

Leader's Guide

LESSON 20

Dr. Jerry Nelson

In response to the sermon on February 3rd.

Romans 12:3-8 **Spiritual Community**

Key Points

In the previous two verses (12:1, 2) we were challenged with our relational response to God's great mercy—sacrificial obedience resulting from a transformation of the heart. In this next passage we will discover how to work out the implications of transformation in the way we respond and relate to one another within the body of Christ, the church. In this passage Paul brings to the forefront:

- Sober judgment: humility
- Many members, different functions (unity within diversity)
- Use of our gifts on behalf of others

God designed us for relationship, both with Him and with one another. The internal transformation that is taking place by the power of the Spirit is continually changing the way we relate to God (a deepening love for him), and the way we relate to one another. Because we are becoming more Christ-like (increasingly responding the way Jesus responds), we have the ability to increasingly become more others-centered than self-centered. And others-centered actions are demonstrated through the way we offer and use our gifts on behalf of the body of Christ.

Our gifts are never to be used on ourselves. They were given to us so that we will use them to build the kingdom of God. The body greatly suffers when we deny them, bury or misuse them. On the contrary, we experience great joy when the church is functioning properly and is living in unity. Paul's challenge to us is to use the gifting God gave us.

Personal Reflection

As a Small Group Leader, no doubt God has equipped you with an ability to listen well, to engage conversation, to draw out key aspects of the passage and engage your group in an authentic, safe environment. Thank you for using your gifts!

What work is the Spirit doing in you that gives you such a passion to invest in others? As you retrace your steps, what are some key events or circumstances that transformed your heart? Can you identify the catalyst for change, or the means God used that enabled you to lead? Whatever it was, God is doing similar work in all of us.

Transformation is a process of brokenness, repentance and restoration. It is out of this process that our passions and gifting converge, giving life to the body of Christ.

Ask your group to share an area where they are using their gifts that have been fueled by this process. Are they able to serve? Do they serve out of love or duty? Have they buried their gifts, or has sin somehow disqualified them (perhaps in their own mind)? Do they serve out of great joy? Take some time to encourage those who may not be participating in kingdom activity, and affirm those who are using their gifts in the church.

Important Point

Being able to name a “gift” is not necessary. Knowing that God is working through you is important. The “gifts” list that has been distributed is meant to show the diversity of “gifts” that God bestows on his people. Undoubtedly many more “gifts” exist when we consider that the definition of a spiritual gift is: “A spiritual gift is a special work of the Holy Spirit whereby he grants to you grace for effective spiritual service.” With that definition in mind, “gifts” might better be described than defined.

Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean to think of ourselves with “sober judgment?” (*We are to be humble, recognizing that we all are on equal ground at the cross and as we will see, we all need each other.*) From what mindset does true (not false) humility come and how is it expressed? Why is this an important concept to mention first after Romans 12:1-2?
2. What relational sin occurs when we don’t start here? What damage occurs to the church? (*Some see themselves as uniquely important and others see themselves as uniquely insignificant.*)
3. How does the metaphor of the human body help our understanding of our relationship to each other in the church? (*Looking at 1 Corinthians 12:12-24 will aid in this discussion.*)
4. In what ways do we “belong” to each other in Christ?
5. What “gifts” has God given you? How do you know? (*See the attached “Gifts of the Spirit” - but please note that naming the gift is not essential nor is the list inclusive.*)
6. In verses 7 and 8 Paul qualifies some of his examples, e.g. “contributing...generously” “showing mercy...cheerfully.” How might we qualify the use of other gifts?
7. What happens to us and to the church when we deny our gifts and don’t use them?
8. What happens to the church when we try to exercise gifts that we do not have, or use our gifts for selfish or ulterior motives?
9. What does Paul’s teaching in 1 Corinthians 12 add to our understanding of the place and purpose of “gifts?”
10. How has someone else’s gift ministered to you and how have your “gifts” ministered to someone else?
11. What might change in your understanding and your actions because of Romans 12:3-8?
12. Using the second section of the handout entitled "The Gifts of the Spirit - Discovering your Spiritual Gifts" think aloud about discovering how God is best using each of us as one of his means to "transform" others. (*You might have people affirm in each other what they see as in #6 on the list.*)