

Romans 12:3-5

We should put our best foot forward without losing our balance or kicking our neighbor.

- There are two great challenges that are counter-intuitive in the Christian life.
 1. **Imputed righteousness of faith.** We want some credit.
 2. **Offering self as a living sacrifice.** We want a God who will serve us, who will do our bidding.
- One of the areas where the living-sacrifice posture is going to be tested is in the way we relate to fellow believers with whom we differ.
- Jesus told his followers that it was easy to love those who were just like us. The real test was to love those who were not like us. Matt.5:47 “And if you greet your brothers only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?”

Mistakes to avoid in “body life” .

3 For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. 4 For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.”

- “Sound judgment” is consistent with a “renewed mind” and is characterized by humility and respect for others who differ in function and passion.
- The reference to “every man” has the sense of “every one.” The Greek word for “male” does not appear in this verse.
- “A measure of faith” has the sense of measuring other believers on the basis of a common shared faith. This is in contrast to the tendency to equate personal worth with particular gifts.
- Paul uses the analogy of the human body with many complementary parts that make up a single individual.

A. Kicking our neighbor - We can wrongly conclude that our gift or ministry is a badge of God’s special favor, our spiritual achievement, or the basis of our self-worth.

- There are many ways in which we differ from each other.
 1. We differ in our spiritual development. Not every believer is a living sacrifice.
 - a. In I Cor.2:14-3:3 Paul speaks of three spiritual states:
 1. “The natural man”, (the non believer)
 2. “The carnal” (fleshly) Christian,
 3. “The spiritual” (mature) Christian.
 - b. In Heb.5:13-14 we read of two stages of spiritual development.

1. The “babe” who can only take milk.
 2. The “mature” who can eat solid (spiritual) food.
2. We differ in our natural history.
 - a. Much of this is beyond our control - genes, circumstances, etc.
 - b. Some of it is the result of choices we have made - our sin, geography, etc.
 3. We differ in our appointed role in the Body of Christ.
 - a. This is ordained of God. These differences in the Body of Christ are “God’s allotment” not our achievement.
 - b. We can wrongly conclude that our personal function and passion is (or should be) common to everyone else.
- If we use our giftedness as a basis of “kicking our neighbors” making them feel inferior or unaccepted, we do not edify the Body or glorify Christ.
 - Christian Community will not work if the people involved are seeking to relate intimately only with others who are like themselves in personality, perspective, and preferences. There must be love for, reception of ministry from, and cooperation with people who have differing roles, passions, and abilities in the community.
 - It also must be understood that the **Head of the Body** is Jesus, not a pastor, political ideology, or a narrow theological tradition.

B. Losing our balance. Giftedness in one area does not mean that we are not (on occasion) to minister in other areas.

- We might use the analogy of a basketball team. The point guard’s job is to bring the ball up the court, and deliver it to other players in scoring position. This does not mean that he should never shoot or rebound even though that may not be his primary skill, calling, or role.
- Paul was an Apostle with a teaching ministry and gift. On occasion, he also served, exhorted, showed mercy, etc.
- The special gifts given to individuals does not excuse each of us from responding to God’s command to minister in areas that may not be our gift.

Gifts given to some	Commands given to all
Ministering	Serve one another – Gal.5:13
Exhortation	Exhort one another – Heb.10:25
Giving	All give – II Cor.9:7
Teaching	Teaching one another – Col.3:16
Showing Mercy	Be kind – Eph.4:32
Faith	Walk by faith – II Cor.5:7
Evangelism	All witness – Acts 1:8

C. Displacement of Christ as Sr. Pastor. The role of human leaders in a community is to point each member to the Lord Jesus Christ as the Head and respect the facilitation of each member's role in the family.

- The implied structure of the church in this passage is simple - Christ is the head and believers are the body. There is little emphasis on any human organizational structure.
- Human Shepherds have an important role that has often been misunderstood.
 1. Human shepherds are to facilitate a bonded connection between Christ the Head and each member of the Body.
 2. Human shepherds do not have a spiritual franchise with the option of shaping and using the community to carry out their personal vision.
 3. Human shepherds are to facilitate and not frustrate the proper functioning of the body and its members. There is no place for petty politics, personal egos, and turf wars.
- It is this commitment to Christ as our Sr. Pastor that is an important mark of Christian community.
- Our identity as authentic believers will be seen both in our identity with Christ as our Head and in our response to, respect for, and relationship with other believers in the body of Christ, especially those who are different than ourselves.
 1. Jesus identifies with His spiritual family so closely that one cannot separate a response to "the least of these my brothers" from a response to Jesus Himself (Matthew 25:40).
 2. Our response to those who are different and by natural accounting "least" among us is an indicator of our response to the "greatest" Lord of all.
 3. Involvement in Christian community is not an option for a true believer. The question is - Will our involvement be constructive or destructive to the health of the community? Will it reveal our faith to be authentic or false?
- Paul provides an explanation of Rom.12:3-8 in I Cor.12 "12 For even as the body is one and {yet} has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. 14 For the body is not one member, but many. 15 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not {a part} of the body," it is not for this reason any the less {a part} of the body. 16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not {a part} of the body," it is not for this reason any the less {a part} of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. 19 And if they were all one member, where would the body be? 20 But now there are many members, but

one body. ²¹ And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." ²² On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; ²³ and those {members} of the body, which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our unseemly {members come to} have more abundant seemliness, ²⁴ whereas our seemly {members} have no need {of it.} But God has {so} composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that {member} which lacked, ²⁵ that there should be no division in the body, but {that} the members should have the same care for one another. ²⁶ And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if {one} member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. ²⁷ Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it. ²⁸ And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, {various} kinds of tongues. ²⁹ All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not {workers of} miracles, are they? ³⁰ All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they? ³¹ But earnestly desire the greater gifts."