

04. The Motivation Gift of Serving

Spiritual Gifts—God's Way

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Bible Text: Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12

Preached on: Sunday, March 13, 2011

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We are going to look again at Romans chapter 12 as we continue to look at the subject of spiritual gifts, so if you want to turn over there we will read a little bit of Romans chapter 12 again. And we are going to talk about today the motivation gift of serving as demonstrated in the life of Timothy.

So Romans chapter 12 beginning at verse six it says, “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith.”¹ And that was the gift that we covered last week.

And this week it says, “Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering.”²

And, by the way, I want to commend all of you for managing to get the time change right and get here early and deserve some kind of a special medal for that.

But let's look at Timothy and, just by way of review, let me talk about the different types of spiritual gifts once again for those of you who maybe weren't with us the last three lessons.

Scripture uses some different Greek words to talk about the different kinds of spiritual gifts. And so in Romans 12 we have a list that is the Greek word *χαρισμα* (khar'-is-mah) and these are the motivation gifts. They are listed for us in Romans 12. And then we have the ministry gifts. These are listed for us in Ephesians four. That is the Greek word *διακονια* (dee-ak-on-ee'-ah) from which we get deacon. It means a servant. So this is some... there are opportunities for service within the church. And in Ephesians four these are ministry opportunities given in the church.

And then in 1 Corinthians 12 we have the manifestation gifts. There is a couple of different Greek words for this *φανερωσις* (fan-er'-o-sis) which means revelation or manifestation is one of these words and *ενεργεια* (en-erg'-i-a) which means the energizing or the effect that a gift has. And then I created a fourth category. Those are all

¹ Romans 12:6.

² Romans 12:7.

the Greek words, but in 1 Peter chapter four it actually lists hospitality as a spiritual gift which I think is kind of cool. And we are all to practice the gift of hospitality.

Now the fascinating thing about these gifts is I believe that God would not have used different Greek words for the different kinds of spiritual gifts unless the different lists were different things, you know? Why didn't he just... you know? And everything I have read on spiritual gifts lumps them into two categories. There is the spoken gifts and the non spoken gifts or there is the visible gifts and kind of the behind the scenes gifts. It is always like that. And I have seen very few people that look at the Greek words and say that, hey, God had different categories of gifts. And so in the motivation gifts there is the ones we are looking at and these are... and, by the way, it is easy to remember where these are. There is Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, 1 Peter four and Ephesians four. So if you remember 12 and four you can pretty well remember where all the lists are.

But motivation gifts are listed in Romans 12:3-9. When all the different Greek words, by the way, occur in 1 Corinthians 12 when he talks about the different kinds of gifts. Paul says we have got these diversities of operations. We have these ministries of the, you know, et cetera and he uses... in other word he... Paul says there is all these different kinds of spiritual gifts and he breaks them down for us. And yet nobody ever bothers doing anything with that breakdown.

Well, when in 1 Corinthians 12 and verse four when he says there are diversities of gifts, this is this word χαρισμα (khar'-is-mah), unfortunately it has gotten a kind of a bad rap because a lot of people associate it with charismatics and think, "Oh, well, that means speaking in tongues." That has nothing to do with it whatsoever. It means that it is the idea of a grace gift. It is a gift given by the grace of God.

Now every believer has one of these. It tells us in 1 Corinthians 12 that God gives to each one severally as he will which means he gives each believer one of these things and that is what that King James language means for us. And these are the seven: prophecy, serving, teaching, exhorting, giving, organizing and mercy.

So we are taking them in the order in which they occur. So we are on the second gift here today which is serving.

Now the relationship between these three gifts is this way. God gives you a motivation gift. It is what drives you. It is what, you know, the things that irritate you that other Christians do, they irritate you because of your spiritual gift. I mean I have the gift of teaching. When people don't care about the meanings of the fact that God classified different categories of spiritual gift, that irritates me, you know. If I see someone teaching something that is inaccurate, that irritates me. Every time I hear that verse I was sharing with Gordon and Lisa a couple of weeks ago, you know. It says, "A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly,"³ and I preached that wrong for years, you know, saying, "Well, if you want to have friends you have got to be a friendly person."

³ Proverbs 18:24.

That is not what it says in the Hebrew. It says, “A man that wants, you know, kind of shallow acquaintances must be evil,” because then you will have all kind of people gather around the water cooler to listen to your dirty jokes and you will have all the wrong kind of people to talk to. But then it says, “And there is a friend...”⁴ and it uses a different Hebrew word for friend. It means a close, intimate companion that shares your heart. There is one that sticketh closer than a brother. And, of course, Christ is that. We have friends in Christ who are that, that are closer than blood relatives in many ways. And, you know, when I see things and when I find out I have been teaching something wrong like I preached that verse wrong for many years, that irritates me.

You know, if you are a prophet and you see someone who is being a hypocrite because they are saying one thing and they are living another thing, that is what irritates you. If you are a servant then what irritates you usually is that you see somebody need that needs to be met and nobody is doing anything about it, that kind of is what irritates you.

So we... the Christian has one God given motivation gift. Now God gives him an opportunity for serving in the church and so there are different roles in the church. There is pastors and teachers and there is apostles. There is evangelists. But there is opportunities for serving the ministry of the church and you... then when you use your motivation gift in the ministry of the church then God works a manifestation in those to whom he speaks. So it may be that if you are teaching in the role of a pastor and somebody hears something they have never understood from Scripture before and suddenly the light goes on in their head and they say, “Aha. Now I know what that means,” Well, they have just gotten what 1 Corinthians calls a word of knowledge. The word of knowledge is not the televangelist saying, “There is somebody out in the audience that has liver cancer. Put your hand on the screen right now. I am going to pray for you.” That is not the word of knowledge. The word of knowledge is understanding Scripture in a way you had not understood it before.

The word of wisdom is seeing how Scripture applies to your life in a way that you didn't understand it before. And so we need to understand these.

Well, we are going to look today mainly at the motivation gift of serving and the major irritation for people with this gift is if they say other Christians just don't show enough concern for practical needs. They see a practical need that basically is going unmet and that is what irritates them.

Now a little bit of an overview here. This is best illustrated in the life of Timothy and there is some guidelines. You may remember last week I said that each one of the gifts in Romans 12 has a special caution given for it and we will talk about these cautions in a minute, but for the gift of service it says you are to demonstrate kind affection, demonstrate brotherly love and honor others. So we will talk more about why God told the servant those three things.

⁴ Ibid.

The most important basic principle of servers is to get under proper scriptural authority. One of the reasons why servers can run themselves ragged. They see a need. They go meet it. They see someone else has got a need. They go meet it. And the fact is they can be so busy meeting the needs of all the people around them they can ignore the needs in their own family.

Now they will take care of the practical needs in their own family. They will take care of, you know, the thing that needs fixing in the kitchen or, you know, this, that or the other thing, but they might not take care of the emotional needs. They might not sit down with their kids and pray with them. And so you need an authority over a server who is wise enough to say, "You know what? You need to quit helping everybody else because we need some of your time to give us some spiritual insight or we need you to reconnect with your brothers and sisters. We need to get you back at the family."

So I have been using some little humorous illustrations so we will use these illustrations again. So here is a cartoon of a server at dinner. And, of course, this was the illustration that somebody comes and they dropped the desert on the floor. And when they do so, you know, the server says, "Oh, let me help you clean it up," because, you know, they see a need, something practical they can do. They want to go out and they want to grab it. They want to do that need. And that is the real motivation.

And then I gave the example of a server if he came to the hospital. He would say, "You know..." They would say, "Here is a little gift. I brought your mail in. I fed your dog. I watered your plants and washed your dishes." In other words, I did all these practical things to help you. And so that is kind of an illustration of kind of a humorous illustration on both of those.

And, again, the irritation that can kind of help you discover your spiritual gift, every one of the gifts is kind of irritated by a different thing. There is a number of responses. If you look at the response for the spiritual gift of service, it is that someone fails, someone fails to see or meet a practical need, to show true Christian concern. They see that there is something that needs meeting and nobody is meeting it.

So one other thing we looked at was the seven sense perceptors. I mentioned the fact that here are seven different kinds of nerve endings in the body and each one tackles a different thing.

Now it is interesting that Paul in 1 Corinthians 12 goes over and over and over again the fact that we are the body of Christ and bodies have nerve senses. You remember, last week we talked about the personal gift of prophecy. That was the heat sensor. You know, you get too close to the fire, something goes off in your nervous system and says, "You are about to be burned. Back off from that."

Well, the servant, he is like the gift of touch. If you ever notice that you can get just a little light touch and if a server responds to the light touch. I mean, all you have got to do to get a server's attention and tell him a need is just, you know, tap him on the shoulder

and say, “You know, I need some help with something.” Man, they are off to the races ready to help you.

And it is that light touch. And I remember a couple of weeks ago we were sitting in the floor in our great room and the girls were talking to me. We have girl talk every now and then late at night and I am pretty gifted at girl talk now after God giving me six of them. And so at one point, you know, one of the girls was trying to touch some hair on my air real lightly to see if I would notice it and I about whacked her.

And, you know, yeah, I noticed it. And so that is the way a server is. It only takes a light touch. They only need to be made aware of something and they are ready to do something about it. So it is a pretty amazing response.

And the slightest touch is registered by those perceptors sent to the brain of response. And normally when a person taps somebody else, he is usually trying to get their attention in order to have a need met and the server responds to that need.

All right. Let’s look at the characteristics of the server. And remember that I am going to talk about both positive and negative characteristics. If you don’t know what your spiritual gift is, you usually find it in the negative characteristics.

And, by the way, I had several people last week, you know, say, “Well, I am not sure after hearing that thing on prophet. Maybe I am a prophet. But, then again, maybe I just have a bad attitude, because the negative uses of a prophet can be very critical. So obviously a person with anger could maybe look at the misuses of prophecies. And think that maybe that is their gifts.

So what I would encourage you to do is listen to all seven weeks. And if you weren’t here, they are available on the internet so you can go listen to the last three weeks of lessons to kind of catch up to where we are so that you can make sure that you hear about the gift of prophecy. It is just... it is helpful for you to know not only what your spiritual gift is, but the spiritual gift of those people in your family because then you will know why they don’t see the world the way you do, you know. So it is helpful to know that.

So the first characteristic of the server is that the server sees and meet practical needs. There are things that are important to a server that may seem insignificant to the rest of us. There are things that are... catch their eye, that catch their attention and they are usually physical things. They are usually things that need to be done, usually things that you could do with you hands, but they know that by taking care of those things they are either alleviating a concern for someone else or that they are bringing encouragement to whoever receives it.

Now Paul told Timothy, he was constantly giving Timothy advice because Timothy would just wear himself out quite frankly. But Paul even mentions Timothy in Philippians.

He says, “For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state.”⁵

He says, “I don’t know anybody else I could send to you that would care for your practical needs as well as Timothy will.” That was Paul’s endorsement of Timothy.

Another characteristic of a server is that a server frees others to achieve. The server derives joy from knowing that his service is going to bring peace to somebody. It is going to take a load off of them. It is going to allow that person to be more productive in serving the Lord with whatever that person’s spiritual gift is.

In Philippians 2:22 Paul says that, “But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel.”⁶

So Timothy served Paul so that Paul could minister.

Now think about this for a minute. One of the things that Paul asked Timothy to do, one of his epistles, he says, “When you come, would you bring, you know, bring more pens. Bring more quill pens,” but also he says, “And bring my cloak also.”

In other words, it is cold here in this prison cell, could you bring my cloak?

You know, he knew that if anybody would remember something, a small practical thing, it would be Timothy. Now I wouldn’t remember to bring a coat. I already... since I have been standing up here remembered two things that I was supposed to bring today that I didn’t because nobody was around to remind me and it wasn’t on my radar, you know, this morning.

So Timothy would remember stuff like that. So the server frees others to achieve.

Another things servers do is they disregard personal weariness. They really even if they are tired, they can kind of put aside the fact that they feel tired because it is kind of like that this needs doing, you know. I have got to do this because this needs to be done and it helps somebody else and they are going to be exhausted, but they will do it anyway. And they will give up their own time very often their own money, their own strength, because they are focused on the importance of the task that has been begun.

And so the server derives joy from focusing on tasks that benefit other people. And so if it benefits others, they do that.

Another thing a server has and this is, you know, I guess it is a good quality in some ways. It can also be a dangerous quality in some ways is that they have trouble saying no. They have trouble saying no. It is kind of like if somebody asks for their help they immediately reply, maybe without thinking about ... or is that going to mean they give up family time? Does that mean that they have to break a promise to the kids that they had

⁵ Philippians 2:20.

⁶ Philippians 2:22.

already made because, you know, here is a need and I have got to take it. And so as a server meets one need, then others may say, "Well, I could use help with that, too," and, you know, it is something like somebody finds out the handyman is on the block or somebody finds out there is a woman that has a gift there, a knack for serving in a certain way and constantly everybody starts asking, you know. And, you know, there is just the demands come. I mean the whole world is looking for servants. They are awesome people to have around you.

And these requests are difficult to turn down because you almost feel obligated when somebody asks you. After all, they saw you do it over here and if you don't do it for this person when you did it for that person, what are they going to think, you know? And so you are kind of like, "Oh, I have got to help them. I have got to help them."

And so they have difficulty saying no.

Another thing is fascinating about servers is that they are... they have an enormous attention to likes and dislikes. They pay attention to what a person likes and what they don't like. And they notice things that nobody else very often even notices. It is kind of like when I had a server in the first church I pastored and I had just moved some things because I needed to move a table. And I put flowers on my desk and Miss Virginia noticed I had flowers on my desk. She assumed from that that I liked flowers. And so I always had a fresh flower arrangement on my desk after that because she noticed that the pastor had put flowers on his desk and, therefore, that meant he liked flowers. So I was going to have flowers all the time, you know?

And but, you know, it was amazing how alert she was to that. And they remember things like birthdays. They remember your favorite color. They remember, you know, that... which stuffed jalapeno happens to be your favorite, things like that. They know those things and they keep that kind of in a little mental record somewhere.

Another thing about servers is they need approval. You know, I think when a person pours so much out of themselves to help other people and they are constantly helping and they are constantly, you know, working to help other... they need somebody every once in a while to pat them on the back and say, "Thank you," or pat them on the back and say, "You did a good job."

I mean, that is the reward for what they do. They live for that in many respects. And they need that.

Now, by the way, Paul got a lot of encouragement from Timothy. If you just read 1 and 2 Timothy you could make a list of all the times that, you know, he calls him, you know, a faithful servant and he tells him, ok, now listen. You need to be an example to the believers in word and conversation and charity and spirit and fait and purity. You know, you need to be this example and you need to endure hardness as a good soldier. He needed some encouragement, but he also needed those little words of approbation, those pats on the back because they go the extra mile. I mean I had a deacon one time who not

only was a servant in the sense that he was a deacon, but he was a servant in the sense that was a spiritual gift. And I remember I had hernia surgery and some of you have identified... I know Linda, at least, can identify with this experience that you have surgery and then wonder later why you had it. And at least for a few days after hernia surgery I thought, "Why did I do this? It wasn't that bad before," because it hurt and I was laid up. I wasn't moving anywhere. I wasn't going anywhere.

But I had this deacon come over and this is an older retired man, but he just has... his whole life he has served others. And he has been on the go. He has constantly been working. Brother Cy Gary. And bother Cy came over and he got out the mower and he mowed my yard, front, side, back. But then he went the extra step. He edged, you know, which I don't edge every time, but he edged. And then he swept it, you know, one of those blowers, got rid of all... I mean and it looked like I had... and I think he even trimmed the hedge. You know, so it looked like that we had hired somebody professional to do it.

See, mowers... or servers go the extra step to do a complete job, a thorough job, to not only do it, but to make it look good as well because they are demonstrating that they are doing it for the Lord and that they want to really meet the needs of others in a quality way.

These are awesome people to have around, by the way.

The other... another characteristic of a server is that they meet needs quickly. They don't like red tape. They don't like to say no. Well, you know, you give them a job and they say, "Now, ok, now, but hold off on this. We have got to go get budgetary approval from the committee or we are going to have to vote on this in business meeting to buy the supplies so you can go do that.

If you tell them that, they are probably going to go out and just go get the stuff themselves, get the job done and hope that they can take care of the red tape later. They just don't like people slowing down. They know about a need and they want to get it done. They want to get it done now and they want to get it over with. And so very often they will use their own personal funds just to over weigh delays. And then they are just committed to getting the job done.

So now let's look at some misuses of the gift of serving. There is some wrong ways that you can use this gift as well. And, again, if you don't know what your spiritual gift is, you will probably figure it out each week from the misuses of the gift rather than the use. If you know what it is, if you are working on it, then you can probably identify it by the positive aspects. But if you don't know what your gift is, you probably will figure it out more from the misuses.

So here is one misuse. The server can give unrequested help. They can give help that you haven't asked for. And sometimes that the task that they think is important because they see a need. They think it is important. They want to go to it, but it may not be important

to anybody else. It may not be important to the one who is being served by that. And the fact is, servers are sometimes aware of needs nobody else even knows about, you know, nobody else even recognizes. And so this is one of the... one of the issues that they have and so sometimes servers can, first of all, be a little irritated with people like why don't you see this need is important and why haven't you done something about this? Why haven't we already taken care of this? Why am I waiting for you to give me what I need to do this? And the other time is that they can seem a little pushy or intrusive if they are going in and solving problems that nobody really cares about and it is kind of, well, why did they do that? You know? Everybody looks out and says, "Why did they do that? That wasn't a big important thing, you know?"

And so you... that can be one thing. Here is another thing. A server can let things become too important. And this is the aspect that a server can be so busy taking care of practical problems that other people have, you know, fixing this and preparing that and delivering this, that they don't always see the needs of the hearts of people in their own family or the needs the hearts of the people around them. They are so busy taking care of the practical stuff and keeping things running smoothly and making sure that everybody has what they need and taking care of the problems that just require some elbow grease that they sometimes don't know that maybe they have got a kid who is starving for attention or they have got a spouse that really just needs some heart to heart time because they are too busy doing. And I am not a... I don't have the gift of service, but I certainly identify with that that I get so busy sometimes using my gift that I fail to see the needs of those around me and so I... this is a problem, I think that maybe several of us, possibly, could have.

But things can be too important. So and what happens is that some people look and say, "Well, you are always taking care of stuff for us. You are taking care of stuff for other people. And they start thinking, "Well, your whole life is about stuff. We are... what about our hearts, you know? Why don't you care what is going on inside?"

And so they... other people can perceive them as, you know, maybe not being in touch enough.

Another one is the server may work beyond physical limits. Now, you know, I think we have a couple of extremes in Christianity today. I think for most of us that we care more about our comfort than we do about serving the Lord and most of us care more about, ok, I need some chilling out time and, you know, we think that the symbol of Christianity is a recliner instead of a cross. And I think that is the generally speaking has been true of most Christians.

However, I think servers go very often to the other extreme where they are so busy working that they push themselves beyond their physical limits and they don't take care of themselves.

Well we know this from Scripture, by the way, because Paul... Timothy worked so hard serving Paul and serving other people that he ended up neglecting his own health and he had stomach trouble.

In fact, as Paul had to give him a prescription. He said, "Use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities."⁷

You know, and, of course, it wasn't that he was trying to get him drunk, ok. It is just that... and you have got to remember in the Bible times wine was another term for grape juice. In fact, it is only about 30 years ago that concord grape juice was still called concord unfermented wine. Ok? So, you know, we used to sell grape juice in this country in jars. We called it unfermented wine.

So the term wine has been pretty common for a long time just to represent grape juice. If you think about Nehemiah, the king's cupbearer, this says, "I squeezed out the grapes and gave the king the wine."

Ok, well, if you just squeezed the grapes, how long did it have to ferment? No time at all.

The thing is grape juice has the ability, we know now, to sooth the stomach. It has the ability to sooth and calm a stomach and it is great for somebody that has a stomach distress. I probably need some because for about three days, I think, my stomach has been crying out for that.

But they just work beyond physical limits. And a lot of it is just from the tension. You know, you have got so much to do, so many demands on you and so many needs that are so important to you that you just kind of go around with your stomach in knots, like, how can I get to it all?

I feel that way just about all the tasks I have on my plate right now. It is like how can I get to them all and for a long time I was doing a pretty good job of living the lives of three men, but they have all caught up with me now. You know, I can't keep up.

Here is another characteristic. The server can neglect their God given priorities. Very often because a person is a servant they end up being given positions of responsibility. It is kind of like, wow, you do more work than anybody else. You get things done. You should be in a position of leadership, which, by the way, sometimes servers would be happier if they weren't put in a position of leadership. They just like to serve. But it is kind of like, well, this guy gets everything done. Let's put him in charge. So now he gets all this other pressure and not only is he trying to serve himself, but he is trying to get other people to serve and meet all these practical needs and it is kind of hard to pull it all together. And they are kind of like a guy that is juggling a whole bunch of balls up in the air. And he can't always keep them in the air. You know, after a while you juggle so many balls you are sooner or later you are going to drop some.

⁷ 1 Timothy 5:23.

And they also they are very quick to volunteer often without thinking about it, often without checking with their authority in their life or with their spouse and so they can end up juggling their priorities. And then, if you can't complete the job or you can't stay on schedule, then you get frustrated and so it is kind of like, you know, they really get frustrated when they can't do something and I am kind of to the point that I have just learned that I can't always meet everybody's deadlines and I am just kind of like I will do all I can do, but that is all I can do and I am ok with that most of the time.

But servers they, you know, they are not. It just kind of drives them insane.

Here is another thing. Servers can react to overlooked needs. Servers sometimes thing hat everybody else should be able to see the same need that they see and they are kind of freaked out when they think everybody else is seeing the same need they see, but nobody is doing anything about it. Kind of like, how come nobody is getting this and how many... how come nobody has been over to so and so's house to take care of that, you know? Why hasn't somebody gone and met this yet?

And they are frustrated and they can't even resent those. You know, if they suggest to somebody else. And, you know, maybe they can't get to it and they suggest to somebody else, "Do you think you could go over and do such and such?"

And the other person says, "Well, that sounds like a good idea," but they never follow through. They can actually resent those people. And so that is a problem. They can resent those who don't take the lead to go solve these problems they think are critical.

Another thing is a server can resent a lack of appreciation. Now servers will give you probably 110 percent all the time. I mean, they will do everything that they can do to get the job done and they want to serve you, but if you just keep giving them jobs over and over and over again and you don't at some point come and put your arm around them and say, "Man, I appreciate you for doing that. I really appreciate what you did there." Then after a while they can kind of feel like, well, I don't feel appreciated. I feel like I am being used, you know? Because they really do want to know that what they have done has been appreciated. And it is easy sometimes to forget that when you are serving people you are really serving the Lord.

You know, a good verse for servers is that verse that says, "Whatsoever you do..." I think it is in Colossians.

"And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."⁸

We need to remember whatever we are doing we are doing it for the Lord. Now so and so may forget to say thank you. So and so may forget to put your arm around your back and say thank you for doing that and we have got at least three servers here this morning that I know of. You know, we may forget to thank you for what you do, but God knows and

⁸ Colossians 3:17.

God does appreciate it and we just have to remember that everything we do we should be doing for the Lord.

Another thing is servers tend to work people around their schedules. In other words, they have a schedule for, ok, the first time I could do that this week would be Thursday night at six o'clock. I am going to do that Thursday night at six o'clock. And so it is kind of like this. The first unscheduled time I have. So I will do this... I will take care of this problem on Thursday night at six o'clock. And now he has to go tell everybody else in his life, "You know what? I can't be there for dinner that night or could we have dinner at eight because I have got something I have got to do for an hour and a half first." And they schedule people around their priorities and, really, guess what, folks? People are their priority. People are the priority.

And sometimes that is hard. I have a demand on my time later today that I kind of semi said, ok, you know, we will do this. And it is just... it is somebody that needs some counsel and I am thinking, oh, I really just want to... I really just want to chill out. I just want some rest. I want something... I want an hour without having to listen to somebody's story and give them counsel. And there is just times that I feel like I have poured out all of my bucket I can pour out. And I understand that servers can do that, too. Servers can just keep pouring out of their bucket, pour out of their bucket. And servers don't know how to delegate. They do it themselves rather than say, "Ok, I need you to help with this, you to help with this, you to help with this."

And they have trouble knowing how to delegate and so they can hinder others from getting involved in their serving, first of all, because they don't delegate. There are other people that could help, that don't. And, you know, one of the best things to do is have a server figure out who the other servers in the church are and so they can go and say, "Hey, can we all go take care of this?" And then they all go out motivated to solve a problem and do it in a third of the time.

But they go... they have their own physical needs going met and they can feel neglected and taken for granted.

Another misuse of the gift is that servers are often frustrated with time limitations. They hate the clock. They hate the fact that they don't have... you know, it is kind of like they are working on a job and they knew the job would take two hours. Well, first of all, a little truth, especially when you are doing electrical wiring in an old church. Let me tell you something. Estimate the time that it takes, multiply it by two and add 40 percent and that will be the actual length of time it takes. And so, you know, if you think, if everything went right it should take two hours, well, you need to plan about five hours for it because not only is it going to be harder than you thought it was, but you are going to have to make three trips to the hardware store to get the right stuff before it is all over. That is just the way life is.

And the fact is, I would encourage you to remember that formula. It has worked for me for a long time. My brother was the first test pilot of the space shuttle and when he was

working on the space shuttle program, that was the formula they used to estimate how long a phase of the space shuttle project would take. They would figure out how long everything would take if everything went right and they didn't have any government delays or anything. And then they multiplied that number by two and added 40 percent and that was pretty close to the time it actually took to do something.

And I tell you what, if you are in a 15 passenger van and you have got eight kids in the back and six of them are girls and you think you only have a two hour drive to make, you have not used the formula to account for bathroom stops, ok? So you have got to do that. So it is an important formula to put into your figures and your calculations.

Well, servers, they don't like rigid schedules. Now schedule is good because if you say, "We are going to work on this two hours and we are going to stop," that protects them because what will happen is a server will be working on one thing. He will find four other things to do.

Now I know, I think Donald was a server and I know Donald can work on one thing in the attic and while he is up there he can find three other things that are wrong that he needs to fix and all of the sudden there is another whole, you know, Saturday he is going to have to come back in the future to do something and because he sees other practical needs that are important to him and he wants to go take care of those things.

And so they don't like rigid schedules. They feel sometimes like their schedules hinder them rather than help them. And Paul had to keep telling Timothy, "Don't get sidetracked."

Look at this. He said, "Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me."⁹ "Do thy diligence to come before winter."¹⁰

By the way, he had already said, "Bring my coat," because the prison cell was cold. And then he has to tell Timothy on top of that, "But don't get sidetracked. I need you to come. I need you to bring that cloak, because if it is cold now, please get here before winter because it is really going to be cold then."

So he knew what Timothy would be doing, because Timothy would be out. He would see one thing and on his way to come see the apostle Paul he would see somebody that needed help and he knew Timothy would stop and try to help that person. I mean, that is the way Timothy was.

And that is why he could honestly say to the Philippians, "For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state."¹¹

⁹ 2 Timothy 4:9.

¹⁰ 2 Timothy 4:21.

¹¹ Philippians 2:20.

He said, "There isn't anybody else that will take care of you like Timothy."

So, consequently, it was this constant idea that, oh boy, you have got to... you know, you have got to keep this guy on track because he gets sidetracked by other needs.

Here is another one and I think this is a danger not only for people with a gift of serving, but also people with the gift of giving is that servers can interfere with God's discipline on somebody. There are sometimes that things come into a person's life because God is chastising them. God is trying to bring this person to a position of need so that they will repent and they will turn toward him. And so God sometimes uses need in our lives to bring us to repentance. But if a server doesn't discern God's working in that person's life, he just says, "Oh, they have a need," and he trots off to meet the need, which is the very need God is trying to use to call these people back to himself, you know?

And so servers have to be discerning. Ok. Before I go solve that problem is there a reason this person has this need? Ok and so I talked to a gentleman Wednesday night that came here to the church and was basically looking for a handout and then he spent, you know, 15, 20 minutes telling me how good he was and what a good man he was, what a good father he was and, you know that may very well be true. But, you know, I... before I addressed meeting his practical need I said, "I want to share one Bible verse with you. Can I do that?"

And he said, "Yes."

And I said, "The Bible says, 'I have never seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread.'" I said, "You are basically here begging and according to that verse that tells me there is something wrong in your life. It tells me that you are not living a righteous life or your heavenly Father... it doesn't mean you won't have needs sometimes. It doesn't mean we don't all suffer, you know, how much month is left at the end of the money. You know, that problem that all of us have. But I don't believe that God lets his children beg because it makes him look bad. And he likes to glorify himself because he is worthy of it."

And so I... and then I had an opportunity to share Christ with him and he prayed to receive Christ before he left, you know, and I will know some day, I hope, you know how sincere that was. But he told me. He said, "I need to do this whether or not you help me with this other problem." And, you know, I am glad for that opportunity, but, you know, that is an instance where if all I had done is just given money so that I could get back to the ministry I was involved in before he came, right? Have you ever done that? It is kind of like, "Oh, I just need to get rid of this person so I can get back to ministry."

And so, you know, if I had done that, I could have very easily walked back, gotten back in the FBI and not missed nearly as much as I did. But you need to discern instead of just helping somebody, discern whether or not there is a reason for it. And God usually doesn't let somebody like this gentleman get in the mess that he was in, unless he is being

disciplined or unless God is trying to bring him to the bottom so he can look up and receive Christ.

So I think it is just important for us to be discerning. If you... especially if you have this gift of giving before you do it and, you know, teachers can be... you need a prophet or a teacher around you.

Prophets can look at a person's life and they see somebody come in and say, "Oh, boy, here comes another one."

You know, this guy... I can tell he is a hypocrite. Prophets just have a radar that go off in their head like, "Oh, this guy is not sincere. You need to watch him.

Ok, so if a server has a prophet around that can say, "Wait a minute, I don't think you ought to meet this need because I think God is trying to get through."

Or if you have a teacher around a teacher can look at a person's life and can say, "Well, based on this evidence and if Scripture says this, then I think we can conclude this.

Now teachers, they don't have the radar, but they will compare what is happening in a person's life to Scripture and see what scriptural principle is being violated and they can say, "You know what? We don't need to help them right now. We need to counsel them to get this part of their life in order." And then when they do, we can help them.

And so you have got to be very careful about that. So this is why we need one another in the body.

Now think about it for a minute. You remember the story of the prodigal Son and this guy wants his inheritance now and he goes running off and he squanders it all and then he ends up, you know, eating with his bacon every morning, if you know what I mean. He is out there feeding, you know, with the pigs. And I don't know if you know this. Preachers love to alliterate stuff, you know alliteration is where you make everything start with the same letter. I read one time that somebody wrote the entire story of the prodigal son in alliteration and was using the letter F. I remember that. I don't remember the whole story, but the one phrase that still sticks in my mind is, "Fain, he would have filled his frame with the fodder fragments."

In other words, he would have eaten the same stuff the pigs were eating if he could, you know. And... but it is just... what if a server had come along and seen this guy's practical need and said, "You know what? Come home with me. I will feed you. You can stay in my house for the next couple of weeks and, you know, we have got plenty."

The guy might not have ever said, "I need to go back to dad. I need to go back to the father."

So that is why you have got to be careful that you discern before you help someone.

And then, I think, maybe the last... let's look at this last slide and that is the special instructions to the server.

So in Romans 12, here is what he gives. Now, again, Romans 12 you have got all seven gifts listed and then each verse after that belongs to one of the gifts and it is in order.

So the very first verse there last time the word of warning to the person with the gift of prophet, he says, "Let love be without dissimulation."¹² In other words, love people and don't fake it because prophets sometimes are very quick to throw the baby out with the bathwater.

So there in Romans 12 verse nine goes with the prophet.

Verse 10 is for the server and here is what it says in verse 10, the sever.

"Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another."¹³

So first thing he says you need to do, he says, "You need to focus on people, not stuff. You need to focus on people, not things. You need to serve. You need to love your brother and not just worry about your brother's stuff that is broken and you could fix or your brother's stuff that is mended and you could go over and sew it up for them. You need to worry, first of all, focus, first of all, keep your focus on people rather than things and demonstrate your affection to the whole family, to your family, in honor preferring one another." He says, "You have got to be careful if you are a server. Don't meet everybody else's practical needs and neglect loving your own family, spending time with your own family, teaching your own family from the Word of God, sharing spiritual insights as God has given you just loving, getting down on the floor and playing with the kiddos, ok? Don't ignore that."

Allow others to lead the way. Don't always be pushy about what you think is important.

If there is a need, you know, share it with one in authority, but then kind of leave it there until they see it is a need. The fact is, if you are a server, let me give you a little principle that will help you out in life.

I had a very wise professor. I had a number of wise professors, but I remember I had a professor, Dr. Edwin Crank is now the dean or president, there we go, at Jacksonville College. And brother Crank was a practical man and wise in a lot of ways. And I remember he taught me what was called the principle of the slight edge.

Now I am going to give this to you because it not only works in church, it works in just about every aspect of your life. And that is when you think something is important, but

¹² Romans 12:9.

¹³ Romans 12:10.

you don't think you can get others to buy into it, you just kind of mention it. And so you mention it to somebody and then you just kind of let it sit. You don't do anything about it. And then, you know, a few weeks later, a month later you just kind of bring it up again in passing. You kind of mention it. It is called the slight edge. And then, you know, you wait a few weeks alter and you just kind of casually bring it up in conversation again and what will happen is after two or three times of you doing that, all of the sudden somebody who is in a position to actually do something about it will wake up one day and they had this brilliant idea that we need to do something about this problem.

Now he was telling us to a group of pastors saying, "You know, if you are in one of these Baptist churches that has to vote on everything which most Baptist churches are that way, then what you have to do is you just kind of mention this little need and eventually some people will come up with it and they will think it was their idea."

Ronald Reagan says, "You can get a lot done if you don't worry about who gets credit for the idea."

And he was a wise man in more ways than one. So you can do that. You can say, "Ok," we just, you bring the idea. Give that principle a slight edge.

Servers need to learn to do that. If you see something that nobody else notices, just kind of bring it up. Maybe ask an authority about it and then leave it alone. If it is still important to you a month from now, bring it up again. Two weeks after that bring it up again. You will be amazed that sooner or later somebody will think it is as big and hairy a deal as you do and that something will get done about that.

And that was.... that was wise advice. So keep your focus on people. Don't just bulldoze ahead to get something done. It may be that there are other needs that you are not aware of that really take priority over the need that you think is important and you need to do that.

So there is, kind of in a nutshell for you, the gift of service. That is also called the gift of ministry. So if you ever hear me say the motivation gift of ministry, it is the same thing as the motivation gift of service. So the terms are kind of interchangeable.

I want to tell you that as a pastor, very often there are two gifts that I have learned to really appreciate. Oh, we need all the gifts. But I will tell what. As a pastor I have learned to appreciate people with the gift of service because they can get something done faster than anybody else.

And the other thing I have really learned to appreciate is people that have the gift of encouragement because very often that is a gift that pastors in particular need.

Well, let's go to the Lord in prayer and for those of you who are servants here, you kind of know who you are. Like I said, I know there are at least three in the audience today that that is their motivation for life and I want you to know I really appreciate you guys.

You know, and I, you know, women obviously can have the gift of service, too. But I have got three men on my mind right now, but I just could not function without these guys and I appreciate it so much.

Let's go to the Lord in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you for this day. Thank you for people with the gift of service. Thank that they do lighten the load on us so that we can focus on things that are more in line with our gifts, things that you have given us to do. Father, we pray that we don't just abuse these people by constantly giving them more and more to do. We want to help them protect their lives and their families and not place undue stress on them. Father, give us wise leadership that won't let these people work too much. But, Father, thank you for the gift they have of meeting practical needs in the lives of others. Give them discernment about when to say yes and when to say no so that they can honor your priorities and so they can be sensitive to what you are doing in the lives of others. Father, fill our pastor now with your Spirit and just help us to see keen insights from the Scripture in Isaiah today and to learn how that you can bring such a great victory that even people who couldn't fight otherwise can enjoy the fruits that you have. Lord, we love you. Thank you for this church. Put a hedge of protection around about it both spiritually and physically that we can continue to serve you and grow so that we can go out into our communities and share the love of Christ with others. We love you now and pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.