

I. Introduction.

- A. Our devotion to God produces a devotion to one another in the church. Rom. 12:1ff
- B. Praise God for His design of the church. Acts 2:47

II. Make a sober assessment of your spiritual gifts. v. 3

- A. What is a spiritual gift?
 - 1. Not merely a natural talent, but a special God-given ability given for ministry.
 - 2. Every believer has at least one spiritual gift. I Co. 12:7 I Pe. 4:10
- B. Don't think too highly of yourself. v. 3a Gal. 6:3
 - 1. Those who are especially gifted can be tempted to pride.
 - 2. Pride robs God of His glory and harms the church body. I Co. 3:3-4 III John 9
 - 3. You have nothing to be proud of because your gift is sovereignly bestowed by God. v. 3c, 6 I Co. 12:6-7,18 4:7 3:5-7 15:10 John 15:5
 - 4. Paul recognizes his apostolic gift is only by God's grace. v. 3a 1:5 15:15 I Ti. 1:12ff
- C. Nor should you think too little of the gifts God has given you. v. 3b I Co. 12:15-16
 - 1. Those who have the less visible gifts may be tempted to denigrate themselves
 - 2. Those who undervalue their gifts tend to underutilize them -- to the detriment of the body.
 - 3. Honor the gifts of others, especially those whose gifts are less flashy. I Co. 12:23
 - 4. God sovereignly distributes gifts according to His purpose. I Co. 12:18 Jo. 3:27ff
 - 5. You are a steward of your gift. Lu. 12:48

III. Understand how your gifts function in the church body. v. 4-5

- A. The body is a powerful metaphor for the church. I Co. 10:17 12:27 Col. 1:24 2:19 3:15 Eph. 1:23 4:4,12,15,16,25
- B. God has made us purposefully diverse.
 - 1. There is a great diversity of grace gifts among God's people as every believer has a unique function in the body.
 - 2. There is even diversity among those who have a particular grace gift.
 - 3. There is also a diversity among local churches in the universal body of Christ.
- C. God has designed our diversity to organically unite and strengthen us. I Co. 12:12-18
 - 1. None of us has all of the gifts.
 - 2. None of us is independent of the others.
 - 3. The body functions as a whole.
 - 4. Your gift is given so that you might edify (build up) the body. I Co. 12:7 14:12
 - 5. Our interdependence reinforces humility.
 - 6. The church is to grow with each member doing his or her part. Eph. 4:11-16
- D. You must be committed to a local church body in order to function properly. Heb. 13:17 I Th. 5:12-13 I Co. 12:12
- E. These truths have implications for how the church is to be run.
 - 1. Not a one man (or a "professional") ministry. We are all priests. I Pet. 2:5
 - 2. Our leaders must encourage the development and use of every member's gifts.
 - 3. Our focus should be on discipleship rather than programs. Mt. 28:18ff II Ti. 2:2

IV. Exercise your spiritual gift. v. 6-8

A. General principles regarding the use of gifts.

1. There is a sense in which each of us is called to build each other up in all of these ways. There is a danger of becoming over-specialized.
 - a. All should give. I Co. 16:1-2 Pr. 3:9-10
 - b. All should serve. Mark 10:45 John 15:1ff
 - c. All should speak the Word to each other to build up the body. Eph. 4:15-16,29 5:19 Col. 3:16 Rom. 15:14 Heb. 5:12 8:11 10:24-25 3:13
2. God has given every believer a gifting which should be a focal point in our service to Him and to the church body. I Tim. 4:14-16 I Pe. 4:10-11
3. Just as God sovereignly gives different kinds of gifts, He also gives different degrees of gifting. v. 3b,6a I Co. 12:6 I Pe. 4:10
4. Spiritual gifts can be developed and improved through faithful use. II Tim. 1:6-7
5. The gift lists in Scripture are exemplary, not exhaustive. I Co. 12:28-30 Eph. 4:11
6. The gifts fall into two broad categories: speaking and serving. I Pe. 4:10-11
7. Each gift has its particular pitfalls.

B. Revelatory gifts were foundational in the early church. Eph. 2:20

1. Paul was an apostle. v. 3a I Co. 9:1 15:9 II Co. 12:12
2. Some were prophets. v. 6b Eph. 2:20 4:11 I Co. 12:28.10 14:1 Acts 11:27-28 21:9ff
 - a. While there were some gifts in the early church about which we know little, prophecy is clearly defined in Scripture. Dt. 13:1-5 18:15-22 II Pe. 1:20-21
 - b. Prophets served as God's mouthpieces, through whom revealed truth was communicated. Ex. 4:16 7:1
 - c. The standard for one claiming to be a prophet is perfection. Dt. 18:18-22 13:1ff
3. Revelatory gifts ceased when the Scriptural canon was closed and the apostles passed off the scene. Eph. 2:20 Heb. 1:1-3 2:3-4 II Co. 12:12

C. Some of us have gifts of utterance: teaching and exhortation. v. 7b-8a II Ti. 1:11 2:2 Acts 15:35,31 13:15 14:21-22 4:36 Mt. 28:19-20 Js. 3:1ff I Ti. 4:13 Heb. 10:24-25

D. Many of you have gifts of helping: serving, giving, leadership/administration, mercy. v. 7a,8b 15:27 I Pet. 4:11b Eph. 4:12 Acts 6:1,4 2:45 4:32ff 24:17 II Co. 5:18 8:2 9:13 II Ti. 4:5,11 I Ti. 1:12 3:8ff I Co. 12:5,28 16:15 15:25-27 Phil. 1:1 I Jo. 3:17-18 I Th. 5 Pr. 14:21,31 22:8 17:22 Mt. 5:7 6:3

E. How can you know your gift? Desire, need, effectiveness, counsel and confirmation.

F. Each of the gifts is perfectly exemplified in our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. He is your Prophet. Deut. 18:18-22 Mt. 13:57 21:11
2. He is your Servant. Isa. 52:13 53:11 42:1 49:1-7 Mt. 20:28 Phil. 2:7
3. He is your Preacher. John 13:13
4. He is your *Encourager* and He sends the Comforter. I John 2:1 John 14:16,26
5. He has given Himself for you. II Co. 8:9
6. He is your Leader/Head. Col. 1:18 2:19
7. He has shown you mercy. 11:30-32 12:1 Mt. 25:31f Lu. 4:18-19

G. Your gift comes as a result of Christ's victorious work and when you use it, you are a minister of His grace. Eph. 4:7ff

V. Concluding applications. II Ti. 1:6

Discussion questions for family worship.

- 1. What is a spiritual gift?**
- 2. Why does God give spiritual gifts?**
- 3. What are two broad categories of gifts?**
- 4. Which gifts are no longer given? Why?**
- 5. How can you know what your spiritual gift is?**
- 6. Why shouldn't you be proud of your gift?**
- 7. Why shouldn't you be ashamed of your gift?**
- 8. How is the church like a body?**
- 9. What harm results from people trying to serve in areas in which they are not gifted?**
- 10. What is your spiritual gift? How are you using it?**