

Romans 12

“The Serving Gifts”

The gifts mentioned in chapter 12 are called the serving gifts. These are certain abilities that are given to us by the Holy Spirit when we are born again. Every believer has at least one and often more than one. The list here is *probably* not comprehensive because there are other gifts mentioned in other places. Like all natural abilities when we use our gifts they get better and we become more skilled as we use them.

Some gifts are paired like peanut butter and jelly - they are made for each other. While others are like jalapeno jelly, a little weird but delicious.

The Holy Spirit led Paul to list seven gifts here but the gift of prophecy is *more a calling* than a gift. Now that statement is controversial because our charismatic friends feel that *every believer is a prophet*. I plan to talk about the sign gifts and charismatics on the 29th.

My view is that *prophecy* is preaching and since not everyone is called to preach or even permitted to preach - not everyone is a prophet. The call to preach is hard to explain but those who have been called know it and they know it just as assuredly as they know Christ called them to come to him for salvation.

One of the gifts mentioned here is that of teaching, this is different from the prophet. It is a faithful saying that, “All preachers are teachers but not all teachers are preachers.” Our church has a lot of fine teachers both men and women, but they know they are not preachers, because they aren’t called.

1. Prophecy 12:6b-c

The preacher must believe what he preaches and he must be sure that he preaches, “the faith”. The term, *the faith*, refers to the doctrines of Christianity contained in Scripture. You can spot a faithful preacher because they preach the word and in Christianity any preacher is held accountable by the Bible. (See Acts 17:11; 2 Tim 4; and Jude 22 *contend for the faith = wrestle/struggle face to face for the purity of the faith against error.*)

To be a prophetic voice means that your message is God’s message and God speaks truth. Not everyone likes the truth - even within a church. (See 2 Tim. 3:1-5, Titus 1:9-11)

A prophet must be sure to keep his attitude in check and remember (2 Tim. 2:22-26).

The best thing a pastor can do is to remember that the people he watches over/feeds are not his people, they are Jesus' people.

2. Service/ministry 12:7a

This is service in a practical way. Helping people with physical needs like: mowing, cleaning, cooking, washing, giving a ride, etc. It is the kind of thing that can be done with our hands and feet.

Within the church it is stuff like custodial work/putting out the chairs/nursery/mowing etc.

The deacons of a church usually take on these things either personally or co-ordinating them. (See Acts 6)

3. Teaching 12:7b

The ability to pass on information (not gossip lol) from the Bible. This is a gift of systematics. My friend Don Fortner (1950-2020) was a preacher and not really a teacher, but he wrote a book of theology called *Basic Bible Doctrines*. It is 630 pages of doctrinal dogma by Don - it is not a systematic theology. It is fun to read. But John Gill (1697-1771) wrote a *systematic theology* of Bible doctrines, and he references the Jewish scholars, church fathers, and gives a robust presentation of the truth in a systematic way that answers questions/objections. *Not quite as fun to read.*

This kind of teaching could be in a classroom or one on one, helping people to see the meaning of the bible more clearly. The gift of teaching could be called the *ability to unfold*.

4. Exhorting/encouraging 12:8a

MacArthur says that music *must* play a part in this because music can be so encouraging to us. Music and singing is source of lifting us up isn't it? We have 150 Psalms that God's people sang for centuries and in the NT (Eph 5:18-19; Col. 3:16) the apostle connects our singing to our Spirit filledness.

There are other ways for this to be manifested too, encouraging people to leave sinful living, to trust God, or reminding people that this is not the end! It is the ability to infuse others with strength.

5. Giving 12:8b

One writer says the greek word here μεταδιδούς means a *super giving*, maybe like extravagant giving. I didn't see that it was universal take on the word but it is worth a minute. I've been around people who are able to do well with money and to whom God gives a special joy when they give.

The word μεταδιδούς seems to indicate *sharing what you have*. Which means you have a generous spirit even though you don't have *wealth*. A dear old lady in Texas lived in a little share cropper type of house in Texas with a *wood powered cookstove* was super giving! But she had little money, so she cooked for people and it was great. She loved to bring kolaches, cinnamon rolls and cream filled cupcakes by our house - she shared generously.

Now, we all should be giving - especially in our day giving an offering. Some of you need to start giving regularly out of your abundance and others need to start giving so you can open the windows of heaven for a blessing! (Mal 3:10)

Some people's lives are so busy that the only place they can serve is giving.

6. Leadership/administration 12:8c

The ability to organize/mobilize/supervise. The ability to get things done. This church has a lot of people who do that now. We could say this is the ability to *delegate*. Which means they can spot potential or strengths in people.

7. Mercy 12:8d

Showing sympathy and sensitivity to those who are suffering or in dark times. It is the ability to ease the suffering of people by bringing cheer to them by *compassionate understanding of people*.

There we have it - six ways we serve our brothers and sisters.

A few parting shots:

1. Each believer has a different gift, and God has bestowed these gifts so the local body can grow in a balanced way. But each Christian must exercise his or her gift by faith. We may not see the result of our ministry, but the Lord sees it and He blesses. (Wiersbe) Friends, we do the work and leave the results up to God.

2. In 12:6 it says, "*let us use them*" - use your gift.
Only the ESV/NASB adds this little exhortation to serve God. My friends, we need to get off the couch and start serving God.
3. Don't freak out if you don't know what your gift is.
Just do what you feel like you should. I've spent most of my life not being sure what my gift is but I've just tried to do what is needed at the time.
4. Have you lost your gift?
Maybe today you've realized that you haven't been serving the Lord for a long time and now you want to, but you are wondering *if* you still have your gift...
Look at Romans 11:29... *it is still there, so start exercising it.*

~ Amen