [6-8]

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.

We have *differing gifts as God gives by His grace* [6]. The term translated *gifts* is the Greek term *charisma* referring here to spiritual gifts given by God and unavailable solely by human effort (rather than a dynamic personality). Before examining the listed gifts, it is important to contemplate the phrase *let us use them* [6]. In connection with each gift is an exhortation to use the gift, or a description of how to use the gift. It is important to recognize that having a gift, but not using the gift, is effectively useless. We are to be useful!

Also, recognize that the various lists of spiritual gifts listed in the New Testament do not appear to be exhaustive [1Cor. 12:4-10, Eph. 4:11, 1Pet. 4:9-11]. For example, gifts to intercede in prayer, create art, and to lead others to express worship through praise music are not listed, but are clearly gifts from God.

Here are seven spiritual gifts that are to be used to serve God by serving others:

Prophecy [7] *if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith.* The gift of prophecy is the ability to speak under the influence of the Holy Spirit to share a message God has revealed. The message can be tested by whether it builds people up in their faith, is consistent with Bible doctrine, and if it involves foretelling the future whether the prediction is fulfilled. The gift of prophecy should be distinguished from the office of prophet (e.g. Elijah, Jeremiah).

Ministry [7] *or ministry, let us use it in our ministering.* The Greek term *diakonia* which yields our English term deacon, means to serve or servant. All who serve are to do so with the ability that God supplies that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus [1Pet. 4:11].

Teaching [7] *he who teaches, in teaching.* This gift relates to the ability to explain and instruct regarding the Bible, and can be displayed in larger, smaller, and one-on-one settings [Eph. 4:11, Mt. 7:29, 2Tim. 2:15, 1Tim. 3:2].

Exhortation [8] *he who exhorts, in exhortation.* This is the gift to encourage, comfort, and motivate people to act upon what they learn about God, sin and to draw closer to Christ. In Acts 4, we read of Joseph who was called Barnabas, meaning “the son of encouragement.” Those with the gift of exhortation have a gift to encourage, comfort, and motivate people to do what God declares as right.

Giving [8] *he who gives, with liberality.* Those with the gift of giving have learned that it is truly more blessed to give than to receive [Ac. 20:35]. They give liberally, because they have discovered that God keeps giving. They are generous because they have discovered that He has provided resource to increase their standard of giving as well as the standard of living [Ac. 4:36-37].

Leadership [8] *he who leads, with diligence.* Leadership is at its essence the ability to influence others. Those with this gift should do so with diligence or zeal.

Mercy [8] *he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.* Mercy is compassion or forgiveness toward someone whom it is within one's power to punish or harm. Mercy is to be displayed with *cheerfulness* or kindness rather than wrath or pity [See, David re Mephibosheth 2Sam. 9].

Study Guide Qs

Q1. *What are some of the reasons why people don't serve in their local church (or para-church organization)?*

Q2. *What are some of the benefits you've experienced serving in a local church?*

Q3. *What are some areas of service that you've tried, and what happened?*

Q4. *How might you encourage others to serve God?*

Digging Deeper

1. Review other portions of Scripture that feature lists of spiritual gifts: Cor. 12:4-10, Eph. 4:11, 1Pet. 4:9-11.

What did you discover about God, yourself, and ministry?

2. Here is an interesting article about Christian service outside of the local church: [https://www.gotquestions.org/](https://www.gotquestions.org/Christian-service.html)

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