

Romans (12:7-8)

Super "Natural" Gifts

Part 64 - March 5, 2006

REVIEWING ROMANS



Last week we began talking about the gifts God gives each of us, and how He expects us to use what we've been given. Jesus told a parable about a servant who buried his talent, and he called him: fearful, wicked, and lazy. We've been given gifts to express God's grace.

We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. - *Romans 12:6 NIV*

Now let's continue with the rest of the gifts in Paul's list:

If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully. - *Romans 12:7-8 NIV*

There're seven gifts here. In 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 there's a list of nine - and eight of them are *different* from this list; v. 28-29 list a couple more. And 1 Peter and Ephesians list even more.

People argue whether there're 17 total gifts or 19. I think they miss the point. We like to categorize things, define things, and come up with "official" lists. But the Bible doesn't offer an official list. The gifts aren't mutually exclusive or rigidly defined. And they kinda overlap.

Q: Where does "showing mercy" stop and "serving" start?

The gifts come in different measures and mixtures. And over half of these gifts are virtues we're all supposed to have.

Serve one another in love. - *Galatians 5:13 NIV*

Encourage one another daily ... - *Hebrews 3:13 NIV*

Give generously to others in need. - *Ephesians 4:28 NLT*

Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. - *Luke 6:36 NIV*

So, if you've taken one of those gift inventories and concluded that you're an "exhorter", you're not off the hook for growing in every expression of God's grace and Christian love!

Q: So, what's the difference between a virtue and a gift?

Some of the virtues come more joyfully and are more fruitful for some than others. When that happens ... it's a gift! For instance, some believers find unusual delight in giving generously, while others pull out their pocket calculator to figure their percent!

- Virtues that are unusually joyful and fruitful are gifts.

Q: So, what's the difference between *gifts* and *natural abilities*?

Natural abilities and spiritual gifts may seem the same. But spiritual gifts come with something extra: God's Spirit!

Let's say a servant-hearted, mercy-filled *unbeliever* offers a cup of cold water to a thirsty refugee in the name of the Peace Corps - while a *believer* offers a cup in the name of the Lord. The cup of water doesn't change. But along with the refreshing drink comes the love and grace of God transmitted *supernaturally* by His Holy Spirit and used for His Kingdom purposes.

- Natural abilities only transmit natural things.
- Spiritual gifts transmit *super*, natural things.

When some folks get saved, they discover a whole *new desire* to serve or teach or show mercy. But other converts simply keep using their preexisting abilities, but with *new purpose*. Either way, when we partner with God's Spirit, He empowers our newly purposed abilities to enhance and advance His Kingdom.

A *Spiritual Gift* is any ability that's Spirit-motivated, Spirit-directed, and Spirit-blessed.

LOOKING AT THE LIST

Now let's take a snapshot of the six gifts in our passage.

If it is **servicing** ... These are people who enjoy assisting others, as a functional, practical expression of Christ.

If it is **teaching** ... These are people who enjoy digging into the Word of God and edifying others with their discoveries.

If it is **encouraging** (exhorting) ... Teaching informs the mind; encouraging (exhorting) influences (persuades) the heart and conscience.

If it is **contributing** ... These folks don't think, "How much of my money should I give." But, "How much of God's money should I keep?"

If it is **leadership** ... These are people who are effective and efficient at rallying the troops and overseeing their progress.

If it is **showing mercy** ... These are the “Good Samaritans” who enjoy caring for and tending to the weak, sick, poor, and lowly.

Q: Why do we tend to look at the *combined* spiritual gifts of others, and compare and contrast it to our own limited gifts?

SWIFT GIFT ANALYSIS



It doesn't take an extensive questionnaire to find your gifts. I'll give you a swift gift analysis. It's just a little story. I've titled it: Little Billy Tries to Carry Three Ice Cream Cones at a Family Picnic. Okay, you're at a family picnic and little Billy tries to carry three ice-cream cones, and he drops one. The End.

Q: How you react and respond will reveal your prevailing gifts.

1. If **Prophecy** is in your mix, you'd probably say: "Well I saw *that* coming!" ... but you shouldn't say that. You might say: "You should ask for help next time, Billy."

Prophecy's motivation is: To correct and direct. You see where things are headed, and you want to warn and guide others in order to improve their future.

2. If **Serving** is in your mix, you'd probably say: "I'll help you clean that up."

Serving's motivation is: To assist and support. You see a mission and you want to assume responsibility for it.

3. If **teaching** is in your mix, you'd probably say: "Why didn't they give you something to carry those in? Why didn't you make two trips? *Did* you trip? Why aren't you wearing shoes? Teachers can be so annoying! Just ask my kids or Shar!

Teaching's motivation is: To analyze and discover. You see a problem to be solved, and you want to figure it out.

4. If **encouraging** is in your mix, you'd probably say: "It was a good lesson, wasn't it Billy? I'll bet you do things different next time, right?"

Encouraging's motivation is: To persuade and convince. You see an opportunity to push someone in the right direction.

5. If **contributing** is in your mix, you'd probably say: "I'll buy another cone."

Contributing's motivation is: To provide and supply. You see a shortage and you want to satisfy it.

6. If leadership is in your mix, you'd probably say: "Bob, buy the cone. Katie, clean the mess. I'll help Billy hand these out. Meet back here in four minutes ... three minutes!"

Leadership's motivation is: To achieve and accomplish. You see the goal of the group, and you want to orchestrate it.

7. If Mercy: "Don't feel bad Billy, everybody drops stuff."

Mercy's motivation is: To relieve and lighten. You see discomfort, and you want to alleviate it.

ALL ABOUT ATTITUDE

Do you see how it all works together? We need each other! And that's why, when you don't find your place of ministry in God's Kingdom, the rest of us get cheated.

And, in a family that doesn't appreciate the different giftings:

- Teaching says: Why didn't one of *you* help Billy carry these?
- Prophecy says: Each of us needs to be paying more attention.
- Encouraging says: This has been a good lesson for everybody.
- Contributing says: For crying out loud, it's *only* ice cream.
- Serving says: Will someone get me some napkins or something?
- Leadership says: Are we going to just stand around and talk?
- And poor little Mercy says: Why can't we all just get along?

You see, what matters to the Lord, isn't merely that we use our God-given, Spirit-empowered gifts, but *how* we use them.

If it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully

- Attitude outweighs aptitude.

These three words: "generosity", "diligence", and "cheerfulness" show us that ministry is not meant to be duty-driven. It's meant to come from an overflow of joy in Christ. And, that is exactly what our gifts empower us to do!