

Romans 12:6-8

Discerning the gifts of the Spirit

6 And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; 7 if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; 8 or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.”

A. We each should put our best foot forward.

- Christians are to minister “according to the grace given to us.”
 1. Paul tells us in Rom.12:6-8 to **publicly move in the areas of our strengths** not our weaknesses. The community needs to affirm and encourage each member to find their place in the body with their unique gift or strength.
 2. This means that **we value each other's strengths and overlook each other's weaknesses**. A community that fails to see its members as assets with gifts of value to the community will quickly develop what some have called spiritual lupus, the tendency to devour one another. When we relate to others in terms of their failures and inadequacies we quickly dismantle community.
 3. When gifts are used properly they will **graciously edify the body of Christ** and preserve its unity. The phrase “exercise them accordingly” (referring back to verse 5) suggests that the ministry of gifts should respect and promote the unity of the Body.
- Christian Community not only provides a place for ministry for every believer, it also provides a place for each believer to experience the fulfillment and significance that comes from seeing God work through them. We need to know that we are **valued by others** and that our presence makes a contribution to the Kingdom of our Lord.
- Leaders have a liturgical role in that they speak the truth to and for the body of believers. They declare and demonstrate the core values that bind the community together. They are watchful or literally “heads up” with respect to tending the flock. They listen, discern, and act with wisdom and in a timely manner. Every community needs gifted leadership.

B. We each should operate within the grace and faith boundaries of our ministry.

- Each of the gifts mentioned is to reflect grace and faith.
 - “if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith;” – The prophet is not to stray from what he or she has received from God by faith.

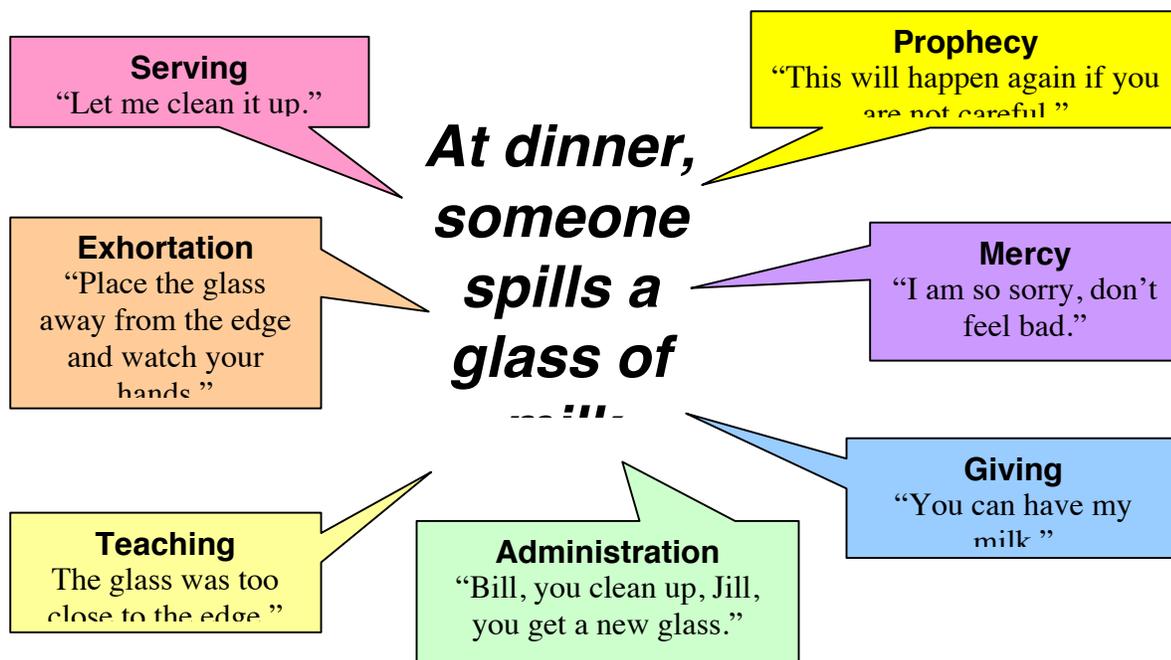
- “7 if service, in his serving;” – The server is to serve within the boundaries of the grace to serve that are given to him or her. There may be areas of service that are not appropriate to a particular person.
 - “or he who teaches, in his teaching;” – The teacher needs to be sensitive to the grace that he or she has to teach in some areas and not in others.
 - “8 or he who exhorts, in his exhortation;” – The exhorter (comforter, or encourager, or one who convicts) must be sensitive to the grace or boundaries of the Spirit’s empowerment.
 - “he who gives, with liberality;” – The giver should be generous as is in keeping with grace.
 - “he who leads, with diligence;” – The leader should be eager to lead but careful not to dominate or manipulate. It is significant to note that leaders or administrators are not put in a special class above others. They are like public servants who orchestrate the environment so that the Spirit can minister through various members in an orderly way.
 - “he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.” – The one who shows mercy should show up with a cheerful heart.
- While recognizing gifts in the body, we also must be aware of weaknesses. A community is committed to minister through strengths to the needs and weakness of the lives of those we love. Love demands that we not aid and abet foolish behavior. It compels us to help one another in our struggle to grow to responsible maturity. This may require confronting one another and even the use of discipline. But when it comes to our inclusion in the community, we want to major on the assets of each person not their liabilities. It is only in extreme cases that removal from the community as a matter of discipline would be the loving thing to do. A healthy Christian community addresses weaknesses but celebrates assets.

C. We must not confuse spiritual gifts with spiritual maturity or health.

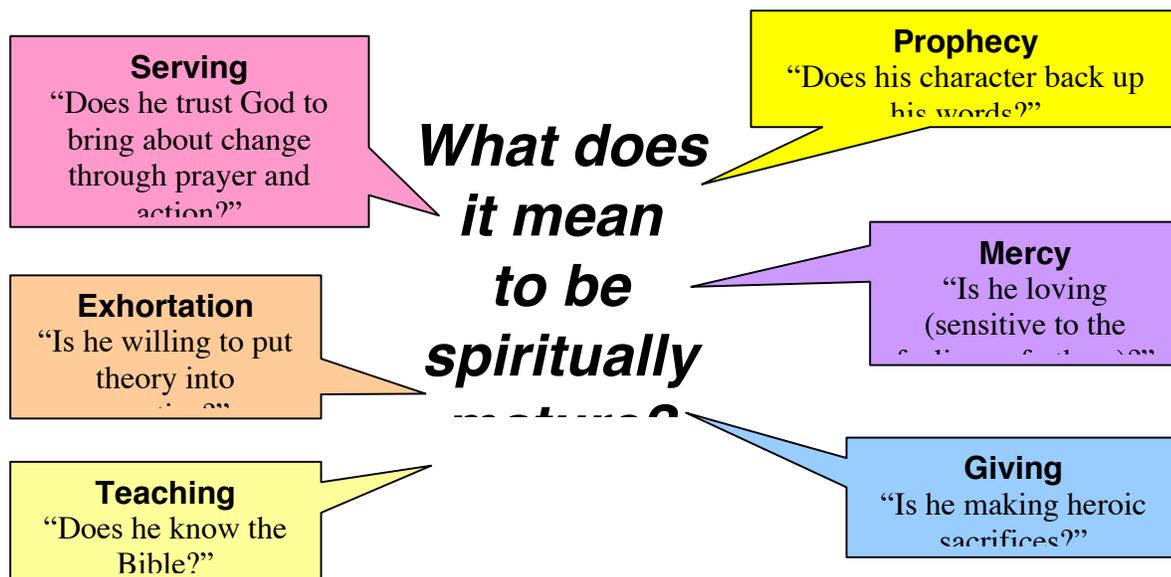
- It is all too easy to equate “spirituality” with the manifestation of a particular gift. It is interesting to note that we tend to equate spirituality with the gift that we have or wish we had.
 - For example, those who have gifts of serving through healing with faith may tend to believe that others who do not have this passion or role are not really spiritual.
 - Those who have gifts of teaching and know the Bible are often viewed as “more spiritual” as are those with gifts of evangelism (especially as missionaries).

- It is very important that we respect and support each gift without elevating it to the status of "more spiritual" than others.
- Some gifts are recognized as more powerful (more edifying than others). These gifts include prophecy, teaching, apostleship, tongues with interpretation - I Cor.14:4-5. It was expected however that the lesser gifts be given greater places of honor in the church because they may tend to leave those with those gifts feeling insignificant - I Cor.12:22-24.
- The various gifts mentioned in Rom.12 represent different sensitivities to life in the church.

How the gifts in Rom.12 might respond to a specific situation?

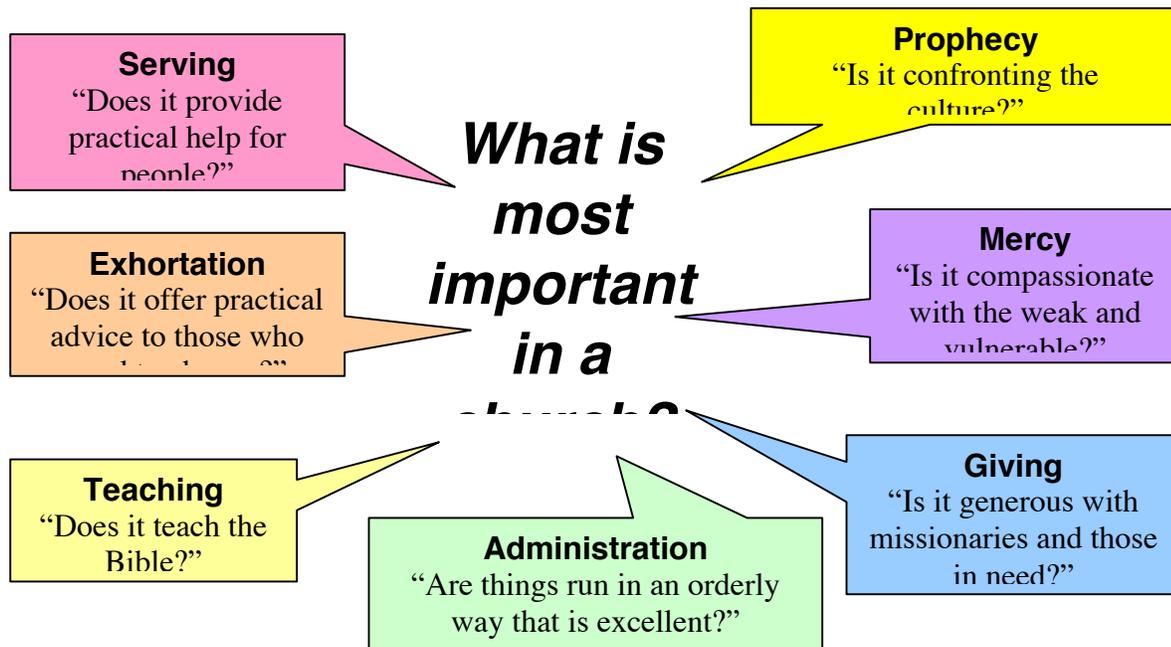


How the gifts in Rom.12 tend to judge the "spirituality" of others?



Administration
 “Is he respectful of doing things well, and in proper order?”

What do the gifts in Rom.12 look for in a church?



- There are varieties of gifts, ministries, and effects.

I Cor.12:4-6 “Now there are varieties of **gifts**, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of **ministries**, and the same Lord. And there are varieties of **effects**, but the same God who works all things in all persons.”

Gifts (motivations)	Ministries	Effects (manifestations)
The Spirit given ability to edify the church.	The office or position from which a gift is exercised.	The result of the gift's use in the life of the church.
Aptitude	Ordination	Word effected (result)
When? At the moment of salvation	When? At the time of ordination the body recognizes the gifted one	When? When “gift”, “ministry”, and “the Holy Spirit” work together.

- For example - a person can teach from many different positions (not just as a pastor) in the church and that teaching can have a very different effect or application in each hearer. Or a person with gifts of service can do so from a number of different "recognized" or "unrecognized" positions in the church with differing effects in the lives of those served.

Gifts (motivations)	Ministries	Effects (manifestations)
Teaching	Pastor, elder, deacon, parent, group leader, missionary, etc.	Healing, evangelism, prophecy, mercy, administration, etc.