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Grace Energized Men: God, Gifts, and God's Building Project



Part 16 (080217AM)

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The God of the Universe is seeking something—God is looking for individuals who will worship Him. We were all born, alienated from God, by our sin. But Jesus Christ came to seek and save the lost by taking our place on the cross and paying the price for our sin.

The Good News of the Gospel is that Jesus did all that needs to be done to take away the penalty and power of our sin so that we can worship our Creator.

Open with me to Christ's words in [John 4:22](#).

John 4:22-28 "You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. 23 "But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. 24 "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." 25 The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When He comes, He will tell us all things." 26 Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He." NKJV

Today salvation is turning towards Christ in faith and away from sin. At the instant of salvation, as Jesus told this woman at the well, we become worshippers. But we have so many hindrances all around us to fully offering that worship that God the Father seeks from us. That is why we are studying edification. We need to be:

Edified (Built up) to Worship

Now, turn with me to [1 Peter 2:4](#) and listen to what we all need today.

*1 Peter 2:5 you also, as living stones, are **being built up** (there is our word "edified") a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

In order to offer worship as God desires, we all need to be a part of a lifelong building project that God has called the Church.

There have been some amazing building projects in history. Noah building the ark; the Pharaohs building the pyramids 500 years before Abraham; and Solomon building God's first temple a thousand years before Christ's Birth; Herod the Great building the Temple Mount of Christ's day; the Great Wall of China; and even recently the interstate highway system...these all were monumental building projects.

But, the greatest construction project of all time has also been going on the longest. For 2000 years God has been building up Christ's church using gifted workers with a blend of seven skill sets to make holy temples out of living stones that are sending clouds of worship before God's Throne in heaven.

You have come to the greatest construction project on Earth. Christ's Church is God's massive building project. It stretches across our land and around the world and extends all the way up to the Sea of Glass surrounding God's Throne.

An old hymn used to remind believers of what God was doing to us through the church. The hymn was "O To Be Like Thee" and had one clear statement of edification when it says, "fitted for life and service above". Every day we need to be built up in our walk so that we can be better fitted for life and more prepared for the worship we offer now and will be offering forever above.

The Church as God Sees Us

Down here we only see the construction, but up there we see the offerings of worshipping saints. Look with me at the finished product, what all of the edification or building up that we are to be each involved in doing, is for. Turn with me to 1 Peter 2 where Peter shows us the

Church functioning as God sees us and desires us to serve.

1 Peter 2:4-10 Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious,5 you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.6 Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, "Behold, I lay in Zion A chief cornerstone, elect, precious, And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame." 7 Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, "The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone," 8 and "A stone of stumbling And a rock of offense." They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed.9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. NKJV

Do you see what God is doing? He is taking each of us as we are saved and placing us into Christ's church. There we are to be offering our lives as living sacrifices of worship. Just as we are to do forever in Heaven (worship Him) so we are to be doing now as we go through our earthly lives.

Peter wrote to people living and working in the Roman Empire. This letter went to the Roman Province of Asia (modern Turkey) where there was a very high degree of civilization. People had to work just like today just to survive. But Peter said, as you go to work—you are to worship. As you go through life—you are a priest to God.

Becoming a temple of living stones that each is offering worship and collectively are a temple to God is not easy. That is why Peter surrounds this description of what God wants and how we are to offer Him worship with all of these exhortations. Note all the struggles these believers faced.

- They had to be reminded to put away the old life (2:1).
- They had to be encouraged to eat spiritual food (2:2-3).
- They had to be often reminded that this world is not their home (2:11a).
- They needed strong exhortations to abstain from feeding the flesh (2:11b).
- They had to be reminded and taught how to be living a lifestyle that pointed to the Lord (2:12).
- They had to be submissive to the laws of society around them (2:13-17).
- They had to learn to work hard for their employers (2:18).
- They had to learn to go through hard times or suffering affliction and not quit (2:19-21)

When saints are out of fellowship with the Lord, out of harmony with each other, out of line in their spiritual lives—we can't offer pleasing worship. Only a clean, humbled, and Spirit-filled saint can offer acceptable worship. So we are all called to be some part of mending and building up other believers.

That is why every one of us has a spiritual gift set, just right for what God wants us to do. To help us remember exactly what God wants each of us to be doing, we need to examine another passage of Scripture. As we turn to Romans 12 we find the job descriptions of—

Construction Workers God Always Wants and Uses

Spiritual gifts are the grace-energized empowerments God uses to build up His Church.

There are several New Testament lists of these gifted believers, or construction workers God deploys at each building site. The two main gift lists are Romans 12 and I Corinthians 12.

The easiest way to look at these two lists is to say that the Corinthian list is primarily pointed at temporary sign gifts and the Roman list is pointed at the ongoing gifts that we see today at work in local churches.

For our construction site visit, we'll focus on the list in Romans 12. Please join me in v.4 as we see what God has given each of us and wants to do with all of us:

*Romans 12:4-12 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function,5 so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if **prophecy**, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith;7 or **ministry**, let us use it in our ministering; he who **teaches**, in teaching;8 he who **exhorts**, in 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 kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;11 not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;12 rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; NKJV*

This passage in Romans 12 gives us seven amazing types of gifted people God wants to use in every church.

Three of these seven gifts are mentioned in [1 Corinthians 12:28](#) (prophets, teachers, administration); two of the gifts (prophets and pastor-teachers) are included in [Ephesians 4:11](#); and another two (administering and serving) are listed in [1 Peter 4:10-11](#).

So, these seven seem to resonate as a complete set of workers that God loves to use to build up the individual members of Christ's church into fully functioning worshippers. But whatever gift, or blend of gifts, you have been given, exercise them faithfully as a stewardship from God.

Seven Gifted Believers that are Building Up Other Believers

At every construction site where Christ is at work building His church, He will be sending believers that He has gifted for the following construction “jobs” or “duties”:

1. **God has workers gifted in speaking forth God's Truth; and that is the word “prophecy” (Romans 12:6).** This gift energizes a believer to be “speaking forth” (as the Greek word means) and does not necessarily have to involve prediction of the future or any other mystical or supernatural aspects. When used in this non-revelatory way in the New Testament, this word “prophecy” simply identifies the skill of public proclamation of the Word of God (as in *1 Pet. 4:11*). This person may be random, or may be systematic—but they love to proclaim the Word. But the key that tests the prompting of the Spirit is that a person’s “prophesying” is to be done **in proportion to the faith**, a better translation would be “in agreement to the (not his) faith.”
2. **God has workers gifted in Serving God's People; and that is the word “ministry” (Romans 12:7a).** This gift energizes believers to look for and want to do every kind of practical and helpful task (cf. *Acts 20:35; 1 Cor. 12:28*), and is similar to the gift of helps (*1 Cor. 12:28*). This person never needs to be pushed towards a job, they are always looking for things to do for others. “Ministry” is actually the same word used of “deacon,” and simply means those who serve others. These believers are energized by God’s grace to love to be servants to the needs of the individuals in the Body of Christ.
3. **God has workers gifted in explaining God's Word; and that is the word “teaching” (Romans 12:7b).** This gift energizes believers with the ability to interpret, clarify, systematize, and explain God’s truth clearly (cf. *Acts 18:24-25; 2 Tim. 2:2*). Pastors must have the gift of teaching (*1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:9*; cf. *1 Tim. 4:16*), but many mature, qualified laymen also have this gift. This differs from preaching (prophecy), not in content, but in the unique skill for public proclamation. This person is very didactic and able to clearly communicate truth, even though they may be quiet and even prefer a small group.
4. **God has workers gifted in inspiring others to obey God's Word; and that is the word “exhortation” (Romans 12:8a).** This gift energizes believers with the ability to effectively call others to obey and follow God’s truth. Many of the areas believers struggle with are attitudes and emotions that are not pleasing to God and that are not helpful to others believers. In a negative sense this person may love to admonish and correct others regarding sin (*2 Tim. 4:2*), or in a positive sense, this person may be always drawn to encourage, comfort, and strengthen struggling believers (cf. *2 Cor. 1:3-5; Heb. 10:24, 25*).
5. **God has workers gifted in pouring out what they have for others; and that is the word “gives” (Romans 12:8b).** This gift energizes believers with the desire and ability to sacrificially share and give their resources, and even them self to meet the needs of others (*2 Cor. 8:3-5, 9; 11; Eph. 4:28*). This person has a simple desire, to just offer to others a single-minded and openhearted generosity. Contributing is to be done with generosity (en haploteti) which means not sparingly (*2 Cor. 8:2; 9:11, 13*). This Spirit-energized ministry occurs with no desire for thanks and personal recognition, but only a longing that God be glorified (see also *Matt. 6:2; Acts 2:44-45; 4:37-5:11; 2 Cor. 8:2-5*).
6. **God has workers gifted in showing others the best way; and that is the word “leads” (Romans 12:8c).** This gift energizes believers with the ability of managing, leading, or administering. The Greek word means lit. “standing before”, and when Paul describes this gift to the Corinthians he calls it “administrations” (*1 Cor. 12:28*). This word also means “to guide” and was used of the pilot who steered the ship (*Acts 27:11; Rev. 18:17*). In the NT, this word is used to describe only leadership in the Christian home (*1 Tim. 3:4-5, 12*) and in the local church (*1 Cor. 12:28; 1 Tim. 5:17*; cf. *Acts 27:11; Rev. 18:17*). The Lord adds that this leading is to be done **diligently** (the Greek words *en spoude* means “in eagerness, earnestness”), not lazily or halfheartedly.
7. **God has workers gifted in incarnating (living out) Christ's Compassion; and that is the word “shows mercy” (Romans 12:8d).** This gift energizes a believer to minister to the emotional needs of other believers. They are energized by His grace in actively showing sympathy and Christ’s compassion to those in suffering and sorrow; and they give both the willingness and the resources to help lessen the afflictions of those in need. Frequently, this gift of compassion or mercy comes with the gift of exhortation. But when prompted by the Spirit there is also an evident **cheerfulness**. This spirit-energized attitude is vital to ensure that the gift of mercy becomes a genuine help, not a discouraging commiseration with those who are suffering (see also *Prov. 14:21, 31; Luke 4:18-19*) [1].

What is Your Skill Set?

Which workman are you? What “job description” did God give you when He invited you to come to the construction site of His church?

1. v.6 if **prophecy**, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith;
2. v.7 or **ministry**, let us use it in our ministering;
3. he who **teaches**, in teaching;
4. v.8 he who **exhorts**, in exhortation;
5. he who **gives**, with liberality;
6. he who **leads**, with diligence;
7. he who shows **mercy**, with cheerfulness.

These are the tools that we use to mend and build up, to equip and edify. This equipping (mending lives) and edifying (building up lives) is all part of fulfilling our calling in the Great Commission. Christ’s final words to us after His earthly ministry were that we invest our lives “making disciples”. The seven types of gifted people within the church deal with this entire process of discipleship as they mend and build up each other.

A discipling mender first helps a fellow believer get back in step with the Lord with a clean heart and a clear mind so that worship will flow. Then that discipling edifier will help them see how to be built up into a fully functioning worshipper of God.

If you look closely at the list of gifts and their application, there is so much more than just the content of true doctrine and salvation that must be carefully watched over in the church.

- First, two **gifts focus on the ministry of true doctrine** (#1 “prophecy” & 3 “teaches”);
- Then three **gifts focus on meeting physical needs** (#2 “ministry”, 5 “gives”, & 6 “leads”).
- Finally, there are **two gifts that God uses to minister to the emotional needs** of a believer (#4 “exhorts” & 7 “mercy”).

God has deployed us as skilled workers. Some of us are going all over this house of worship with the gifts that lead to training and teaching everyone in the Word of God’s Truth. Others are going about ministering to physical needs, and still others are gifted to work with the emotional needs of believers. All of us have needs and all of us are to minister our gifts.

Spirit-Energized Edification is God’s Plan For Each of Us

Now back to Ephesians 4 where we launched last week into this look at edification.

Let’s get a hold on these twin truths of [Ephesians 4:12](#). Remember the words God chose to use to describe our purpose? All of us have a two part calling directly from the Lord Himself. What a thrill it is to know what we were created to do for God—and to do it!

[Ephesians 4:12](#) “..for **the equipping** (Gk. # 2677, n. from v. #2675 lit. “mending”; KJV “perfecting”) of the saints for the work of ministry, for **the edifying** (Gk. #3619 lit. “building up”) of the body of Christ...” NKJV

The terms edify and edification, were some of Paul’s favorite words, when describing our ministry in Christ’s church as believers. The basic meaning of the Greek word for **edify** (oikodomeo) is “to build a house” and by extension led to mean the building of anything. When used in our New Testaments it took the meaning of growing spiritually and helping others to grow up in a spiritual way. Anything that contributes to spiritual growth was said to edify.

Peter exhorts everyone at the end of his epistle to “grow in grace and the knowledge of Christ” ([II Peter 3:18](#)), and to do that we can find in God’s Word at least three basic means that God uses through us to grow others:

1. **God’s Word.** As Paul was leaving behind the beloved church he had invested his life into for over three years, he told the elders of the church standing with him at the port city of Miletus, “And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified” ([Acts 20:32](#)). The Bible, God’s Word, is the key tool that the Lord uses to build our spiritual lives ([John 17:17](#)).
2. **Preaching and teaching.** Later in this letter to the Corinthians Paul tells them that, rather than being so concerned about speaking in tongues, they should focus on prophesying, or preaching, which “speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation.” The “one who prophesies edifies the church” ([1 Cor. 14:3–4](#)).
3. **Obedient Ministry prompted by Love.** Our purpose as believers is to do “the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ” ([Eph. 4:12](#)); and as Paul reminds us only with love can this edify others, because only “love edifies” ([1 Cor. 8:1](#)).

The conclusion is that every believer is called and gifted to be an edifier. Either we are or we are not. Either we obey or we disobey. I hope that you want to do what God made you to do in Christ’s church!

“Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to his edification. For even Christ did not please Himself” ([Rom 15:2–3](#)).

“Therefore encourage one another, and build up one another, just as you also are doing” ([1 Thess. 5:11](#)).

At the instant of salvation, we become worshippers. But we have so many hindrances all around us to fully offering that worship that God the Father seeks from us. That is why we are studying edification. We need to be:

Edified (Built up) To Worship

So, God gifts a complete set of workers to use to build up the individual members of Christ’s church into fully functioning worshippers. Whatever gift, or blend of gifts, you have been given, exercise them faithfully as a stewardship from God.

When saints are out of fellowship with the Lord, out of harmony with each other, out of line in their spiritual lives—we can’t offer pleasing worship. Only a clean, humbled, and Spirit-filled saint can offer acceptable worship. That is why every one of us has a spiritual gift set, just right for what God wants us to do.

So we are all called to be some part of mending and building up other believers into consecrated worshippers! Are you doing what God has called YOU to DO?

Today – you and I are God’s priest’s in this temple of living stones, offering to Him our worship that He receives in Heaven.

- **Our devotion to Christ is our burnt offering:** [Mark 12:33](#) And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and

to love one's neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." Have we offered our devotion up to Him irretrievably, completely, and lovingly?

- **Our life given back to Christ is our spiritual sacrifice of worship:** [Romans 12:1](#) I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. [Romans 15:16](#) that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. **Have we recently renewed that offering of all we are to Him?**
- **We pour out our service like a drink offering:** [Philippians 2:17](#) Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. [2 Timothy 4:6](#) For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. Are we pouring out what we cannot keep – to Him so we cannot lose?
- **We offer our gifts as a fragrant freewill offering:** [Philippians 4:18](#) Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. What is the aroma ascending from our living before Christ's eyes today?
- **We offer our worship as a praise offering:** [Hebrews 13:15](#) Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. When is the last time we stopped and launched a wave of praise filled worship toward His Throne?
- **We offer our deeds as a spiritual sacrifice:** [Hebrews 13:16](#) But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. [1 Peter 2:5](#) you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. What acts of kindness have we premeditated and carried out this week?
- **We offer our prayers as an incense offering:** [Revelation 8:3-4](#) Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar, which was before the throne. [4](#) And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand. What do we have in the bowl of our collected prayers? If God loves our prayers so much that He collects them all (like notes from my wife & kids) why don't we send more?

[1] This list has been abridged, edited and adapted from John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Dallas: Word Publishing) 1997.

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