

## LESSON 9

January 28, 2024

# Unit II: Learning about Faith Using Our Unique Gifts

DEVOTIONAL READING: Ezekiel 11:17-21

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Romans 12:3-8

PRINT PASSAGE: Romans 12:3-8

### KEY VERSE

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us.  
(Romans 12:6a, KJV)

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We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us.  
(Romans 12:6a, NIV)

### LESSON AIMS

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Evaluate a life of faith versus conformity to the world.
- Value the gifts that God gives which invite transformation.
- Identify a spiritual gift and consider one tangible expression of using that gift in service to God.

### \*KEY TERMS

**Body** (verse 5)—Greek: *sóma* (so'-mah): a body; flesh; the body of Christ.

**Faith** (verse 3)—Greek: *pistis* (pis'-tis): faithfulness; belief; trust; confidence; fidelity.

**Function** (verse 4)—Greek: *praxis* (prax'-is): a deed, an action, a mode of action; business; "office" (KJV).

**Gifts** (verse 6)—Greek: *charisma* (khar'-is-mah): gifts of grace; free gifts; spiritual gifts.

**Grace** (verse 3)—Greek: *charis* (khar'-ece): grace, as a gift or blessing brought to humans by Jesus Christ; favor; kindness.

**Members** (verse 4)—Greek: *melos* (mel'-os): limbs (of the body); properly, parts belonging to the whole.

**Think** (verse 3)—Greek: *phroneó* (fron-eh'-o): to have understanding; to reason, direct the mind to.

\*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)





### The Biblical Context

The book of Romans is named for its recipients: the Christians in Rome, the capital of the Roman Empire. The book's human author is the apostle Paul and was written in approximately AD 57–58. Paul wrote Romans while in Corinth toward the close of his third missionary journey while preparing to go to Palestine to deliver an offering for the poor in Jerusalem. Paul's primary purpose for writing was to teach the vital doctrines of the Gospel of grace to those never having received apostolic instruction. This letter was Paul's introduction to a church where he was unknown. The overarching theme of the book of Romans is God's righteousness—the glorious truth that God justifies condemned sinners by grace through Christ alone. Structurally, Paul composed the book of Romans around two distinct but related sections. Chapters 1–11 present the theological truths of the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ alone. Chapters 12–16 present the practical application of that doctrine (sanctification) in believers' lives, individually and collectively. The biblical context of this lesson is Romans 12, where Paul presents the practical outworking of spiritual gifts and practical godliness.

## INTRODUCTION

“Yes, I belong to \_\_\_\_\_ church, but I’m just a member.” “No, I’m not in any ministry because there are already enough people involved in those activities.” “I would participate, but I don’t know what I’m supposed to do.” “Yes, I’ll serve if I can do it like I want to.” Do you recall hearing statements like these from members of your local church? These and similar ones are common responses to questions about getting “involved” and serving at church. Even deeper than making excuses for noninvolvement was the absence of awareness and understanding that each believer has been endowed with spiritual gifts. Paul noted this reality when he wrote to the Corinthian Christians, “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant” (1 Corinthians 12:1). Still today, one of the areas of spiritual unawareness is the lack of teaching and understanding about spiritual gifts and their vital role in the life of the Lord’s church. This concern was so pressing to Paul that he devoted a significant part of his letter to addressing their lack of understanding concerning spiritual gifts. He explained who receives them, and why God gives them to believers. It is still essential for believers to understand spiritual gifts so that the church can function with spiritual unity, Christian love, and effective ministry in the world. In Romans 12, Paul provides the platform for teaching the correct

attitude and use of spiritual gifts—to enhance believers’ usefulness to the Lord and His church.

### ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

## Spiritual Gifts: The Correct Attitude (*Romans 12:3-5*)

### KJV

**3** 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.**

## **NIV**

**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.**

**4 For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function,**

**5 so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.**

This new section answers the question, “How should Christians respond to God’s undeserved mercy?” The beginning point is to become living, breathing sacrifices dedicated to serving God as an act of perpetual worship (see Romans 12:1-2) by using the spiritual gifts He has sovereignly given to every believer. This process begins with an honest evaluation of oneself (**verse 3**). It is not wrong for believers to recognize theirs and others’ gifts. The problem arises when believers falsely evaluate themselves solely based on their spiritual gifts. The reality of this erroneous thinking was vividly demonstrated among the Christians in Corinth (see 1 Corinthians 12–14). Every spiritual gift is given because of God’s grace to be exercised by faith to honor His name so that each local congregation grows in a balanced manner. Paul illustrates this proof by using the human body as a metaphor for a local assembly of believers (**verses 4-5**). Just as the human body is a unified whole—with each part effectively operating for its good—God has given individual spiritual gifts to each member within local congregations to create a cooperative diversity that complements and benefits all. Maintaining the correct attitude toward spiritual gifts requires two essential principles: one is recognizing and acknowledging God as their source; the second is understanding that God has given each believer the exact gifts He purposed for them and the resources to use them properly. Spiritual gifts are assigned according to God’s will, and it is inappropriate to ignore or neglect your spiritual gift, or to be envious of someone else’s gifts. Finally, having the proper attitude toward spiritual gifts involves recognizing that these gifts are not to be equated with “holding” church offices or positions. Only a select few within any congregation “hold offices.” Still, despite age, gender, educational or socioeconomic levels, or length of membership, every believer has been supernaturally endowed with one or more spiritual gifts to exercise in ministry to benefit all and advance God’s kingdom’s work.

## **WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

**How has a lack of understanding and knowledge about spiritual gifts hindered effective ministry in the local church?**

## **Spiritual Gifts: The Correct Use (Romans 12:6-8)**

## **KJV**

**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.**

## **NIV**

**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.**

Paul's focus in these verses is not on listing, defining, or explaining spiritual gifts but on showing how believers use them. He introduces the gifts listed here by referring to what he has just stated in verses 3-5 and applies it to exercising these God-given abilities for spiritual service. This diversity of gifts is given under God's sovereign grace according to the unique way He has endowed each believer (**verse 6a**). Paul emphasizes that God intends these grace gifts to be used, not just possessed. It may be that local congregations struggle with implementing biblical ministry because of the lack of focus on teaching about spiritual gifts, believers' being unaware of what their gifts are, or failing to structure ministry around those gifts available within the body of believers. Spiritual gifts are present within every local congregation of believers, but they must be used correctly. Paul begins explaining how they are to be used with the gift of prophecy (**verse 6b**). Prophecy or proclaiming a message from God requires exercising faith that the message's source is from God or according to His revealed Word. Paul lists two more gifts in **verse 7**, serving and teaching. Serving refers to every kind of practical help that can be given to others and teaching to the supernatural ability to bring understandable clarity and meaning to God's Word. These must be exercised by faith. The gift of exhortation (**verse 8a**) involves advising, encouraging, strengthening, and comforting others, a vital ministry within the faith community to keep believers on the right path and moving forward. Giving (**verse 8b**) refers to seeing needs and generously and sacrificially sharing what one possesses. Those gifted to lead (**verse 8c**), or the gift of administration, are urged to do so with enthusiasm, constancy, and consistency. Finally, showing mercy, which involves reflecting the mercy that God has shown the justified, is to be done cheerfully out of a genuine concern for another's well-being (**verse 8d**). The foundational principle behind exercising these and all spiritual gifts is faith—trusting God to use His power to the fullest through those He has justified to edify His people and bring honor to His name.

## **WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

**Why is faith necessary to exercise spiritual gifts effectively?**

## **A CLOSING THOUGHT**

God has sovereignly chosen to graciously endow every justified believer with one or more spiritual gifts. The purpose of the gifts is to empower believers to serve within the framework of



the body of Christ. In Romans 12, Paul explains the correct attitude and way to exercise these undeserved spiritual enablements—in humility and by faith. Every believer is gifted perfectly according to God’s grace. Ministry flows smoothly when believers know their gift(s), seek divine confirmation, pray for wisdom, and faithfully exercise them for the building up of Christ’s church.

## YOUR LIFE

Many Christians today seem unaware of the fact that God has given them spiritual gifts for effective service within the church. The lesson’s focus is not on believers’ identifying spiritual gift(s) but on their using them faithfully and correctly. If you are unaware of your spiritual gift, pray and wait for God to reveal how He wants to use you in building His kingdom on Earth.

## YOUR WORLD!

An encouraging takeaway from this lesson is that all believers have an essential role to play in fulfilling God’s plan and purpose for the church. God endows each believer with supernatural abilities to build up others. Therefore, we must humbly recognize and acknowledge each other’s gifts while faithfully using them to fulfill God’s unique purpose for giving them.

## CLOSING PRAYER

Gracious Father, You have given us spiritual gifts with which to build and bless Your church. In gratitude and faith we offer ourselves as willing vessels through whom You may continue working to glorify Your name. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

## CONCLUSION

(Preparing for Next Week’s Lesson)

Ponder this question as you study next week’s lesson: “What thoughts and feelings does witnessing God’s awesome power through nature cause you to experience?” Read Isaiah 40:12-13, 25-31.

### Home Daily Bible Readings

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|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| MONDAY, January 29    | “Gentiles Become Fellow Heirs”    | (Ephesians 3:14-21)      |
| TUESDAY, January 30   | “Sing of God’s Might”             | (Psalm 89:1-13)          |
| WEDNESDAY, January 31 | “Rely on God”                     | (1 Chronicles 16:8-22)   |
| THURSDAY, February 1  | “God Reigns in Power”             | (Revelation 11:14-19)    |
| FRIDAY, February 2    | “The Power of God for Salvation”  | (Romans 1:8-17)          |
| SATURDAY, February 3  | “Be Strong in the Lord”           | (Ephesians 6:10-18)      |
| SUNDAY, February 4    | “Wait on God, Who Gives Strength” | (Isaiah 40:12-13, 25-31) |