

## PROVIDENCE CHURCH

*Glorifying God by knowing, living and proclaiming His truth in the world*

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### **How People Change – Part III**

**Pastor Ty Blackburn**

**Romans 12:3-10**

**January 17, 2016**

Please turn with me in your Bibles to the 12<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Romans. We're going to be in this chapter, I think today will be our last time here. We began looking at this passage a couple weeks ago under really asking the question, why don't we change? On a New Year's emphasis, we're looking at a topical series of how people change. That's actually the title of the message, is *How People Change*. This is Part III. But I asked the question, why don't Christians change? Why don't those who profess to be believers change? We've seen that sometimes Christians, those who profess to be Christians, don't change because they're not truly believers, not been born again. There's no true spiritual life in them. Where there is life there will be evidence of it. But at the same time, those who possess genuine life sometimes don't change. We don't change because we're not following God's blueprint for how to change, His plan that He lays out in His word for how we are to change more and more into the likeness of Jesus, how we're to grow spiritually, how we're to be sanctified.

We're really talking about a theology of that word *sanctification*. Sanctification is the progressive growth in godliness of the believer, where little by little, year by year, you put off more and more sin, and you put on more and more likeness to Jesus. How does that happen? That's the question we're asking. How does that happen? Romans 12 lays out for us something of a blueprint. Real change in the words of the text, transformation, to be transformed, we've said in the last two messages that for real transformation to happen, a believer must understand who he is. That's what we looked at two weeks ago.

The Christian, according to the image here, is a priest. He's one whose business is to offer sacrifices. And so you understand who you are You're a priest. And what are you called to do then? A priest is called to offer sacrifices, that is, to live a life of worship. One of the reasons we don't change is because we forget that our business is to worship. It is to lift up the glory of God every day, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. That's what we're called to do, to stop worshiping the creature, and to worship the Creator who is blessed forever, to turn away from all of the things, the idols in our hearts, and to from the very depth of our soul, turn from those things and to true worship of the Lord Jesus Christ. And that's really the root of sanctification is it happens at that level.

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We grow. We overcome real sin patterns by changing at the level of heart worship. We turn from being controlled, for example, by anxiety or fear, by turning from the idol that we worship. Maybe it's control. We want to have control of our lives, and we realize finally we worship God. "You are in control. I am not in control." And that's the root and foundation of real life change, so that you're no longer controlled by fear. So transformation happens when a believer sees who he is, that he's a priest, and what he's been called to do, that is, to worship and to offer sacrifices, to die to the former ways of living, and to live for the glory of God.

Then we said last time, we looked at how real change happens also when we see that we're called to worship, and we understand how to do it. How does that transformation happen? How does it happen that we turn from false worship to true worship? It happens through the renewing of the mind. It happens through the power of the word. I want to ask a fourth question. We talked about: *Who? What? How?* Today we're going to ask: Where does this happen? Where does the believer really continue to remember who he is, what he's been called to do—to turn from false worship to true worship, and to do that by being renewed in the spirit of his mind, being transformed by the renewing of his mind—where does that happen?

I think in the flow of thought, we're going to see today that where it happens, where are we sanctified, is in a phrase *in the church*. When I say in the church, I don't mean a building. It's not in the building. It's not even in a group of programs. That's not what the church is in the New Testament. The church is never a building, a physical, literal building. It is a spiritual building made up of people. The church is really the word in the Greek, ἐκκλησία (ekklésia), the called out ones, the assembly of people who have been called out of the world, who gather together and form a fellowship, a communion of saints.

So where does sanctification happen? It happens in the church. Real change happens when we are living in dynamic relationships with the people of God. So you can ask yourself, "Why am I not changing? Why am I not growing?" Well, perhaps you've forgotten who you are, that you're a priest. Why are you not changing? Perhaps you've forgotten what you're called to do. You're called to worship God, to turn from false worship to true worship. Why are you not changing? Perhaps you've forgotten the means of change, how you're to change. It's the word of God. Why are you not changing? Perhaps you've forgotten where you're to seek change, among the people of God.

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Let's read Romans 12:1-10, and we'll see that Paul basically, as he unfolds for us the picture of what He's called us to do, he moves directly into *where* beginning with Verse 3. Let's start at Verse 1 or Romans 12:1-10.

### ***Romans 12:1-10***

***Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. 3 For through the grace given to me I say to everyone 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. 6 Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to 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. 9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. 10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;***

Let's pray together...

*Our Father, we ask that the Spirit of God might open the minds of our hearts, that You might open for us the word. Grant us light, and in Your light might we see light, and might we be more like Your Son. We pray in His Name, Amen.*

Where does change happen? It happens in the church, that is, in the assembly of believers. It happens among God's people. Paul Tripp and Tim Lane, in their book *How People Change*, the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter of the book *How People Change*, this is the title of the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter. *Change is a Community Project*. It's sort of like it takes a village. It really does when it comes to a Christian. I hadn't thought about this in a while, and it wasn't in my notes, but Hillary Clinton's book from years ago, *It Takes a Village to Raise a Child*, or whatever. No, it takes parents, but it does help

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to have a community of believers around them. It doesn't take a bunch of godless social engineers to raise a child. Anyway, that's enough on that.

How people change, change is a community project though, and the more you look at the New Testament, the more you see this, that we are to be in relationship. One of the key phrases in the New Testament is the phrase *one another*. It happens numerous times, but about 47 or 48 in my latest count, depending on exactly how you divide it up. Basically, I'm talking about 47 or 48 times that the New Testament says to us *love one another*. It uses the phrase *one another* in terms of instructing us. To be a Christian, you need to love one another. In Romans itself in Verse 10 of the passage we just read:

***Romans 12:10 ~ Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;***

You'll find in Romans 13:8, *...love one another...* In Romans 15:7, *...accept one another...* In Romans 15:14, *...admonish one another*. Throughout the New Testament you'll find things like *encourage one another*, *build one another up*, *confess your sins to one another*. It pictures the Christian life as lived in close community with other believers, in intimate relationships, intentional relationships, and you see it in the *one anothers*. You also see it in the second person plural pronouns and verbs. This is something that we lost actually quite a bit when we went from the King James to modern English, the difference between *thou* and *ye*, or as we say in the south, *you* and *y'all*, you plural versus you singular. In fact, Romans 12:1-2, if you read it correctly with the number, the person and number in your pronouns or your verbs, this is what it says literally:

***Romans 12:1 ~ Therefore I urge you all, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present all of your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is the spiritual worship you all ought to be involved in. 2 And you all need to not be conformed to this world, and you all need to be transformed by the renewing of all of your minds, so that you all may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.***

Do you see that? *All* is plural. So the transformation of us seeing ourselves as priests, we're to help each other in the process. We're to help each other in offering sacrifices and worshipping correctly, and you see it even more clearly when you see what he does from Verses 3 to 8. The apostle Paul is helping us to walk out our faith. Remember that Romans is like Ephesians we read a moment ago.

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In Ephesians you have the doctrinal section in Chapters 1 to 3, the theology of all that Christ has done for us in saving us. And then remember we read Ephesians 4:1-16. Chapter 4 turns the corner to now taking our theology and our doctrine and turning it into practice in our life. Ephesians 4:1 says:

***Ephesians 4:1 ~ Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called,...***

“Based on all that I’ve said before, therefore, this is what you’re to do to walk it out.” Romans 1-11 is doctrinal theological, and Romans 12-16 are practical. So here Paul again is turning from theology to the practice of our lives. How do you live the Christian life? You see the *therefore*. “Therefore, in light of all that I’ve told you about the mercies of God in the first 11 chapters, I urge all of you brothers to present your bodies a living sacrifice.” So he’s telling us the way that we live out the Christian life is to see who we are, what we’re called to do, how we’re called to do it, transforming our minds, but then where? Because this is what happens in Verses 3 and following. He begins to focus more explicitly on our relationships to one another. Change is something God intends for us to experience together, Tripp and Lane write in their book as well.

Now, look with me at Verse 2 and watch the transition from Verse 2 to Verse 3. He’s saying, “How are you going to stop worshiping the wrong things and worship the right things? You need to have your minds renewed.” The problem that you and I have is we have a problem in our thinking as Christians. We have imbibed the ideas of the world. The world, and the flesh, and the devil have programmed us, and it’s like a computer with bad programming. We need to isolate those things and remove them, and replace them with right thinking. We have a thinking problem. *As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he*. So he says what needs to happen is the transforming of your mind. And then what does he do in Verse 3? It’s about your thinking. Look in Verse 3 how the flow of thought continues to focus on that.

***Romans 12:3 ~ For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment,...***

The word *sound judgment* literally in the Greek, the word *think* is the word φρονέω (phroneó), and the word *sound judgment* is σωφρόνως (sóphronós). It’s a prefix which means *sound* in front of the same word. So it really says, “I want you not to

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think more highly of yourself than you ought to think, but to think so as to have sound thinking.” I think thinking is on his mind four times in that verse.

He said, “Listen, you need to have your mind renewed, and let me talk about where we’re going to start on this.” The problem that we have is we think way too highly of ourselves. The most pervasive and most destructive thinking problem we have is pride. We all naturally think too highly of ourselves, and that’s why Paul says, “Listen, we need to start here.” How do you attack this fundamental root problem of pride? This is really the dominant issue of the whole chapter, this idea of thinking, and getting your thinking right, and laying down your pride. The only way you’re going to change is by repenting at the heart level of pride and turning to trust in Christ. In Verse 3 you have that think, think, think, think, right? Look at Verse 16:

***Romans 12:16 ~ Be of the same mind toward one another;...***

The word *mind* here is the same root word as *think*. It’s just the noun here.

***Romans 12:16 ~ Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.***

The word *haughty* and the word *mind*, ***Be of the same mind,...*** then ***...do not be haughty in mind,...*** and ***Do not be wise...*** all three are the same word as in Verse 3. It’s your thinking. But you see that the issue is pride. Our problem is we tend to be haughty in mind. We tend to be wise in our own estimation.

Spurgeon has said that pride is the firstborn child of hell. The first thing that hell did once it came into existence was to beget pride. That’s what Satan is. He is the essence of pride, and that’s how he led man into sin. The essence of man’s sin, Eve’s sin, was pride. She wanted to be like God. Spurgeon also says it’s the first sin to enter man’s heart at conception, and it will be the last to leave when he lies in the grave. Pride. The Scripture pictures us as people whose biggest problem is that we think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. That’s the malady that we have, and the treatment, where do you go for treatment? How do you overcome pride? There’s no way to overcome pride without going to the treatment center of the body of Christ, living in relationship with other believers who Jesus has brought to Himself. They are God’s gift to you and me to help us put down our pride, and he deals with this in these verses. How am I going to change the way I think? I think too highly of myself, he says in Verse 3. I tend to have a haughty

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mind and to be wise in my estimation, Verse 16. What's the answer to those things? The answer is to see myself rightly related to the body. That's what he does in Verses 4 to 8.

“Hey listen, think of yourself to have sound judgment. See yourself as one member of the body, to see yourself as one gift among a group of gifts.” That's what he's doing in this passage. What I want us to do in the time that we have remaining, I want us to talk about four things we need to change about the way we think, four points. Each of them are going to be *I need to change the way I think about something*. The first is *I need to change the way I think about myself*.

### 1) I Need to Change the Way I Think About Myself:

That's the first point here in this passage. He says in Verse 3:

***Romans 12:3 ~ For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think;***

The word here *think highly* is actually the combination of the word φρονέω (phroneō) with the prefix ὑπέρ (hyper), which we would transliterate *hyper*. So it's ὑπερφρονέω (hyperphroneō). The prefix *hyper* means *over, above, and beyond*. So it means to think over and above and beyond about myself, about yourself. He says, “Stop thinking over and above and beyond about yourself. Stop overestimating your own value.” He goes on to say, “But what I want you to do is to think so as to have sound judgment.”

***Romans 12:3 ~ ...but to think so as to have sound judgment,...***

Remember I mentioned sound thinking. The word sound thinking I mentioned is a prefix *so* in front of the word φρονέω (phroneō), and that prefix *so* in front of it means in the Greek *to be sound, to be in your right mind*. It's like when somebody writes their will. They say, “I being of sound mind...” and then, “...this is what I've decided.” And if you're not of sound mind, it doesn't count. You have to be of sound mind to then have it legally stand, right? He's saying our problem is we tend not to have sound minds. He's saying that to not think correctly about myself is to be functionally insane. And the question of whether or not you're insane is how highly do you value the body of Christ? Not theoretically, but practically, and I would suggest to you that we all tend to be insane in this area. I think the text suggests that. I confess that as a pastor through the years, you would think that I

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would have a very high view of the body of Christ. It's my life's work, but I find continually again and again that the Lord is continuing to lift up in my estimation my view of the church. I tend to have too low a view of the church, but the church is precious to God. It is that which He purchased with His own blood, according to Acts 20. The blood of God purchased the church.

I need to change the way I think about myself, and the only way I can do that is to have a right view of the church, because evidence of my wrong thinking about myself is my wrong thinking about the church. I think my pride consists chiefly of this—I think I'm okay on my own. I grossly underestimate how much I need the body of Christ. Now, we know that there are some people we see this obviously in. A lot of people who profess to be Christians say, "I don't need to go to church. I don't need organized religion." Maybe they've been around bad organized religion, and they're just reacting to that, but some folks that have been exposed to good churches, they come up with this idea. Where does that come from? It comes from pride. It comes from appalling arrogance and confusion. But the same thing that's maybe true of those who say, "I don't need the church," is also true of us, and it's even worse in here.

When we don't really invest the time that we need to in relationships with others in the body, we're having too high a view of ourselves. That's why we don't think we need to. We don't see it as urgent as it is. The reality is I will never become what God wants me to become that I want to be myself in my noblest desires to be like Christ—I will never reach that without a living and dynamic relationship with the church. Look how we see ourselves wrongly. He tries to correct our view. There are several key words in the passage as we look at it. We're to think so as to have sound judgment, Verse 3:

***Romans 12:3 ~ ... as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.***

There are two key words in that verse that I want us to focus on for a moment, *allotted* and *measure*. The picture just kind of begins to unfold as you look carefully at what he's saying. If you want to think rightly, you have to see, wait a minute. God has allotted to each one in His body a measure. Allotted means to divide into parts. He's taken His grace and He's divided it into parts. He's given you a part, and He's given you a part, and He's given me a part, and He's given you a part, but He's not given all of it to any of us. And our tendency is to overestimate the value of our part, and to think that we can do something worthwhile on our own.



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One of Patti's favorite desserts that I love that she makes is a buttermilk chess pie, and one of the things about it—I've helped her with it some, so I remember the measurements. I'm pretty good with numbers, and so 2/3 of a cup of buttermilk is in that buttermilk chess pie. There's a lot of other stuff in it too. There are a couple cups of sugar almost. We usually cut it a little short of that. There are five eggs and some butter. I don't know, something else maybe, but that's the main stuff, and how can you go wrong? A whole stick of butter. Are we ready to eat? So this buttermilk chess pie, but really I think a key ingredient according to the recipes and what she's read, is it's the buttermilk. Think about how proud the buttermilk can be. "I am what makes the pie. I am 2/3 of a cup of buttermilk. You butter and sugar, y'all are alright, but without me you are not a chess pie." So if the buttermilk cuts itself off from the flour, and the sugar, and the eggs, and etc, what is the buttermilk worth? Put that buttermilk in that pan and stick it in the oven at 350 for 45 minutes and see what you have. Do you want to eat it?

In the same way, the Lord has portioned out to each one of us part of the recipe. We're only a part. We do not have the whole, and our part without the other parts is as worthless as that buttermilk in the pie pan. We cannot be what we're called to be without our brothers and sisters. And Paul uses the image that he uses a number of other places here, in Verse 4. The word picture is the members of the body.

***Romans 12:4 ~ 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.***

The word *member* there could be translated just as *body part*. "For just as we all have many body parts in one body and all the body parts do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually body parts one of another." That's an even more kind of graphic picture. You think about how important the various parts of your body are, and what you'd do without certain things. As you get older, some of these things don't work as well and you start realizing how necessary that was to have knees that don't hurt. It was really good. I never realized how good I had it. Some of you have that a lot worse. I don't really have that problem so much, but other things hurt. Things don't work like they used to. But imagine that you have a body part that gets a little inflated in itself, say the big toe. The big toe is actually a lot more important than you think. Try to live without one and you can't walk.

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So the big toe can think, “I am the king of the foot. Nothing happens without me. I’m so tired of dealing with these other guys over here. I mean, what’s the pinky toe? What’s he really contributing? I don’t like what he’s giving.” He doesn’t realize that the pinky toe is helping out too. I was thinking about this yesterday. I was walking around my house actually thinking about my toes. It’s something you never think about. I was feeling it, “Wow, what would I do without those last two toes?” I think I’d be tempted to fall over. But the big toe, back to the big toe. He says, “I’m the king of the feet, and I think I’m going to go out on my own.”

It’s kind of like a music group where the guy goes out on his own and cuts some records. What’s the big toe like separated from the foot? He’s over there on the ground in a little pool of blood. “Look at me! Check me out!” That’s really how we can live. “I’m okay. I don’t need to be around the body that much. I can come to church and just be there for the worship service and not really get to know people.” What we’re doing is we’re trying to live the Christian life in a way that is insane, according to this. We are not having sound thinking. We are not of sound mind, according to God. We need to be in living, dynamic relationships with one another, and when that happens and we see ourselves in need of that, our value is found in that organic connection. Then we really find the value that we have, the true value, not a false value we make up in our own minds, but the real value God has made us for. It comes as we submit to His plan and we serve His body. Now, change the way I think about myself, that’s the first thing. The second is closely related to it, but it’s important. It’s the other side of it.

### 2) Change the Way I See Others in the Body:

I’ve already hinted at this. I need to realize I need them. You need to see how much you need other believers. It’s interesting as he goes on in Verses 6 and following, he introduces seven spiritual gifts.

***Romans 12:6 ~ Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to 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.***

He introduces seven gifts, and the idea as you look at this is that he’s assuming one gift per person, in a sense. The one who has service is serving. I think that’s

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probably accurate. There's not a lot of description here. There are other spiritual gifts in other places, but this seems to be what some people have called motivational gifts, and we each have one dominant motivational gift. It's one or the other, and we're supposed to exercise that for the benefit of the body for the glory of God. So basically no matter what you have, you have one seventh of what you need. You need more than that, but you're missing a full six sevenths. Even if all of you with the gift of a particular gift, all of the folks with giving, if they got together, if all the big toes had a gathering, "We're going out on our own because all these other people don't give like they ought to give," and so they'd only have one seventh of what they need. We need the other six sevenths. It's 85%, basically. You're missing 85% or 84%. You've got 16%. So we need others desperately. In fact, if we look at it correctly, they are gifts. I should see other members of the body as gifts to me. In Verse 6 he says:

***Romans 12:6 ~ ...we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us,...***

So they're gifts of grace. You are a gift. You are an expression of God's grace to every other believer, and every believer should see every other Christian as that. You are a gift, an expression of God's grace to me, and we should be grateful. I need you and God knew that I needed you, and you're exactly what I need. And even the weaknesses that we have are expressions of God's grace and His giving heart to us. There's nothing that pulls out of me my need of sanctification like encountering something that I find difficult. And when we're in a relationship, we all have sin. It's the same thing for you. If you see in me my flaw, my sin in some way, it gives you an opportunity to see your own, and even that's God's gift, His sanctifying, iron sharpening iron. So the way we should see others in the body is I need you in my life. I desperately need you. Thirdly, not just change the way I think about myself, not just change the way I see others in the body, but I need to change the way I see my role in the body, my responsibility, you could say, but we'll say role.

### 3) I Need to Change the Way I See My Role in the Body:

I think for us as American Christians, we need to understand that my role in the body is not as a consumer. This is something that we catch a whole lot more than we realize. We have a consumer mindset. This is why people leave one church and go to another, often. Basically it's kind of like leaving AT&T and going to Sprint, or going to Verizon. "They have better coverage, and so I left AT&T and I went to

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Verizon.” Well, that’s okay in the business world to make a decision like that, but that’s not how you look at the church. That’s not the way we are called to look at the church when we are parts of a body. We’re not a consumer. We’re not looking for, “Give me your full menu of services that you offer. No, I’m going to go over there.” That’s not the way we’re to see who we are in Christ. We’re not consumers.

Secondly, we’re not critics. We’re not to sit around and criticize all that we see wrong. That’s not our role, to just look for what’s wrong and focus on it, ruminate on it, talk about it, and complain about it. We’re not consumers and we’re not critics. What are we? We’re servants. We’re slaves of Jesus Christ. To use the biblical term, we’re slaves. We belong to Him, and we are to do His will. He’s placed us in His body as He chooses. He’s given us the gifts He’s chosen. We don’t choose our gifts. We don’t get to say, “Lord, I want this gift.” We might say we want it, but He’s already given us the gift He wants us to have. The Holy Spirit, we’re told in 1 Corinthians 12, gives gifts as He chooses. So what are we to do?

Our role is not a consumer, not a critic, but our role is a servant. I’m to use my gift. The way that I can go about being changed is I enter into relationship and I use my gifts. I realize that I need the body. I need every other believer, because I don’t have what I need. If your gift is mercy, you don’t have the full understanding of giving that you need. If my gift is exhortation, I don’t understand all the implications of leadership that I need. And the goal really is to be like Jesus who is the perfect embodiment of all the gifts. So you can think, “I have a head start in one seventh of the areas, and I need a whole lot of help to get up to speed in all of the other six areas.” But how do you do it? You don’t go as a consumer just wanting to get. What you do is you follow Jesus and you go giving whatever your gift is. You go prophesying, or you go teaching, or you go serving, or you go giving. You give your gifts. You use your gifts, and as you do that, what happens is as you go ministering to others, the Lord is going to use that to make you individually more like Jesus, and He’s going to use that to make the whole body grow up into Christ-likeness. That’s what Ephesians 4 was talking about. We grow until we all attain the unity of the faith to the full measure of the stature of Christ.

People when they come and are around the body of Christ, if somebody were to visit our church today and come back five years from now, and they spent enough time each time to be around us, they should ideally sense in five years that we have grown more like Jesus corporately. That’s the goal that we’re to have. Now, you say, “I don’t know what my gift is.” That’s a good point. How can you exercise your gift if you don’t know what it is? You may have seen spiritual gifts tests.

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There can be some value in that, but I don't think that's really the way to go. It maybe be of some help. How do you find out what your gift is? You get next to people, you love Jesus, you prayerfully engage in relationship, and you see what needs you notice. You even see what things irritate you. You see what things move your heart, and then you serve that. You meet that need.

You're not a critic. You're not looking around making a list of things that are wrong. "I can't believe this church. Look at this. Look at this. Look at this. Look at this." No, the very fact that you've seen something means you're supposed to be serving. That's that the Spirit is doing in His body when we are abiding in Christ. But see, the neat thing is He's given one seventh of us the ability to do some things that the other six sevenths can't do or they can't even see it, sometimes. So if they wait on us to do it, it'll never get done, because we're happy with it as it is. We don't see that problem over there. It's amazing. I remember hearing an illustration one time about these gifts. It was a helpful illustration, so I'll use it. It was if you're at a dinner party and someone's bringing the main dish in, and all seven gifts are around the table, the person that's bringing the food in, we don't know what their spiritual gift is. That's irrelevant. There are seven people around them. So there are eight people at dinner, and the eighth person is bringing the food in and they drop the dish. You watch the seven people walking in the Spirit, what they do, what they see.

One person says, "You need to be more careful when you carry that. I can see you weren't being careful." It's probably prophecy. Another person says, "You know, I think the problem was you had too much weight on that side of the plate. You need to be more balanced in the way you carry that." That's teaching. Exhortation is like, "Hey, it's okay. We can do something else. Don't worry about this. Be encouraged." Administration says, "Bill, get the mop. Sally, get the broom. John, call for pizza." Service is already down and he's cleaned up half of it already. Giving says, "I'll be happy to pay for the pizza." Mercy is holding the person and supporting them. "I'm so sorry. I know you feel terrible. It's okay. Here, cry on my shoulder." But seriously, you see how we're oriented to see different angles, and now does it make sense for the person who sees that everything needs to be done a certain way, the administrative person, or the person that sees things from a service standpoint, should they be irritated that nobody else is on the floor on their hands and knees like they are, already cleaning it? No, just serve. Do what you're called to do.

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Now listen, what's going to happen, this is the beauty of it, that when we walk in the Spirit, my gift may be teaching, but as I see the person on their knees already cleaning up the mess, I'm convicted and moved. I want to be more like that. We learn from one another, and there's a sense in which we're saying to one another as we serve together, as we just deal with the issues of life together, we're saying, "Follow me as I follow Christ." He was the most humble, wonderful Servant that ever walked the face of the earth. He was the most righteous teacher that saw truth and error and called it out prophetically. He was the great Prophet. Was there ever a teacher like Jesus? Was there ever an encourager like Jesus? Was there ever someone who understands and meets the woeful heart like the Lord Jesus Christ, full of mercy and compassion, a High Priest who sympathizes with us in our weakness? Who ever gave more than Jesus? Who shepherds and leads better than Jesus?

So all of the gifts are God's gift to us to help us follow Jesus. So we're to stop complaining that other people aren't like us, and realize this is exactly what God intended, and just do my part, and I will help others follow me as I follow Jesus, and I will follow them as they follow Jesus. My role is to serve, and just being with people is the best way to find out what your gift is. Love God, keep growing in grace, be around and see needs, and when you see a need, see what you can do to meet it. Maybe you want to do something but you can't do it yet, because nobody will get out of the way. Well, don't be discouraged, just share the desire.

There are things that will get done by this church through the years because you see something and you bring it up, that will never get done if you don't see it and bring it up. Now, let me tell you something. There are many times you're going to bring something up and it's not going to get done. Just get ready. Does God ever do things like one time you bring it up and you finished it? The Lord always takes us on a journey, so be patient with it. That's why he goes on to say things like, "Be devoted to one another in love. Give preference to one another in honor, in Verse 10, rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer. Just keep on keeping on, loving one another, and praising God that He is working all of this to His glorious purpose.

We change the way I think about myself first, change the way I see others in the body, and thirdly, change the way I see my role in the body, and finally, change the way I see sanctification, what God's doing in my life.

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### 4) I Need to Change the Way I See Sanctification:

Changing the way I see sanctification is a community process, a community project. If I'm going to grow to be what God wants me to be this next year, I need to be more committed to relationships in the body of Christ. The process is a community project, and the goal is a corporate goal as well as an individual goal. Individually I want to be more like Jesus, but I ought to, if I'm thinking biblically, if I'm thinking with a sound mind, I ought to want my brothers and sisters to be more like Jesus individually, and I ought to want the whole body to look more like Jesus at the end of this next year. And I ought to be praying and laboring in all of those hopes and dreams. And when that happens, people see the Gospel lived out. And like I said, who has given more than Jesus? Who has loved more than Jesus? This is how we know what love is. Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. He bled and died in our place. He gave everything so that we could be saved.

When you and I love one another, and when we appreciate one another, when we give preference to one another in honor, when we're devoted to one another in brotherly love, when we're willing to keep working at things when it doesn't work out, "I see this, you don't see this," we talk about it, we work through it, we keep at it, we keep loving one another, we keep pursuing peace, then God is doing something every step of the way deep down in our souls. It's not surface change. Real deep change happens in relationship. That's why he went in Verses 3 to 8 immediately to the body. If you're going to be transformed, you've got to be in relationship, and what an exciting thing. It would be easier if it was just on our own. I mean, some of us are extroverts. We like to be around people all the time, and that's just our disposition, or sort of our orientation, perhaps inherited, and perhaps learned. Some of us are more introverted. You think what you would prefer to do if you had a couple hours? Would you prefer to be by yourself or just with your family, or would you prefer to be at a big party? It kind of helps you think about your orientation. But ultimately it doesn't really matter what you prefer. It matters what Jesus has called you to do.

I was sharing with some ministers the other day. We were talking about our gifts, and one of the guys mentioned—it was neat, because he's a really warm, loving pastor. He's a little older than me, and we were talking about this kind of stuff, and I forget how we were talking about it, but he brought up that he's more of an introvert, which I thought that was surprising that he would say that, because he doesn't seem like an introvert to me at all. He said he went to Georgia Tech and so he's an engineer, and he worked in electronics, and he said there's nothing like

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being around a bunch of electrical engineers, that they never talk to each other, just get the job done. But he said when he saw the commands of the Gospel, he saw, “I’ve got to be involved in people’s lives. I have to get outside of what I want to do, and do what Christ has called me to do,” and now I can say that man does not come across as an introvert. He looks more like Jesus.

But there are good things about being not too extroverted. Some people who are extroverted just live on the surface, right? They kind of flit around, like hey over here, and hey over here, and they never get anywhere deep. Well, they learn from the folks that are more thoughtful, and then they can be quiet and listen. We’ve all got to learn from each other. It’s just a wonderful thing to see that God is at work in us. The work which He’s begun, He will complete until the day of Christ Jesus. He’s committed to that. But you and I are to cooperate with Him in the process.

We have the joy of realizing and being reminded by the word on a daily basis, “I’m called to worship You. I’m called to give You glory. I’m called to lay down my life for You,” and one of the best places to see that I need to lay down my life, really the only place, is in relationship. That’s where the rub comes. It’s when we have relationships, and conflicts, and difficulties. Lay it down and worship Jesus Christ, and let us all become more like Him. How people change is people change as God works in us, to change the way we think about ourselves, the way we think about others in the body, the way we think about our role in responsibility, and the way we think about the goal of sanctification. May God help us become more like Jesus.

Let’s pray together...

*Our Father, we marvel at Your wisdom and the perfection of Your plan. It’s so striking how we understand the way that You have put together Your plan of salvation, how You bring people from darkness to light, and how You keep transforming us into the image of Your Son. Things are so counterintuitive to the way we would think of them. We think, Lord, if we have to have a renewed mind, we need to be off by ourselves continually studying the Bible. And of course, we do need to have time like that, but how that change really happens is as we’re serving one another, relating to one another. We just praise You that Your word is perfect. We praise You that Your plan is perfect. We praise You that Your grace is sufficient, and we praise You that Your Son is a faithful and good Shepherd, and that as we follow Him, He will lead us all the way home. As we set our eyes*



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*together as a group, Lord, we pray that You would help us at Providence to become more of a body, to have this kind of mindset, and concern, and compassion for one another, that we each would begin to do our part by Your grace, and that as we follow Jesus, that in 2017 a year from now, we as a body would look so much more like our Savior. Lord, we thank You that it's Your will that that happen, and we just fervently ask You to accomplish Your will in our lives, and we ask this in Jesus' Name, Amen.*

“How People Change – Part III”

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