

Thinking Rightly As Member's Of Christ's Body

Romans 12:3-8

Pastor John Miller

“For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. 4 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: 5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. 6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; 7 Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; 8 Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.” Romans 12:3-8

I want to go back to Romans 12:1-2. Paul says, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” I heard the story about a cathedral in London, England that had been bombed during WWII by the Germans. There was a group of German believers there in London that felt a bit of responsibility to what had happened and volunteered to help refurbish and rebuild this cathedral that had been broken down. In the cathedral, there was an actual statue of Jesus with His hands extended out, and the caption under the statue said, “Come unto Me.” Well, as they were working on repairing this statue, they got to the hands that had been damaged. They did their best but couldn't seem to restore the hands, so they came up with an idea to actually remove the hands of Jesus on the statue. They changed the caption from “Come unto Me,” to “Jesus has no hands but your hands.” There is a lot of truth to that statement, “Jesus has no hands but your hands.”

When you come to Romans 12 and Paul on bended knee says, “I beg you by the mercies of God that you present your bodies unto God, a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable, which is your reasonable act of service or worship to God, that you may prove what is that good and perfect and acceptable will of God.” There is a natural flow from verses 1-2 to verses 3-8. That natural flow, as we are going to see tonight, is we first consecrate our lives to God. When you present your body unto God, it means your total being. It means your mind, your emotions and your will, and you present to Him all that you are. Once you've made that consecration to God, and you've dedicated yourself to God, what's the natural outgrowth of that? That you begin to serve Him—your hands become His hands, your feet become His feet, your eyes become His eyes, and you become His extended hands. If you have consecrated yourself to God as your act of worship, the natural outgrowth of that is, “Here I am, Lord, now use me.” The idea that there is consecration without service is inconsistent. If I have consecrated myself to God then I am also going to follow up by serving God—take my hands, take my feet, take my mouth, take all that I am and use me now for Your glory.

Paul, to summarize, said that we need to have a consecration of our bodies, verse 1, and we need to have the transformation of our minds, verse 2. Now our bodies, being consecrated and our minds being transformed, here are a couple of questions Paul seems to answer in verses 3-8. How are we now to think about ourselves? How are we to think about other believers in the church, the body of Christ? What about our spiritual gifts? What are we to do with the gifts that God has entrusted and given to us? Paul answers these questions in verses 3-8. I want you to follow with me as we read this text. Paul says, "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man..." this would be every person "...that is among you," he's speaking to every one of the believers. He says, "...not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith," or the measure of "the" faith, "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office," or gifting or equipping, "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. 6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; 7 Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; 8 Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness." We find out that once we are consecrated to God, then God wants to use us as His instruments.

I want to point out three things, if you're taking note. First of all, we find the answer to the question: How are we to think about ourselves? Now that I am committed and consecrated to God, what estimation of myself am I to have? That is found in verse 3. Go back with me to verse 3. He says, "For I say, through the grace given unto me..." in other words, Paul was called by God's grace, equipped by God's grace, given the gift of an apostle by God's grace, and he said, "...to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think," how should we think about ourselves? "...soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." What Paul says here is for everyone. It's not just for pastors or missionaries or for super saints. As a matter of fact, verses 1-2 is for everybody. We think that missionaries or monks or priests or pastors or theologians are the only ones that are to completely dedicate their lives to God, and all we have to do as normal everyday Christians is go to church on Sunday, or if you're a real heavy-duty Christian you go on Wednesday night—the deeper life club on Wednesday night. Certainly, we don't have to give our all to God—use our money for God or give up our job for God or just serve the Lord with everything we've got. Not so. This isn't talking about pastors, elders, or spiritual leaders. This is talking about everyday average Christians—you and me.

Present your bodies to God as a living sacrifice. Once you have done that, this is how you ought to think about yourself. I want you to notice it very carefully. The first is negative. Don't think too highly of yourself. Now, how does that go with our culture today? You say, "Is that really in the Bible?" That's really in the Bible—don't think too highly of yourself. Now, this phrase in the Greek is super hard to translate into English, and it's funny I say it that way because the Greek would actually read: Don't super think about yourself. Don't have super thoughts or elevated thoughts about yourself, your gifting, your ability, or your place in the body of Christ. Some would translate it: Do not get hyper about yourself. Certainly, this is a warning

of pride, and perhaps Paul put it first because it is such a natural tendency for us.

I really don't think we have a hard time loving ourselves. I believe that comes naturally—self-preservation, self-love. I know that there are those who take their own lives out of desperation, despair and so forth. Obviously, the natural tendencies are to self preserve. When I'm hungry guess what I do? I feed me—not very well if my wife isn't around. If I'm tired, I put myself to bed. If I'm thirsty, I get me something to drink. I take care of me, and I think about me. If I'm tired or weary, I begin to get absorbed with thoughts of myself. We're all, to some degree, narcissistic and focused on ourselves. Paul is saying, "Look, now that you have surrendered yourself to God, you've taken up your cross and you're following Jesus Christ, you've died to yourself, you're not to have elevated thoughts of yourself.

Do you know that pride can take one of two forms? It can take the form of superiority complex or inferiority complex. You either put yourself up, your abilities, your achievements, you name drop, you boast about who you are and what you've done, and you elevate yourself above what is fact or true. We all know people like that. They like to name drop. You're hanging out with them, "Yeah, as I was talking to Billy, uh Billy Graham that is, the other day, you know, he called me to see if I could preach for him, but I told him I was busy." It's like, "Yeah." If we meet somebody important we want other people to know, and we'll let them know. You know, social media is crazy on that—look at me here, look at me there, look what I'm doing. People are so self-absorbed with themselves on Facebook, Instagram, and all that stuff. I don't do social media, so if you're trying to friend me on Facebook, sorry. It's not that I don't like you, I just don't have the time to do that. They get so self-absorbed in their own little world, so one form that it takes is a superiority complex but, believe it or not this is quite common, the other extreme is the inferiority complex—we put ourselves down.

Someone said, "We can either have super thoughts or sub thoughts." You say, "Well, what do you mean put yourself down?" Now, I know how this works because I've done it, okay? I'm a professional at this. You kind of put yourself down so other people will tell you how wonderful you are because you want to hear that. "Oh, I'm so dumb. I'm so ugly. I can't do anything. I'm such a klutz." Then people say, "No you're not! You're really smart! You're really gifted. You're really intelligent." You say, "I am?! Tell me more, tell me more. That's pretty good." They feed on that because they want people to affirm them. "No, you did a good job." "Aww, I did so bad. Aww, that was so terrible." "No, no. You're really gifted. You're really good." And you say, "Oh, okay. Thank you." It's just like they are looking for those props. You know how to put an end to that, don't you? When they're putting themselves down agree with them. "Man, I'm so dumb and messed up." You say, "Yeah, you sure are." "What?!" Then they get mad at you, you know. It's like, "What?!" Then they're all bummed out at you. We either have super thoughts or sub thoughts, rather what we should have is sober thoughts. Notice it in verse 3. Think of yourself soberly. So, think not more highly of yourself than you ought to think, but think soberly, "... according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith," or literally should read "the" faith. Instead of super thoughts, we should have sober thoughts. It's seeing yourself as God sees you—made in His image, saved by His grace, filled with His Holy Spirit, redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. That's really what gives us our sense of self worth. I am a child of God. I

am a blood-washed, bought child of God, and God so loved me that He gave His only begotten Son to die on the cross for my sins so that I could have eternal life and have a relationship with God.

Do you know that God loved you and saved you by His grace? You don't earn it. You don't deserve it. You don't merit it. Everything we have comes to us by God's grace. Notice as Paul opens there in verse 3. He says, "What I'm telling you, I'm telling you by the grace of God that was given to me. God was gracious to me, and God graced me with His calling as an apostle, and now I'm exhorting you, that if you really want to be used by God," and you're going to see amazing progression here. It goes from consecration, to humility, to being used by God in the area of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. "If you want to prove what is that good and perfect and acceptable will of God and discover your gifts and gifting and calling, it starts with consecration, and a proper estimation of your position and who you are in Christ Jesus." So, not super thoughts or sub thoughts, but we should have sane thoughts; not superiority complex or inferiority complex but basically humility. Humility is simply a person that doesn't think about themselves. Notice, verse 3, he says, "...according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." The Greek actually says "the" faith. The standard by which we judge ourselves is the gospel, the gospel of God's grace. The faith that we have, the body of truth that we believe, it's not our feelings.

Do you know a lot of people determine their value and worth by their feelings? Feelings come and feelings go. Did you ever notice that? Feelings are deceiving, but one thing that is sure is the grace of God. You may not feel that valuable or that worthy or that gifted or that loved, but you need to stand in the faith that God loves you, and God has forgiven and redeemed you by the blood of Jesus Christ. You belong to Him, and you're precious to Him. Our estimation of ourselves should not be what other people think. It's nice to have other people affirm, like, and appreciate you, but deep down in your heart it doesn't satisfy. It does not satisfy. You can be the most popular person and the most well-loved human being on planet earth, but if you're not right with God it's going to be empty. It's going to be absolutely empty, and all human relationships will end up empty if you're not right with God. That's where we find our peace, and our self worth is our position in Christ. It's "the" faith.

The Bible tells us in Philippians 2, that though Jesus Christ was in the very form or essence God, He thought that equality with God not something to hold tightly to. It says He, "...made himself of no reputation," interesting statement. Do you know what that means? It means that He humbled Himself. He gave up His reputation. He came from heaven to earth, "...and took upon him the form of a servant...and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Jesus, the second person of the Godhead, voluntarily left heaven, came all the way from heaven down to earth. Now, if you were in heaven would you want to come back to earth? I'm on earth and I want to go to heaven, but He gave up heaven to come down to earth. Not only did He come down to earth, but when He came down to earth He was a lowly, Galilean peasant. He worked in a carpenter shop. He submitted to His parents. He was misunderstood by His family. He was ultimately crucified on a cross and rejected by men. The Bible says, He came unto His own and His own received Him not. Why would Jesus do that? He did that for

you. He humbled Himself. Now, if you're a follower of Jesus Christ, Paul says in Philippians 2, let the same attitude, the same mind that was in Christ Jesus, be also in you. Don't grab ahold of your reputation. Don't live for a reputation, but lay it aside for the sake of others. Die to yourself.

So much of what I've been teaching the last few weeks, whether it be in Romans or in Peter's epistle, is all interwoven with the idea of dying to yourself, consecration to God, taking up your cross, and following Jesus Christ. Again, we have it in this passage. The 11 chapters of doctrine are now put into shoe leather—consecrate your life to God, dedicate your body to His service, and have a right estimation of who you are in Christ. Think of yourself with the same attitude of true humility that Jesus had.

You know, when we realize that our salvation, our sanctification, and our service are all because of God's grace, we really have nothing to be proud of. I know that's contrary to the world, but God's kingdom is contrary to the world. I know that's not what you're hearing in Hollywood or in psychology or philosophy or the worldly concepts of our world today, but that's what God's Word says because God's kingdom is a counterculture. Do you want to be a radical? Follow Jesus Christ. Amen? It's not like the world's culture. Die to yourself and think rightly about yourself.

Secondly, it moves in verses 4-5 to thinking rightly about others, other believers, other Christians in the church. This has a beautiful concept of the church being the body of Christ. I want you to notice in verses 4-5. He says, "For..." so, this is the rational outgrowth of your humility, "...as we have many members in one body," now, that one body is a metaphor of the church, both universal and local, "and all members have not the same office: 5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." I want you to notice that Paul uses the illustration of the human body as a picture of the church. The church is the bride of Christ. The church is a flock and He's the Shepherd. The church is the building habitation of God for the Spirit, but we're all familiar with the New Testament usage of the church being likened unto a human body. Now, the reason he does that is because Christ is the head of the church, and our head gives direction and information to the body.

You wouldn't be much good without a head, right? As a matter of fact you wouldn't be much good if you had damage to your brain. I know that from experience. You wouldn't be much good if your brain wasn't fully functioning the way it's supposed to. You know, we don't think about a brain. You don't get up in the morning and say, "Man, I hope my brain's really working good and firing all cylinders." You know, sometimes we take food that gives our brain energy, but your hand doesn't move without your brain. Your mouth doesn't move without your brain. Your eyes don't see without your brain. Nothing happens without your brain. So, Christ is the head of the church, and He leads and guides and provides for the body. Our physical body is a metaphor or a picture of the church.

Listen to me very carefully, when we say "the church," the word church in the New Testament translated into English is a Greek word *ekklesia*. I know that may not mean a lot to you, but the

word means called out assembly. We, as Christians, are called out—called out of the world and called unto God. One day we will be called up in the rapture. Amen? We're the called. We're called out of the world. That's why, again, these principles aren't like the world, they are contrary to the world because we are called out of the world. The church comes in two categories. It comes in what we call the local church, which is this body of believers at Revival Christian Fellowship and other churches that meet in the valley here, around the state, around the country, and around the world. Other congregations are individual bodies of which Christ is the head, but listen carefully. Christians all over the world in different churches, different denominations, different persuasions, and different organizations comprise the church, the body of Christ.

Did you know there is only one church? You say, "You know, if Christianity is true why are there so many churches?" Well, technically there is only one church, and Jesus Christ is the head of that church. Just because you go to a Presbyterian or a Lutheran or a Methodist or an Episcopalian or a Baptist or a Pentecostal or a Baptical church, whatever you might choose, doesn't mean that you're not a Christian. Now, they sometimes do things a little differently, and their culture may be a little different, and the church government may differ from ours, but we are one in Christ, and we are all united to the head. So, this application has application to our local church, Revival Christian Fellowship, and to the church, universal. We need to see ourselves as part of the church in the big picture as well as in the individual local church. Some call the universal church the invisible church and the local church—the church that we have in one fellowship—one body of believers. You need to have that distinction clear. Paul is talking about both here. He's talking about the body of Christ, but he's talking in context about individual bodies or churches, and he talks about the fact that we are one body.

I want you to write down some important facts here. First, he says that there is only one body. Notice in verse 4 he says, "For as we have many members..., that's diversity, "...in one body, and all members have not the same office," notice again in verse 5, "So we, being many," that's diversity, "are one body...", that's unity. In the church, there is both diversity and unity. Now, remember the church is likened unto a body. What does your body have? It has diversity, and it has unity. The whole body is not just a hand. The whole body is not just a head. The whole body is not just a foot. I heard of a youth pastor that wanted to convey this idea to the youth group one night and he took a football and painted it into an eyeball. He painted the ball white and made a pupil on it. He made it a big eye. He wrapped it in a blanket like a baby and brought it to church. He asked if they wanted to see the new baby. The kids gathered around, and he opened up the blanket. It was a big eyeball! Freak out. That's not a baby, that's a monstrosity! That's a monster movie. You know, the body is not just a hand or a foot or an eye or an ear. The body has diversity. It has many members, but all those members coming together make one body. I have one body—two hands, two feet, two eyes, two ears. Although there is diversity, they all work together in harmony and unity getting its directions from the head. What a beautiful picture of the church is the body of Christ. Now, we are individual members. You might be a hand, or you might be a foot. You say, "I'm a toenail." Well, be a good toenail. Whatever you are in the body of Christ, you make up a body, and sometimes those members of the body which we don't think are important, when we lose them we realize

how important they are. Right? You don't go around thinking about your little toe that much until you hit it real hard injuring it. Then it's like, "Oh, I can hardly walk! All I did was hit my little toe, but my whole body hurts." When one member suffers, all the members suffer. When one member is exalted, all the members are exalted. So, it's the whole working together of the body, but those two things are important to remember. That is, unity, verses 4-5, and all the members have not the same office—diversity. He says we are many members, verse 4. That's diversity. We have different gifts and callings in the body of Christ just like a human body. So, we are to be using our gifts, whether we're a hand or a foot or an eye, for the good of the whole body.

Here's the third point I want to make in verse 5, that is, we need each other in the body. Verse 5 says, "...every one members one of another." This is what we call interdependency. I thank God for both of my hands. I thank God for all of my fingers, all of my toes. I thank God that I have all these parts that work together, and you don't want to lose anything. There are no vestigial organs in the body of Christ. Every member is important, needed, and necessary. We can't just kind of do without. So, we are all interdependent and leaning on one another. You get up in the morning and eat some cereal or whatever you eat for breakfast. You're dependent on your mouth to open up. Right? This is deep theology here. What if you got your cereal ready and sat down. I eat cereal in the morning. I put some strawberries on it and throw a little honey on it, you know. (I'm getting hungry right now.) You start to make your cereal and then you say, "Oh, this is awesome!" You grab your spoon, stick it in the bowl, and your mouth won't open. You can't stick it in your ear. I mean, your mouth won't open! It's like, "What's the skinny? What's going on here?" Or, your hand won't pick up the spoon, or your arm won't move. So, every member is important to work together in harmony for the good of the body, for the good of the whole.

You're here tonight and you think, "Well, I don't have any exceptional gifts or talents or abilities. They don't need me." We're interdependent on one another. Paul uses this same illustration in 1 Corinthians 12. He says the hand cannot say to the eye, "I have no need of you." No one member of the body can say to the other, "Well, we don't need you anymore." The body is interdependent. So, there is unity—one body. There is diversity—many different gifts and callings in the body that once we've consecrated our lives to God we need to use for the good of others and for the glory of God.

Do you know one of the problems in the church today is radical individualism—radical individualism and narcissism, Christian narcissism, narcissistic Christians—radical individualism. People come to the church, "Uh, I wonder if they have the kind of worship I like? I wonder if the temperature will be just right in the sanctuary for me. I wonder if parking is going to be really easy for me to get in and out. I wonder if people will say hi to me. I wonder if the preacher is going to be the kind of preacher I like. I wonder if they're going to be nice to me at that church." It's all about me, myself, and I—the unholy trinity. We've totally lost the concept today of "I'm a part of this church because I'm a member of the body of Christ and there is interdependency. They need me and I need them." Did you know you need the church? You need this church, the church needs you—we need one another. I need you, you need me—we

need one another. We need to love each other, pray for each other, and serve one another. Amen? We're one body, and we make up different parts of the body, but we all have to work together in harmony. When we rebel against that and go our separate way, and we don't like other people and go running around trying to find a church that'll be nicer to us, then we're not using our gifts to build up the body. It's not enough just to come and to be like a vestigial organ in the body, you need to be doing your part. That's what Paul is trying to convey here.

The third point I want to make is in verses 6-8 because really what he is saying is that we need to think rightly about our gifts. We need to think rightly about ourselves and about others, that is, we are interdependent and one in the body of Christ. We also need to think rightly about the gifts that God has given us and use them for others and for the glory of God. Follow with me as I read verses 6-8. Paul says, "Having then..." this is the wrap-up, "...gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us," and then he names seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. This is one of three important passages in the New Testament that specifically describes some of the gifts of the Holy Spirit that are given to individual Christians. "...whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; 7 Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; 8 Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness."

Every Christian has been given at least one gift of the Holy Spirit. Just as you have been placed in the body of Christ and are a member of that body, God has given you a gift. Every one of us has been given gifts according to the sovereign choice of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12). In verse 6, notice he says we don't have the same gift, we have "...gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us." These gifts are given by God's grace, "...gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us." It's interesting that the very word "gifts" here in verse 6 is a Greek word *charis* where we get our word "grace" from. We get our word "charismatic" from it which means a grace endowment. So, every Christian has at least one gift. We don't have the same gifts otherwise we'd all be just an eyeball or a hand. We wouldn't be individual members of one body, and those gifts are given to us by God's grace. What does that mean? It means we don't earn them. We don't deserve them. We don't merit them. They're grace gifts. So, if you see somebody in the church that has a gift, it's not because they are more special than you. It's because God is a God of grace, and they're given by the Holy Spirit. They are sovereignly given by the Holy Spirit of God. He chooses who gets what gifts, and they are to be used for the common good of the church. They are not toys to fight over or jewelry to show off, they're tools to build up. You know, it's funny. A lot of times churches get divided and fight over the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The gifts were never intended to divide a church, they were intended to unite the church. If used properly, they are used by humble people who are consecrated to God. They are used by people who don't esteem themselves more highly than they ought but they think soberly. That means clearly. They are clearheaded about who they are in Christ and they use their gift for the good of others and the glory of God. That's easy to remember, by the way.

What are your gifts for? The good of others and the glory of God. They are not for you to get rich or famous or to show off. They are not for you to promote yourself, your gifts or your ability

but for you to be hid behind the cross to bless others and to glorify God. That's why God has entrusted gifts to you, and God has given you a gift. Here's the main point of the whole passage. If you've consecrated and dedicated your life to God, and you're thinking soberly, humbly, and righteously about who you really are in Christ, then have you used your gifts for the good of others and for the glory of God? If you don't...If the hand doesn't work properly, the whole body suffers. If the eyes don't work properly, the whole body suffers. If the feet don't work properly, the whole body suffers. If you don't use your gift that God has given to you, guess what? The church suffers, God is not glorified, and you miss out on a real blessing. You miss out being used by God for His glory. There is no greater joy than finding the will of God, the purpose of God, the plan of God for you, the gift that God has entrusted to you, and being in the center of God's will using that gift to bless and to build up the body of Christ and to glorify God.

Paul mentions seven gifts. I'm just going to touch quickly on what they are. He mentions prophecy in verse 6. As I mentioned, this is one of three areas in the New Testament where the gifts are named; 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4, 1 Peter 4, and here in Romans 12. Now, prophecy means to speak forth the word. It doesn't mean to speak about an event before it happens. We think of a prophet with a long robe and a beard in a sandwich plaque walking up and down Main Street saying, "The end is near," prophesying the end of the world. It's a person that's been given that gift to just speak a word of God, to be something that is consistent with the Scriptures according to the faith. Notice what it says there. It says, "whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith," or the faith. It has to be consistent with what God has already said in His Word. Then, there is the gift of ministry. We get our word "deacon" from that. It means to be serving, sometimes thought of as the gift of helps or talked about as the gift of helps. Do you know that God may not call you to preach or to teach, but maybe God has called you just to serve. He has given you a servant's heart. You want to help people, and you use that gift to help other people. Then, verse 7, there is the gift of teaching. In the Greek it actually says to start teaching. He's not telling us to wait on our ministering in verse 7, he's actually saying, "Get busy doing it." If God has called you to serve, then get serving.

A lot of people ask me how to get involved in ministry. Do you know what my answer is? Just start ministering. Grab a broom. "Well, I was kind of thinking about Sunday morning sermon or something like that." "I thought maybe Billy Graham would call me." You want to minister? Pick up trash, dump trash cans. Greet people. Say, "Hi." Teach Sunday school. Find something to do. When I'm asked about how I became a pastor, I just started serving. I just started doing anything I could do. I didn't start with preaching. I started in construction. I started cleaning churches. I started dumping trashcans. I started doing things around the church. I just started serving. I never had any aspirations to be a pastor. All I knew was that I was saved, and I wanted to live for God, and I consecrated my life to God, and anything that needed to be done, "I'll do it! I'll do it! I'm ready to go. Whatever you need me to do." People are waiting for God to descend from heaven and give it to them in a blueprint or something like that.

Do you know that you can't steer a parked car? I remember when my kids were little and the car would be out in the driveway. They'd like to get in the car and just drive. They wore my tires

out just turning the steering wheel in the driveway. You know, you can turn the steering wheel but it's not going to go anywhere. You need to get going. You've been waiting years, "What can I do for You, Lord? What can I do for You, Lord? What can I do for You, Lord?" Just do something, okay? Just get busy serving. Then, once you get busy serving, like a car that's moving, God will begin to steer and direct you, and God will begin to guide you. Doors will begin to open, or doors shut and He opens another. When God shuts one door, He opens another door. He opens one door and shuts the other door. You start stepping through them, and the next thing you know you find yourself in the will of God, but it all starts with consecration. Remember, whatever gift you have is not yours to choose, God gives it to you by His sovereign grace. You find out what gift He's given to you by your natural ability and confirmation from other people.

If God has called you to share His Word, if He's called you to serve Him, if He's called you to teach, maybe He's given you the gift of exhortation. Notice that in verse 8. "Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation," that means to encourage and to comfort. Be a Barnabas; be a son of consolation, just encourage other people. Notice also in verse 8, there is the gift of giving. "Well, I don't know what I'm going to do?" "I don't know what God has called me to be?" "I don't know what my gift is?" Then, just give to God. It doesn't mean you have to have a lot to give, it just means you have a heart of generosity. You give to the poor. You give to the church. You give to missionaries. You give to God's work. You give of your time. You give of what talents you have. You have the gift of giving. There is, in the Bible, a gift of giving, and the Bible tells us that we should do it willingly not out of necessity. The Bible says the Lord loves a cheerful giver. You should never give money to God grudgingly. "That stupid offering. They're always asking for money. Okay, God, here. Take it!" Do you think that gets God all excited? "Oh! Clapping They gave Me five dollars!" God just gets so excited and tells Gabriel about it in heaven. If you're not giving for the right motive you might as well go out and just buy an In N Out Burger. You might as well just spend it on yourself.

Give joyfully, proportionately, sacrificially. Don't make a show. You don't give to be seen of men. You don't give to get your picture in the foyer, "Giver of the Month." Some churches put little signs on everything around the church, "Donated by the Jones'," "Donated by the Smiths," "Donated by this family or that family." Jesus said, "Don't let your right hand know what your left hand is doing." He's not talking literally, like when the ushers come by you have to fake out your hands. "Don't let the left hand (quickly shifts hands) know what the right hand is doing." He's saying, "Don't blow a trumpet!" Don't take out your money and fan it. "Ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty..." you know, count it and then put it in the offering and then take a bow. He says you're going to have your reward—you're being seen by men. You do it to your Father, which is in secret, and your Father, which is in secret, is going to reward you openly. You use that gift of giving to glorify God, to give it to people. From time to time people will come in a time of need and other people will meet their need and give to them. They don't want to toot their horn or let people know about it. They are just doing it as unto the Lord.

You may not be called to preach or teach or be in a position of spiritual leadership at the church, but you are a member of the body of Christ and you are not a vestigial organ. You are

needed and necessary; the body needs you and you need them. You need to take your gifts and get busy serving them for the glory of God because one day you're going to answer to God for what you did with your gifts. You're actually going to stand before God and give an account for the gifts that you had and what you did with them. To wrap it up, there are still two more gifts, notice verse 8. It says, "...he that ruleth, with diligence." In other words, if you are a spiritual leader, do it with diligence. If you are called to lead or oversee the church, then give it all you've got. You do it diligently. You do it with devotion. Then he says, "he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness." Did you know that's a gift of the Holy Spirit? Showing mercy. Isn't that awesome? God just drops into your heart this overwhelming love to just show mercy to people, to be forgiving and kind, to be compassionate, and to help people—showing kindness and helping people in need. That's the gift of showing mercy, and we need people to do that in the body of Christ.

Here's what we need to do. We need to think soberly, verses 3-5, and we need to minister diligently. We need to fan into flame the gifts that God has given to us, and there is no such thing as consecration to God without dedication in service. You can't separate the two. If last Wednesday night you said, "Here I am, God, I consecrate my life to You," and you just sit there, what good does it do? If you don't get busy using the gifts that God has given to you by His grace—praying for others, giving to others, serving others, blessing others, showing mercy to others. Whatever it might be, discover your gift. You say, "Well, okay. How do I discover those gifts?" Consecration, humility, and then you begin to just use your gifts in love for the good of others and the glory of God. Let's pray.