

Romans 12 (ESV)

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

³ For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

⁴ For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

⁶ Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷ if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸ the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

⁹ Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. ¹⁰ Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.

¹¹ Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹² Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. ¹³ Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.

¹⁷ Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.

¹⁸ If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

¹⁹ Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."

²⁰ To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Over the years we have received a number of gifts from people we have known and loved in the church. Now that we've started the process of packing up our belongings, we've run across a few of those gifts that I've forgotten about.

Some of these gifts were useful, all of them will bring back fond memories.

In Romans 12 Paul gives a description of some of the gifts that the LORD has bestowed upon His church. These are gifts He's given to the church for the Body of Christ.

If you are a believer, you are a part of that Body. You have been given a gift for the benefit of church. Today we're going to talk about how those gifts are to be received, used, and displayed, all for the glory of the giver of those gifts.

The first point deals with who you are as a child of God; having a right assessment of yourself.

Romans 12:3 (ESV)

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

Don't think too highly of yourself; but on the other hand, don't think that you have nothing to offer. Consider these marks of identity as a child of God.

As a Son of Adam or a daughter of Eve you are:

- Made in God's image

Genesis 1:27 (ESV)

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Psalms 8:4-6 (ESV)

What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?
⁵ Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. ⁶ You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet,

The crown of God's creation with dominion; fearfully and wonderfully made.

Conceived in sin; children of wrath

Psalm 51:5 (ESV)

Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.

Ephesians 2:1-3 (ESV)

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

We are not born innocent and then become corrupted over time. We are conceived in sin. Most people think of themselves as flawed, but not wicked. We need improvement, not salvation. The Bible says that our depravity affects every aspect of our being. That necessitates the need for reconciliation with God.

That we are made in the image of God, but at the same time sinful and estranged from our Creator is true of every human being. The next eight characteristics are true for those who have been reconciled to God through Christ.

Chosen
Justified
Redeemed
Adopted
New creation
Citizenship in heaven
Body is a temple of the Holy Spirit
Member of the Body of Christ

Chosen by God; made alive in Christ

Ephesians 2:4-5 (ESV)

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—

Ephesians 1:3-4 (ESV)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love

- A redeemed sinner; justified by grace through faith

Ephesians 2:8-9 (ESV)

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Romans 5:1 (ESV)

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

- Peace with God; no longer estranged

- New creature; born again; citizenship in heaven

2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

Philippians 3:20 (ESV)

But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,

- We're to be mindful of the things above; not just on earthly things

Adopted into the household of faith; the family of God

John 1:12-13 (ESV)

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

Romans 8:15-17 (ESV)

For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” ¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs— heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

Body is the temple of the Holy Spirit

1 Corinthians 3:16-17 (ESV)

Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? ¹⁷ If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him. For God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (ESV)

¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, ²⁰ for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

Living sacrifices we offer our bodies to God

A member of the Body of Christ

1 Corinthians 12:27 (ESV)

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

Romans 12:3 (ESV)

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

How do you know if you have a right assessment of yourself? This is an internal test. Not many people will go around boasting about how great they are and how fortunate the church is to have them around.

On the other hand, there are a good number of people who think that they have nothing at all to offer in the Body of Christ and they excuse themselves from any form of ministry.

Both assessments are not only wrong, but sinful. Pride and arrogance are obvious sins. So is false humility. False humility can be a cover-up for unbelief.

It's not that you just lack confidence in your gifts and abilities; you lack confidence in the promises of God. As a child of God, you were created to glorify your Maker.

Ephesians 2:10 (ESV)

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

A right assessment of yourself is to walk humbly before God serving the people in the sphere of influence where you've been placed for the advancement of His Kingdom.

In the parable of the talents, various servants were given different amounts of resources. One was given five talents, another two, and another one; each according to their ability.

Each one was entrusted to invest those talents for the benefit of master. When called to account for what they had been entrusted with, they each gave a report.

Matthew 25:20-21 (ESV)

And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.' ²¹ His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'

In the end, it's not going to matter how much talent you have or how many accolades you receive from others. What will matter is what the Master says to you.

"You have been faithful over a little. I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master."

A right assessment of yourself is to walk humbly before God serving the people in the sphere of influence where you've been placed for the advancement of His Kingdom.

Don't think of yourself more highly than you ought, but with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith THAT GOD HAS ASSIGNED.

You have an assignment. It's not just a job, but a calling. Use the gifts that God has given you for the advancement of His Kingdom.

You may see your gifts as modest, but that's not the issue. You are a child of God. In Christ you are chosen, redeemed, adopted and called to glorify your maker.

Our second point is this: The Church is ONE BODY with MANY MEMBERS.

Romans 12:4-5 (ESV)

⁴ For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

The Body of Christ is one of many metaphors that describes the church. We are the family of God, the household of faith, the bride of Christ, and so on.

The Body metaphor is used most often in the NT. One body, many members. Every part of the body has a function. Every part plays a role.

1 Corinthians 12:14-18 (ESV)

For the body does not consist of one member but of many. ¹⁵ If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? ¹⁸ But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose.

If you are a believer, you are a part of the Body of Christ. You are not separate from the body, but a part of it.

The NT gives different categories or listings of the various gifts which the LORD has given to the church.

Ephesians 4:11-16 (ESV)

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴ so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

The different parts of the body are not in competition, but they are to complement one another. And they are to do so in love. If the Body of Christ is functioning the way its design to, that's what you're going to see.

People serving one another in love, growing in grace, for the building up of the Body. Every part is significant.

1 Corinthians 12:21-26 (ESV)

The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." ²² On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³ and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, ²⁴ which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, ²⁵ that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶ If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

I think the strength of a church is how the members honor one another; especially the weaker parts being treated as indispensable.

I can't tell you how much it's meant to our family how this congregation over the years has shown such kindness to our special needs child. She is fully involved in the life of the church, and she knows that she is loved.

Secondly, like any other church, we seem to attract our fair share of needy people; some excessively needy. We're at our best when we show grace those who may be struggling.

There is one body, and many members. We don't all have the same function. Our teachers who love doctrine, need to be patient with those who are less incline to the study of theology.

Our workers who labor behind the scenes, need to remember that they're serving the LORD (not men) so that they don't get resentful.

That takes us to our final part deals with JOYFUL SERVICE THROUGH CHRIST.

Romans 12:6-10 (ESV)

⁶ Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷ if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸ the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. ⁹ Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. ¹⁰ Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.

If there is to be any competition in the Body of Christ, may it be in this: Outdo one another in showing honor. This is where the joy comes from. This is where Christ is displayed.

Though He was rich, He became poor, that we may gain His riches. He left the glory of heaven to dwell among us. He came unto His own, even when His own received Him not.

Though He was fully God, He didn't count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant.

He washed the feet of his disciples. He associated with those who were considered to be outcasts. He was a friend to sinners, and He showed compassion to those who were hurting.

Most of all, He exchanged our sin for His righteousness. He submitted Himself to the cross and to the wrath of God so that we might be received by His Father.

The greatest gift that anyone could give is the gift of themselves. That's what JESUS did. His sacrifice led to His death on the cross.

Now we are to be living sacrifices; holy and pleasing to God which is our spiritual act of worship. What we offer in service is done in joy and with gratitude.

Romans 12:11-13

¹¹ Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹² Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. ¹³ Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

When you are serving the LORD, your joy will come when the spirit of Christ is displayed.

- When you put the needs of others in front of your own needs.
- When you show grace to those who may not deserve it.
- When you pray for those you could easily have contempt for.

In the end, it's not about all the work that you've done or all the accomplishments that you've achieved.

It's about knowing the One who did what we could never do and accomplished what we could never have achieved.

JESUS gave us the greatest of all gifts; the giving of His life so that we might receive the gift of eternal life.

Have you received that gift? If you have, then how are you showing your gratitude for it?

