Homework: Read through Romans 12 each day. Circle any words or phrases that you see frequently repeated. Mark what you think is the most important/key verse in Romans 12.

Notes

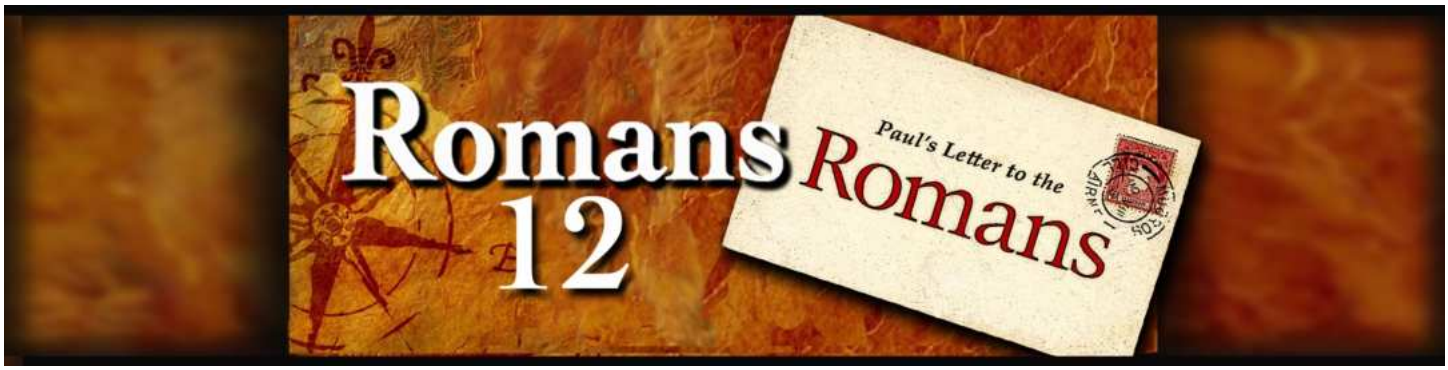
Romans 12

(ESV)

Chapter Title

1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present
your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your
spiritual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed
by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the
will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. 3 For by the grace
given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more
highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each
according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. 4 For as in one
body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same
function, 5 so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually
members one of another. 6 Having gifts that differ according to the grace
given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; 7 if
service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; 8 the one who
exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one
who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.
9 Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.

[10] Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in
showing honor. [11] Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the
Lord. [12] Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.
[13] Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.
[14] Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. [15] Rejoice
with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. [16] Live in harmony
with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never
be wise in your own sight. [17] Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to
do what is honorable in the sight of all. [18] If possible, so far as it depends
on you, live peaceably with all. [19] Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but
leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will
repay, says the Lord." [20] To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him;
if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap
burning coals on his head." [21] Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome
evil with good.



REVIEW

The first 11 chapters of Romans have presented a very clear and detailed explanation of the Doctrine(s) of the Christian Faith, the New Covenant between God and His chosen/elect people from among both Jews and Gentiles. The New Covenant is unilateral; Christians have been redeemed and eternally saved by God's grace alone, through faith in Jesus Christ alone, not by any works that they have done. He paid the penalty for the sins of His elect through His death on the cross, rescuing them from eternal judgment and damnation. This is the **only** means to become righteous in God's eyes, by His work alone and nothing from His people. These doctrines form the essential foundation of what a Christian must understand, believe, think and live.

Key Doctrines in Romans:

1. **The Nature of God**—His **authority** (Romans 1:1), His **love, grace, and peace** (1:7), His **supremacy** (1:9), His **will** (1:10), His **power to save** (1:16), His **righteousness** (1:17), His **righteous wrath** (1:18), His **self-revelation to all** (1:19-20), His **sole right to worship** (1:21-23), and His **absolute right to judge as He pleases** (1:24, 26, 28).
2. **Mankind's Sinfulness**—Sin separates every human from God; only Jesus Christ can reconcile God and man. (Romans 1)
3. **Justification By Faith**—Complete freedom from judgment and the bondage of sin comes by faith alone in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. (Romans 3-4)
4. **Definite Atonement** —God's purpose for the sacrifice of atonement was limited and definite, limited in its efficacy to all who believe. (Romans 5)
5. **Reconciliation**—The sacrifice of Jesus Christ for sin renews and restores the relationship between God and man. (Romans 6)
6. **Sanctification**—Through Christ's atonement, believers are made holy and set apart for the service of God. (Romans 5)
7. **The Wrath of God**—The wrath of God is a divine and just response to (judgment of) human sin and disobedience. The unrepentant sinner, those who reject the Son will experience God's wrath on Judgment Day. The one who believes in the Son will not suffer God's wrath for his sin because the Son took God's wrath upon Himself when He died in the sinner's place on the cross. (Romans 1, 2, 3, 4, 5).
8. **The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit** —The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the action by which God takes up permanent residence in the body of a believer in Jesus Christ, as a guarantee of their eternal inheritance. (Romans 8)
9. **Divine Providence**—God is in complete control of all things at all times; through His wisdom and love, He knows and orchestrates all things in the universe to accomplish His will. (Romans 8)
10. **Predestination (Election)**—God, in His sovereignty, graciously chose certain individuals, but not all, in eternity past, before creation, to be saved ("called") and conformed to the likeness of His Son, justified, and glorified. (Romans 8)

11. **Adoption as Sons**—God has granted that all those who are justiedti would receive the grace of adoption, in and for the sake of His Only Son Jesus Christ. By this they are counted among the children of God and enjoy the freedom and privileges of that relationship. (Romans 8)
12. **Eternal Security (Perseverance of the Saints)**—The guarantee of a believer's eternal salvation is based on God's promise to preserve authentic faith throughout their mortal lives until they enter eternity. (Rom. 8)
13. **Sovereignty of God**—God's sovereignty is His absolute freedom to do whatever He wants and whenever He wants. He has always been the God who has mercy on whomever He chooses to have mercy, and shows compassion to whomever He chooses to show compassion. God is not answerable to finite, sinful creatures. (Romans 9)
14. **God's Eternal Covenant with Israel**—God is not finished with Israel; His Word and His promises have not failed. There is a remnant of Israel who will be saved and restored after the "times of the Gentiles have been fulfilled." (Romans 9-11)

Romans 12 takes a major shift away from **the doctrinal aspects** of **how God justifies sinners**, making them righteous before Him, to **the practical aspects** of how the Christian must act, **how to daily live out the righteousness that God has given** through faith in Jesus alone. These practical elements in the last 5 chapters of Romans focus on the **application of Paul's teaching**, how believers are to practically live out the rich theological truths of Romans 1–11 through their **behavior and relationships** in their daily lives. As a reminder, the only way that these applications can be **lived out** is because of the inner transformation of the essential nature of the person—in their very core, the heart and soul. Changes in outward behavior are **visible fruit of the new birth** because the essential nature has been changed by the presence of the Holy Spirit, so that the believer can live in faith and obedience. **(GPL)**

Read Romans 12:1-2

1. In the very first phrase of Romans 12, we once again meet *"therefore."* What's the *"therefore"* there for? What is it referring back to?

Back in Romans 6 (page 62), we mentioned the Bible Study Technique of noticing **Commands of God**. God has given us His Word to clearly make His intentions and will known to us. The instructions and exhortations of the Apostles and other writers of the NT Scriptures have been given to teach, admonish, and urge us forward in the process of sanctification. (**2 Timothy 3:16, Romans 15:4**) As with the promises of God, not all of God's warnings or commands are specifically for us. We need to **be attentive to** the instructions intended for **us**, but even more importantly, we need **to heed the warnings and commands** that **ARE for us**! These next 5 chapters in Romans are overflowing with admonitions for our conduct and dealing with relationships. You may want to mark the commands from God in your study text or your Bible with some distinctive notation or highlight.

Paul begins this section of Romans with a bold summons to the believers, an urgent, authoritative call to action; it's not just an invitation. He reminds them of the mercies God has shown, and calls them to "Step it up," to "Man up!" This is not an easy ask; it's going to cost them everything.

2. What is Paul exhorting (appealing to) the Roman believers to do? (**Romans 6:13**) What does this mean in a practical sense?

3. How does Paul describe this sacrifice?

Under the old covenant, **dead** animals were offered to God as a sacrifice of repentance for sin and worship to Him. However, for believers in Christ, those sacrifices are no longer required, nor are they

effective. (Psalm 50:13-15, 1 Corinthians 6:20, Hebrews 10:20, 1 Peter 2:5) Having received **new life** through the power of the Spirit, believers are to **offer** (**yield**, **submit**) **themselves** (body, soul, and spirit) in worship and service to the Lord. Here *"bodies"* refers to **the whole person**—"all we are, all we have and all we can do." **(MHC)** Because of the great mercy, grace, and love that God has poured out on His people, Paul calls the believers in Rome to a life of devotion and commitment to the Lord, a very reasonable response to God's lavishness to those who believe.

"Spiritual worship" is not just some ceremonial or ritual activity one may perform at certain times; it involves **the whole heart, mind and will** in worship and obedient service. (Deuteronomy 6:4-5, Luke 10:27) **(NIVSB)** Every act of worship and every deed undertaken as they lead their daily lives, prompted by love for Christ, is a sweet-smelling sacrifice to Him. (Hebrews 13:15-16) **(JFB)**

Beginning in verse 2, Paul presents a clear antithesis between **life in the world** and **life in Christ**. MacArthur notes that *"world"* is better translated as "age," referring to **the system of beliefs and values** at a given time in the world; it is **the sum of contemporary thinking and values which form the moral condition of our world**—evil and corrupt—which, in any age, is always dominated by Satan. (1 Peter 1:14, 2 Corinthians 4:4, Galatians 1:4) He adamantly states that believers **must NOT** be conformed to this world. (1 Corinthians 2:12, 1 John 2:15-17, 1 Peter 1:14-15) The form of the verb *"conform"* implies that some of Paul's readers were already putting on a mask or living a kind of masquerade, which outwardly did not accurately reflect their true Christian identity inside— he was making it clear that this must stop. **(JMSB)** Instead, Christians should consistently manifest their inner, redeemed nature outwardly. (1 Peter 1:14-15 above)

4. How can a person be transformed? (2) (Titus 3:5-6, Psalm 51:10, 2 Corinthians 4:16, Ephesians 4:22-24, Colossians 3:10)

The Greek word for *"renewal"* refers to both "the new birth and constant renovation in which man, as well as God, takes part." **(LW)** "To change external habits without an inward change is hypocrisy. Only God can change the innermost being of a person." **(CB)** This transformation of our minds (our thoughts, beliefs, desires, and motivations) happens through **conversion and the lifelong process of sanctification**, as the Holy Spirit reorients, reforms, and remakes us through consistent study, meditation, and obedience to God's Word, as we die to sin more and more, and increasingly live to righteousness. **(MHC, JMSB)** The result is moral and spiritual growth. (Philippians 2:3-8)

> **The Christian's mindset is to be determined and reshaped by knowledge of the gospel, by the power of the Spirit, and by the concerns of the age to come, rather than by the passing fashion of this age. (RSB)**

Paul further explains the effect of that transformation and renewal—*"…that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." "Testing"* means to "try, prove (in the hope and expectation that the test will prove successful," that the **genuineness** of that which is tried/tested would clearly be displayed/proven. **(LW, BH)** The NIV translates this: *"Then you will be able to **test and approve** what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."* The NIV accurately uses two words, *"test and approve"* to reflect the more specific meaning of **dokimazō. (BH)** The NAS says, *"Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect his will really is."* (Psalm 34:8, Ephesians 5:8-10, Ephesians 5:15-17, 1 Peter 2:2-3) Scottish theologian James Denney (1856-1917) explained that the purpose for the transforming

renewal of our minds is that Christians **may prove and discern** (determine, distinguish, differentiate, discriminate) **God's will.** Abandoning our natural inclinations toward the ways of the world and submitting our wills to **His process** of sanctification, through which He renews and transforms our minds, is the **only way** to perceive His good and perfect will. An "unrenewed mind" is totally lacking moral discernment, so can never begin to understand God's will. **(BH)** (**Isaiah 55:8-9, Ephesians 4:22-24, Ephesians 5:15-17**)

Read Romans 12:3-5

Before he gets down to the nitty-gritty of what a living sacrifice, transformed for spiritual worship, means and looks like in practical terms, Paul again reminds us in 12:3 that God's divine, undeserved favor had **called him** to be an apostle and had given him **spiritual authority** to speak in God's name. (**Romans 1:1, 11:13**) He speaks boldly and authoritatively to *"everyone among you"* regarding the chief sin of all mankind—pride and self-centeredness. **(CB)** Christians are not exempt, but are to be wary and armed against it. (**1 Peter 5:5, 3 John 9**) Furthermore, we are commanded to exercise **sound judgment**, recognizing that in and of ourselves we are nothing. It is only because God has given each believer a *"measure of faith,"* the faith and power necessary for doing what He has called us to do and exercising the particular gifts He has bestowed on us. **(RSB)** Before delving specifically into the spiritual gifts, Paul makes it clear that every believer has something to contribute because God has assigned that *"measure of faith"* to **each** person to fulfill the needs and ministries in the church—He has given that *"measure of faith* in the appropriate amount, so there is no reason for a superior attitude, nor for a sense of inferiority. **(NIVSB)** (**1 Corinthians 7:17, 1 Corinthians 12:7, 1 Corinthians 12:11**)

> "We must not say, I am nothing, therefore I will sit still, and do nothing; but, I am nothing in myself, and therefore I will lay out myself to the utmost, in the strength of the grace of Christ. Whatever our gifts or situations may be, let us try to employ ourselves humbly, diligently, cheerfully, and in simplicity; not seeking our own credit or profit, but the good of many, for this world and that which is to come." **(MHC)**

In verses 4-5 Paul paints a beautiful picture to represent the value and significance of **each believer** in relationship to all other believers in Jesus. He is the only NT writer to use the metaphor of the Body of Christ to describe the church, and we see it in many of his writings. Members of the human body are used to symbolize individual believers. There are many members (individual believers), and each has a different function, but **ALL** are needed together for the health and functioning of the Body, **not even ONE believer is excluded!** The Body of Christ is created through God's perfect fusion of the **diversity** of *every* redeemed man, but the emphasis is on the marvelous **unity/oneness** of *the whole!* (**1 Corinthians 12:12-14, Ephesians 4:4-7, 16, 25, 1 Corinthians 12:27**)

1 Corinthians 12:12-27 gives a more detailed and nuanced illustration of the members and the Body of Christ. It is certainly worth our time and consideration to take a purposeful, but rather lengthy, wander to explore this entire passage for a deeper understanding and context of Paul's imagery and intentions in both 1 Corinthians and Romans.

5. Before we get into the details of the Body and spiritual gifts, what is the purpose of Christ's Body and the purpose for the spiritual gifts given to each member of the Body? (**1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 1 Corinthians 14:12, Ephesians 4:12-14**)

> "The purpose of spiritual gifts is to promote "the common good" of the body of Christ, to build up the church, and to prepare us each for "works of service…until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ." **(GQ-PSG)**

6. Isn't it self-seeking to use one's God-given spiritual gifts for the good of the church instead of the rest of the world? Why or why not? (Galatians 6:10, 1 Timothy 5:8, Ephesians 2:19, 1 John 4:21)

Key Doctrine #15 in Romans
Spiritual Gifts—The Holy Spirit distributes spiritual gifts to every believer according to His will and only as a gift of grace. The purpose of every gift is to edify and mature the church and to glorify God through serving others. The gifts are not intended to draw attention to or edify individual believers, but are to be used for the common good.

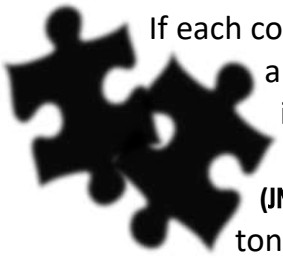
All of the gifts are given by **grace** from God **through the Holy Spirit**; in fact, the Greek word used for *"gift"* is **charis**, which means "grace." Your spiritual gift (**charis**) is **a gift of God's grace**. **(JM–CSG-3)**

1 Corinthians 12:13 states that the **Holy Spirit** has immersed all believers, from *"every nation, tribe, peoples, and languages,"* into the Body of Christ (Revelation 7:9); the unity of the Body originates from the **indwelling** Holy Spirit within each believer. **(JMSB)**

1 Corinthians 12:14–20

14 For the body does not consist of one member but of many. 15 If the foot should say, "Because I am
not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. 16 And if
the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any
less a part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the
whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? 18 But as it is, God arranged the
members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. 19 If all were a single member, where would the
body be? 20 As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

1 Corinthians 12:14-20 highlights the necessity and distinctiveness of individual members of the spiritual body; each member is unique. Some are equipped or suited for, and called to, a specific sort of work; others for a different, yet specific, sort of work. By necessity, each has to be different/unique for them to fit together and work together, like the pieces of a puzzle or the intricate components in a clock or computer. It's the unique function of each individual piece that allows the operation of the entire instrument. The church cannot function without the supernatural working of the spiritual gifts; that is how the Holy Spirit works and how the Body is built. **(JM–CSG-1)**



If each component were the same, they would not be able to join or function together, and so it is with the Body of Christ. MacArthur believes that Paul's words of instruction in 1 Cor. 12 (and Romans 12) implied that certain members of the church were discontent with their gifts, desiring gifts they had not been given. **(JMSB)** Quite possibly, those possessing the more "spectacular gifts" (such as tongues) were more admired or honored in the Corinthian church, leading others to feel that their gifts were inferior or unimportant. **(NIVSB)** In 1 Corinthians 12:18, Paul stresses that *"God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as He chose."* This is comparable to Romans 12:6—*"Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us…."*—given by God. No one is left out, and no one is more valuable or more useful than any other. By implication Paul is saying that **the sovereign purpose of God** has determined that **each** Christian in the Body of Christ exercises **different** spiritual gifts, not the same gift—this **diversity** accomplishes God's **unified purpose**. **(NIVSB)** Paul stresses **unity**, **not uniformity** (exactly the same), which suppresses the obvious need for diversity in the believers' service to the Body of Christ. **(RSB)**

> There cannot be any believer who has not been Spirit-baptized, nor can there be more than one Spirit baptism, or the whole point of unity in the body of Christ is convoluted. Believers have all been Spirit-baptized and thus are all in one body. This is not an experience to seek, but a reality to acknowledge. **(JMSB)**

Spiritual gifts are not designed as special privileges for the one who has them; they are not for self-edification or promotion. Those who seek after more readily observable "abilities," power or influence for their own aggrandizement make themselves vulnerable to fleshly, demonically counterfeited gifts, which are quite prevalent in many "christian" circles. **The design and purpose of the spiritual gifts is to manifest the character of Jesus Christ through every believer and build up the church for the good of all believers.** He gives every believer **aspects of His own unblemished character** (Genesis 1:26); then He gives them back to the church as gifts. **(JM–CSG)** Just to be clear, each believer manifests different gifts; they are not the same—and even though more than one believer in a local church may have the same gifting (i.e. mercy), it will not be expressed in the same way. We don't deserve the gifts, and we can't earn them, learn them, or pursue them; these gifts of Christ are measured out individually and uniquely for every Christian. They are **divine enablements**, **NOT** natural abilities, traits that have been inherited, or skills that can be learned. Neither are the gifts random—their **source** is **God**, their **channel** (means of expression) in **the Holy Spirit**, and their pattern, example, and completeness in **the person of Jesus Christ**. **(JM–CSG-2)**

7. Can you describe any instances where/when spiritual gifts have been strongly emphasized in a group or a church? What happened? What was the result?

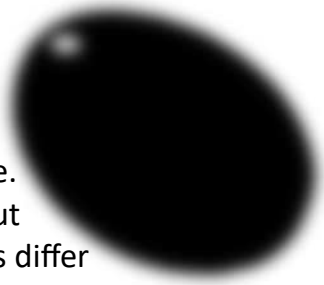
1 Corinthians 12:21-26

[21] The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." [22] On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, [23] and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, [24] which our more presentable parts do not

require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, [25] that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. [26] If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

Here Paul further deals with the contentious issues in the Corinthian church—some people were bemoaning the fact that they did not have certain gifts, while others were belittling those with the more quiet and less prominent gifts—a sense of spiritual superiority and inferiority, and the accompanying disrespect and indifference for those who appear to be *"weaker"* and *"less honorable."* **(JMSB, RSB)** Paul spells out the built-in necessity for **interdependence** among the parts of the body as one unified whole. Christians are to be **mutually dependent** on each other, even as they exercise their distinctive functions. **(NIV)** In 25-26, he firmly insists that there must *"be **no division** in the body,"* but they must *"have **the same care for one another**. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together."*

In 1 Corinthians 12:27 he sums up, *"Now **you** are the body of Christ and individually members of it,"* paralleling Romans 12:5 *"… so **we**, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another."* Each believer and each local church are the body of Christ (*"you"* above), just as the universal church is Christ's body (*"we"*). **(NIV)**

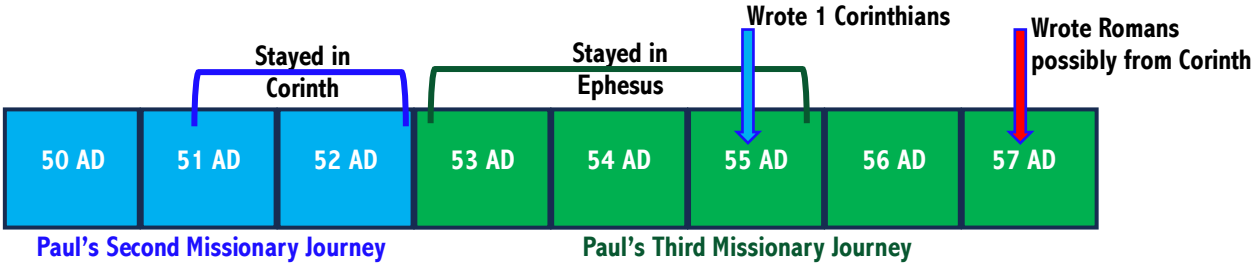


Paul wrote about the spiritual gifts in 3 different letters to churches: Romans, 1 Corinthians, and Ephesians, and Peter also briefly mentions them in 1 Peter 4. Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, Ephesians 4:11-13, and 1 Peter 4:10-11 all list general categories of spiritual gifts, but those lists are not exactly the same. The purpose of each list is not for believers to perfectly identify their own gift, but to faithfully use the unique gifting God has given to each. The fact that these lists differ clearly implies "the gifts are like a palette of basic colors, from which God selects to blend a unique hue for each disciple's life." **(JMSB)**

8. Did Jesus speak about spiritual gifts? What evidence is there?

9. Why do you think that the lists are different? Why do you think that none of the other NT writers (except Peter) mentioned spiritual gifts, or why did Paul not speak about them in **each** of his 13 letters?

We're going to take a brief *historical* stroll off of our "wander" away from our well-worn path to consider the issues/purposes which caused Paul to write so differently, yet extensively, about spiritual gifts in Romans and 1 Corinthians, despite writing little to nothing in his other letters.



Paul traveled to Corinth near the end of his second missionary journey and remained there for about 18 months (c. 51-53). During his third missionary journey, he remained in Ephesus for approximately 3 years (c. 53-55), during which time he received information that the Corinthian church was a mess; they were immature, unspiritual, falling into divisions, immorality, false teachings, and aberrant spiritual behavior. **1 Corinthians was written (c. 55)** from Ephesus to a very immature church with several serious problems.

> "Their former pagan religion had corrupted the Corinthian assembly. They were unable to distinguish between the usual and the unusual, between the demonic and the divine. They could not distinguish what was from God and what was from Satan. They believed that the truly spiritual were marked by 'irregular behavior:' falling into trances, fainting, speaking ecstatic languages, frenzied behavior." **(JM–CSG-1)**

Although 1 Corinthians includes **doctrines relating to matters of sin and righteousness, the major point of his teaching is corrective of behavior rather than doctrinal**. Paul teaches them from the Scriptures, using OT quotes more than a dozen times, and alluding to it at least a hundred times as he explains the doctrines, then he gives them examples and specific rebuke/correction. **(GPL)** MacArthur points out, "In one way or another, wrong living always stems from wrong belief." **(JMSB)**

The wrong beliefs and behaviors greatly affected relationships among the believers in the church, so it was necessary for Paul to instruct them in the reality of the church as the Body of Christ and how the Body is to function. Therefore, spending a **rather extensive amount of time** dealing with the exercise of the spiritual gifts in relationship to the Body is very logical and necessary. As you can see from the timeline above, **chronologically 1 Corinthians is the first mention of spiritual gifts in Paul's writing**, so its considerable detail is **foundational** to their understanding (as well as ours).

However, **Romans, written c. 57** possibly from Corinth, was **written to present the basics of salvation to a church that had not received the teaching of an apostle before.** In Romans Paul has **no need for extensive teaching on the gifts**, except in relationship to the overall function of the church as the Body of Christ. More specific information and clarification related to the spiritual gifts were available to the Roman church from the earlier letter to the Corinthians, which they would no doubt have access to.

CATEGORIES OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

A list of the gifts is found in two separate passages—the first, in 1 Corinthians 12:7-11 lists 10 spiritual gifts or *"manifestations of the Spirit."* A manifestation refers to the means or expression by which the Spirit acts (since He is hidden); manifestations vary in each individual. **(JFB)** The second passage in 1 Corinthians 12:27-31 lists 5 gifts, with some overlap, and 3 of a different *category* referred to as **Gifted Men**. **(JM–GM-1)** The purpose of these lists is to **show a variety**, not a complete list, of the gifts by clarifying and emphasizing that each of them are given to various people from the same Spirit, the Holy Spirit, for the purpose of edifying the church.

Category 1. **The Gifted Men** are given to **the church**, not individual believers, so they cannot technically be called spiritual gifts; there is a clear distinction between **Gifted Men** and spiritual gifts. The **Gifted Men** are not "grace gifts" but are **foundational and fundamental positions** in the church, official **titles** with special ministries. **The Gifted Men** include: **Apostles**, **Prophets**, **Evangelists**, **Shepherds (Pastor-Teacher)** and **Teachers**. Christians all receive spiritual gifts, but **The Gifted Men** are appointed by God in the church as **gifts to the believers** for the purpose of building up the Body of Christ and preparing the believers for the work of the ministry in the church. (see Eph. 4:11-13 below) **(JM–GM-1)** FYI–**The Gifted Men** also have received their own individual spiritual gifts.

1 Corinthians 12:28—*And God has APPOINTED in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues* [languages].

NOTE: The context of First Corinthians 12 is **correcting the church's misunderstanding about the nature of spiritual gifts**, especially their assumption that the more spectacular gifts were more important. 1 Corinthians 12 focuses on the **manifestations of the spirit**. In this passage there are both Gifted Men AND spiritual gifts. **(GPL)**

Ephesians 4:11-13—*11 And he* [Christ] *GAVE the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers,* 12 *to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.* 13 *until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ....* **(ESV)**

Ephesians 4:11-13—*11 And He Himself gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,* 12 *for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ,* 13 *until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ....* **(LSB)**

NOTE: The context of Ephesians 4:1-16 is **the establishment of the church**, and the **role of apostles/evangelists and prophets/pastor-teachers in the founding/formation of the church**. This passage ONLY lists the Gifted Men and NONE of the spiritual gifts. **(GPL)** Also note *"the"* and *"some as"*—these serve as "markers" to identify four positions/offices, not five; a similar construct exists in the Greek.

The **Apostles** **(1 Corinthians 12:28, Ephesians 4:11)** were the primary gifted men, **foundational positions** in the history of the early church. Ephesians 2:20 tells us that the church was *"built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets."* The primary Apostles were "The Twelve," and some secondary "apostles to the churches" are mentioned in. **Acts 14:14, 2 Corinthians 8:23, and Galatians 1:19** They were a unique group for a unique, rather brief, period of history. MacArthur quotes another American pastor, Dr. W. A. Criswell who unequivocally states, "The Apostles had no successors. Like the delegates to a constitutional convention, when their work was done, the office ceased." They are seldom mentioned after Acts 1, and the only use of ***"apostolos"*** in the rest of the NT are references to Paul, the Twelve, and "apostles/messengers" to the churches. The last time recorded that the Apostles ever met together is in Acts 15; after that they were then "scattered all over the world and never appeared again. Why? When they were gone, they were gone—period." **(JM–GM-1)** When the twelve true Apostles died, no one took their place because they had a **non-transferable commission given them directly by Jesus Christ**. When they died, it was over; there was no apostolic succession. Consequently, there is no past or present *apostolic gift*; apostle is not listed as a "spiritual gift." **(JM–GM-2)**

Prophets **(1 Corinthians 12:28, Ephesians 4:11)** means "one who speaks out." It was **always** connected with the idea of speaking *forth*. A prophet was someone who gave God a voice in the world; like the Apostles, NT Prophets were a **foundational position** in the early church ministering to local congregations. They spoke for God, sometimes by direct revelation, and sometimes based on what they had learned from the Apostles. **The Apostles laid the doctrinal basis—the Word of God**, and **the Prophets gave practical advice to the church, which was subject to the Apostles' teaching.** The Prophets had the vital ministry of **communicating God's truth to the church in its infancy, until the Word of God could be written and distributed**—providing the foundation for the church. Once that was accomplished, the Apostles and Prophets ceased to have any purpose. [For additional information/study, check out this article on who the prophets were on the Got Questions website **(GQ-BP)**.]

> "The prophets were a temporary group. They were around only until the close of the Old Testament canon. Then the prophets don't appear in the 400-year period after the Old Testament. When the New Testament is to be written, prophets appear again. But as soon as the New Testament is completed, the prophets disappear again. There aren't any prophets today because the Word of God gives us all we need." **(JM–GM-1)**

When the Apostles and Prophets (**FOUNDATIONAL positions**–not gifts) passed from the scene, their ministry was taken over by another group of **Gifted Men** holding **FUNDAMENTAL positions (not gifts)** in the church—Evangelists, Shepherds (Teaching Pastors) and Teachers. The foundation had been laid by the Apostles and Prophets, but important structural leadership was necessary to teach and guide the church, "*to equip the saints for the work of ministry.*" (Ephesians 4:12)

An **Evangelist** (Ephesians 4:11) is **one who proclaims the good news**, a preacher of the Gospel. (**Acts 8:4, 2 Timothy 4:5**) They were and are the "successors" to the Apostles after they died and continued the ministry of **proclaiming the Word**. Evangelists are given to the church and energized for the purpose of winning people to Christ and teaching the Word of God. An itinerant preacher of the gospel can be an evangelist. **(JM–GM-2)**

Shepherds/Pastor-Teachers (Ephesians 4:11) fills up the void left when the Prophets died. *"Pastor"* means "protect the flock," and *"Teacher"* means "feed the flock"—protect and feed, hence *"Shepherd"* in ESV. (**Acts 20:28-31**) MacArthur uses pastor-teacher, teaching pastor, and teaching shepherd interchangeably; he also notes that they are sometimes referred to as elders or overseers. **A pastor-teacher is given to a local congregation and most often stays in one place in order to shepherd and mature the people**, ministering to their practical needs by applying doctrine. He guards and protects the flock, builds safeguards for them, warns them, challenges, and instructs them. **(JM–GM-2)**

Teachers (1 Corinthians 12:28) This position of *"teachers"* is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12; some people equate this with *"pastor-teachers"* in Ephesians 4. There is not perfect agreement, since others see them as separate positions. If taken as a separate, these are **men who have spent their lives studying**—this would include teachers who are not pastors, such as seminary professors, researchers who publish books, etc. God has given teachers to His church in order to supplement, undergird, and add to the ministries of evangelists and teaching pastors. **(JM–GM-2)**

10. What thoughts or questions do you have concerning the Gifted Men?

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul clearly differentiates between the **Gifted Men**, who were **APPOINTED**, and the **Spiritual Gifts**, which were **GIVEN** to each believer. He makes no distinction between **permanent** or **temporary gifts**, nor between the basic functions of the gifts. The purpose of the gifts is simply stated as *"for the common good,"* for the benefit of the Body. MacArthur uses 3 different "categories" of spiritual gifts to help clarify what the gifts are, their purpose, and the time period in which they were/are active. He calls these categories **Temporary Sign Gifts**, **Permanent Speaking Gifts**, and **Permanent Serving Gifts**.

Category 2. **The Temporary Sign Gifts** were given for the purpose of **certifying and confirming the authority of the Apostles** and **the authority of the Word** when the Gospel was still being proclaimed to non-believers and in the early church, **before the Scriptures were completed**. The **Temporary Sign Gifts** include: **Miracles**, **Healing**, **Tongues (Languages)**, and the **Interpretation of Tongues (Languages)**. Their primary purpose was **not edification of the Body**, as the other 2 categories of gifts are intended (see *3* and *4* below), though they accomplished edification in a *secondary* sense. **(JM–TSG-1)**

1 Corinthians 12:28-31— *[28] And God has APPOINTED in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues* [language]. *[29] Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? [30] Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? [31] But earnestly desire the higher gifts....*

1 Corinthians 12:7-11— *[7] To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. [8] For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, [9] to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, [10] to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. [11] All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.*

Miracles (1 Corinthians 12:28-29, 1 Corinthians 12:10) are **supernatural intrusions** into natural law which can have **no other explanation than God is acting.** God created the universe and put the natural laws into place, so the world and everything in it functioned in the way He designed and decreed. (Proverbs 16:4) He did not frequently interfer or insert Himself openly or physically into people's daily lives. However, once in a long while, God wanted to **get peoples' attention**, to let them know **He was speaking**, so He chose to do something **so astounding** that it could not be done through natural law—He made an ax head float on water, parted the Red Sea, fed thousands of people with only 5 loaves and 2 fish, and raised someone from the dead (not to mention that HE was raised from the dead)—just so people wouldn't forget that **HE** was the one running the show! After the resurrection and ascension, His divine power continued **through the Apostles whom He had chosen to complete this great work**. (Acts 1:8) **(JM–TSG-1)**

Miracles had a **LIMITED PURPOSE**—**to prove that God was speaking**, revealing who He is, His purposes, and His plans. God gave certain men the power to perform miracles (Moses, Aaron, Elijah, Elisha, Jesus, the apostles) to confirm **that specific MAN** had **the authority to speak for God**. There are some who claim that miracles continue to occur today, contending they are receiving 'new revelation' from God through dreams and visions, prophecy, and words directly from God. If this were true, they would be *claiming* that God is still revealing His Word today. However, if He is still revealing His Word, then the Bible is incomplete. Furthermore, if WE believe that **the Word of God is complete and closed**, that **God's revelation has ceased**, there is **no reason for a continuation of miracles**. From the Gospels on through Acts there is a *diminishing occurrence* of miracles, and by the time of Paul's epistles, miracles were gone. (Revelation 22:18) **(JM–TSG-1)**

Miracles were **LIMITED TO SPECIFIC PERIODS OF TIME**. The Scriptures do not record Jesus performing any miracles prior to His public ministry when He was 30 years old; those miracles only occurred when the time came for **His revelation as God**.

> "Not all ages are miracle ages. If you study the Old Testament, there really are only two periods of miracles: One, the revealing of the law to Moses; and two, the lives of Elijah and Elisha when God was laying down the platform of prophetic revelation through His prophets. The rest of the Old Testament contains very few references of use of miracles, and none at the end of the Old Testament. Miracles have not been occurring all the time since the first one. **When God was revealing either His written Word or Christ, His living Word, it was then and only then that He used miracles as a corroborating and confirming sign.**" **(JM–TSG-1)**

Miracles were **LIMITED TO SPECIFIC PEOPLE**. **Jesus** didn't perform miracles to persuade people to believe, but to **provide evidence/prove that He was God**. He miraculously fed thousands, yet there were only about 500 believers when He was raised from the dead. (1 Corinthians 15:6) Jesus didn't

persuade many people, in fact, God never used miracles to **save** people; He has **always saved people through the preaching of the Gospel**. Since there was yet no written word to corroborate their preaching, God gave the **Apostles and Prophets** **miraculous abilities to validate that *only* these men were qualified to speak for God.** Once the evidence was complete that Jesus was God, Christ finished His work, the Apostles wrote it down, and then the gift faded away. Today, if someone says that he is a prophet of God or can produce miracles, we should be skeptical at the very least; most appropriately, we should hold unwaveringly to the Truth given to us in the Word and reject his claims as unbiblical. **(JM–TSG-1)**

Healing **(1 Corinthians 12:28,30, 1 Corinthians 12:9)**, as a spiritual gift, **the gift of healing**, is a very controversial subject. God CAN heal in answer to prayer. God has the power to do whatever He wants, however He wants, and whenever He wants to do it. God can certainly heal miraculously in answer to prayer **in order to reveal His glory**, however, there is a huge difference between **the healing by God** (for His own glory) and **the gift of healing** (for the healer's glory, for relief/pain, or strictly for convenience).

Healing, like **Miracles** above, also had a **LIMITED PURPOSE**, was **LIMITED TO SPECIFIC PERIODS OF TIME**, and was **LIMITED TO SPECIFIC PEOPLE**. Jesus gave the Apostles the power and authority to heal diseases, **to substantiate their power and authority as coming from Him**. (Luke 9:1-2) The gift of healing belonged to Christ; He also extended those abilities to 2 other groups—the Seventy and some associates of the Apostles (i.e. Philip). (Luke 10:1-3, 9) God allowed these men to heal in **the exact manner in which Jesus healed**. There are no other instances in the NT of the ability to heal; the gift of healing cannot be found randomly in the early churches. During the time that Paul was writing his epistles, people become sick, but they stayed sick...including Paul. He had the gift of healing, but he never used it apart from the original purpose, as demonstrated by Christ. Paul prayed for others, and himself, but he never randomly healed their sickness. **(JM–TSG-2)**

Jesus didn't tell His disciples (or us), "Go into all the world and banish disease." He said, *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel"* (Matthew 28:19). **Jesus is more concerned about the soul of a person than He is the body of a person** (Matthew 10:28). **(JM–TSG-2)**

> "Why is it that the people who claim to have the gift don't leave their tents? Why do they have to perform their gift in a controlled environment — staged their way, run by their operation, begins on time and ends on time? Why aren't they in the hospitals? Why aren't they out in the areas of the world where people are really hurting? It just doesn't happen. Why? I submit that they don't have the gift of healing." **(JM–TSG-2)**

Our response to those who claim the gift of healing should be the same as those who claim other miracles—don't believe them or get drawn into their false teaching. (James 1:2-8, John 16:33, 2 Timothy 1:12-14)

Tongues/Languages **(1 Corinthians 12:28-29, 1 Corinthians 12:10)** , the gift of tongues (**glōssa—literally "language"**) was a **"divinely bestowed supernatural ability to speak in a human language that had not been learned by the one speaking."**

The gift of tongues, like **Miracles** and **Healing** above, also had a **LIMITED PURPOSE**, was **LIMITED TO SPECIFIC PERIODS OF TIME**, and was **LIMITED TO SPECIFIC PEOPLE**. Paul gave extensive instructions and restrictions in 1 Corinthians 14 regarding the gifts of tongues, especially compared to prophecy. He mandated that believers who exercised the gift of tongues in church could **only speak one person at a time**, and **only two or three were to speak in a given service**. Furthermore, when tongues were spoken, they were to **be interpreted** by someone with the **gift of interpretation** so that others in the congregation could **be edified by the God-given message**. (1 Corinthians 14:27) **(JM–GoT)**

1 Corinthians 14:2-5—[2] *For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit.* [3] *On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.* [4] *The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies builds up the church. Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be built up.*

In 1 Corinthians 14:2-5, it is important to note a foundational distinction between the singular *"tongue"* and the plural *"tongues."* Paul seems to use the singular *"tongue"* to distinguish the **"counterfeit gift of pagan gibberish"** [since "gibberish" cannot be a plural—there cannot be various kinds of *non-language*] and the plural *"tongues"* to indicate **"the genuine gift of a foreign language"** [there ARE many *"various kinds of languages"* (12:10, 28)]; the only *exceptions* to this appear in **1 Corinthians 14:13, 27-28** since Paul is speaking about a *singular person* speaking in *a foreign language*, therefore *"tongue"* is appropriate and correct. Consequently, the gift of tongues cannot be "a private prayer language," as some claim today, but rather, this is, like all spiritual gifts, for the purpose of serving and edifying the Body of Christ, not the individual alone. (**1 Corinthians 12:7; 1 Peter 4:10, Romans 12:4-6a**) **(JMSB)**

1 Corinthians 13:8-10—[8] Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. [9] For we know in part and we prophesy in part, [10] but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away.

*"Love never **ends**"* comes from a Greek word meaning "to **decay**" or "to **be abolished**." Paul was not saying that love is invincible or that it cannot be rejected; he meant that **love is eternal**—it will be applicable forever and will never be outdated. However, *"prophesies will **pass away,**"* meaning "to render inoperative or invalid, abolish." **(LW)** But most importantly, *"tongues will cease"* meaning "to cease **permanently**," implying that when tongues ceased, they would never start up again. **(JM–GoT)** "The last recorded miracles in the New Testament occurred around A.D. 58, with the healings on the island of Malta (Acts 28:7-10). From A.D. 58 to 96, when John finished the book of Revelation, **no miracles were recorded**. Miracle gifts like tongues and healing are mentioned only in 1 Corinthians, an early epistle. **Two later epistles, Ephesians and Romans, both discuss gifts of the Spirit at length—but no mention is made of the miraculous gifts**. By that time, miracles were already looked on as something in the past (**Hebrews 2:3-4**). **Apostolic authority and the apostolic message needed no further confirmation.**" **(JM–GoT)**

The Interpretation of Tongues/Languages **(1 Corinthians 12:31, 1 Corinthians 12:10)** is a gift that is required to operate in conjunction with/alongside the gift of tongues. It is mentioned in only 5 passages—1 Corinthians 12:10, 30; 14:13, 27, 28. The word for *"interpretation"* literally means "translation," so if one person had the gift of speaking in **true languages**, someone else had **the gift of translating them so that what was spoken could be understood by other believers**. [It would be impossible to translate gibberish!] The whole area of miracles, which can include healing, speaking in tongues, and interpretation, had nothing to do with believers. Its purpose was **to confirm the Word to unbelievers**. **(JM–GoB)**

1 Corinthians 12:7-11— [7] *To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.* [8] *For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit,* [9] *to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit,* [10] *to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.* [11] *All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.*

11. What thoughts or questions do you have concerning the **Temporary Sign Gifts**?

The Apostles and Prophets in **The Gifted Men** category, and the **Temporary Sign Gifts** have both ceased. MacArthur further identifies **Permanent Edifying Gifts**, which he divides into 2 separate categories— **Permanent Speaking Gifts** and **Permanent Serving Gifts**. The Spirit of God has given these specific permanent/continuing gifts to individual believers, through which the Holy Spirit ministers to the church, the Body, for the **duration of the church's ministry**, that is, **until He returns for His Bride**. There are 11 such gifts mentioned in the NT, in several of the passages we have studied. **In those passages, they are not listed in any particular order** (*except for the Gifted Men*), **so the order is not particularly important, and neither are all of them listed in a single passage.** As we have already mentioned, they are like colors on an artist's palette—the Holy Spirit mixes these eleven "primary colors" into combinations, so that each believer has one **specific gift**, **a combination of the various categories of gifts blended together uniquely for each Christian**. (1 Corinthian 12:11 above) **(JM–PEG-1)**

Category 3. Permanent Speaking Gifts are directly related to **proclaiming the Word of God**, and certainly some of these gifts are blended together in varying degrees and may be almost indistinguishable as separate giftings. The **Permanent Speaking Gifts** include: **Prophecy**, **The Word of Knowledge**, **The Word of Wisdom**, **Teaching**, and **Exhortation.** The Christian life is intended to be a Spirit-dominated, Spirit-directed, and Spirit-controlled existence. As we learn and grow in our spiritual lives, the Spirit of God moves within us and operates through us, through those **gifts of grace** given to **manifest** (reveal, demonstrate) the character of Christ in an individual believer for the benefit of the Body of Christ. These gifts "**non-miraculous**" gifts, though they are **supernatural as energized by the Spirit**; they are also permanent because **God is still doing these things**, and **God's people are still ministering in these ways**. **(JM–PEG-1)** Let's begin with our Romans 12 text!

Romans 12:6-8—*6 Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; 7 if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; 8 the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.*

1 Corinthians 12:7-11— *7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 8 For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.*

1 Peter 4:10-11—*10 As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: 11 whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.*

1 Corinthians 14:3—*...the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.*

Prophecy (Romans 12:6, 1 Corinthians 7:10, 1 Corinthians 14:3) is simply the gift of proclaiming Christ to an audience; **it is separate from the foundational position of Prophet, as one of The Gifted Men.** *"Prophecy"* means "to speak before"—not "to speak before" in terms of time, but **"to speak before/in front of" an audience**. The gift of prophecy is not **relevatory** (disclosing something never before disclosed, saying something never before said, knowing something never before known); instead, the **gift of prophecy** is **proclamation** (announcing or declaring something that God has already revealed in the past). Prophecy, in this sense, is vital because it ministers to both believers (1 Corinthians 14:3) and to unbelievers (1 Corinthians 14:24-25, Revelation 19:10, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-21, 1 Corinthians 14:37). (JM–PEG-1)

The Word of Knowledge (or *"Utterance of Knowledge"*) (1 Corinthians 12:8) is **the Spirit-given ability to observe biblical principles and facts, then make conclusions**. In other words, it is the ability to **understand the mysteries that have been revealed in the Bible,** which are necessary for biblical interpretation. By taking what was already written in God's Word, the word of knowledge can be developed into practical insights and information. People with this gift are the writers, scholars, teachers, professors, and researchers which are vital for building up the Body through knowledge. Paul certainly had this gifting of knowledge (however, **his gift of knowledge was revelatory on occasion** because he was an Apostle). (Ephesians 3:3-5, Colossians 1:25-27). (JM–PEG-1)

The Word of Wisdom (or *"Utterance of Wisdom"*) (1 Corinthians 12:8) is different from the word of knowledge since the emphasis is on **the skill of application rather than limited to the knowledge of facts**. Wisdom is the ability to take the facts that the gift of knowledge has brought out and make a skillful application of it. This gift could belong to a mentor or Christian counselor, who identifies a problem, and then through his/her knowledge of the Word of God, draws out the principles that can be practically applied to solve a problem. The expositor can take the Word of God, study commentaries or other sources, reading materials from those who have the gift of knowledge, and then drawing applicable principles for living. This gift is not reserved only for those in professional ministry, but can also be a gift that a lay person possesses to minister to another believer by assisting him in his practical life. (Mark 6:2, Acts 6:10, James 1:5, James 3:13, 17) The gifts of knowledge and wisdom are also quite different. There are people who have a great deal of Bible knowledge, but virtually no wisdom. They may have vast amounts of knowledge in their mind, but they can't seem to make it work in their life. Wisdom is the ability to understand God's will and make an application to obedience. (JM–PEG-1)

"Knowledge is the collecting of facts; wisdom is the application."

Teaching (Romans 12:7) is **the communicative ability to pass on truth to someone else**, through the **divine power of the Holy Spirit**, so that they receive it and can implement it. The root Greek meaning has the idea of systematic teaching or systematic training. (Acts 18:24–25, 2 Timothy 2:2, 1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:9, 1 Timothy 4:16) The gift of teaching is the ability to take a person through a systematic process from one point to another. There is a clear differentiation between the **gift of teaching** and the **office of Teacher**. A Teacher in the church is an **official position**, although he would almost certainly have the gift of teaching. However, not all who have the gift of teaching are recognized as official teachers because the gift can be exercised in so many ways. (JM–PEG-1) Teaching, here, is also not just a skill that can be learned or gained through training, such as in a university setting; the gift of teaching is a **manifestation of the power of the Holy Spirit**.

Exhortation (Romans 12:8) is **the gift of encouraging and strengthening**. God has provided certain people to the Body whose mission or responsibility is not necessarily to proclaim or teach the Word. This gift enables a believer to effectively call others to obey and follow God's truth; it may be used *"negatively"* to admonish and correct regarding sin (2 Timothy 4:2). *"Negatively"* here does not mean bad or harmful, but that it may not feel wonderful when it happens. Exhortation can also be used *"positively,"* to comfort, encourage, help, advise, strengthen someone who needs it. Both the *"negative"* and *"positive"* are necessary for encouragement and strengthening—the process of sanctification! (2 Corinthians 1:3–5; Hebrews 10:24–25) (JM–PEG-1)

12. What thoughts or questions do you have concerning the **Permanent Speaking Gifts** ?

Category 4. **Permanent Serving Gifts** are obviously related to **serving someone's need**, and, again, these gifts can be blended together in varying degrees the **Permanent Serving Gifts** include: **Leadership**, **Serving**, **Giving**, **Mercy**, **Faith**, and **Discernment.** These gifts are also permanent because **God's people are still ministering in these ways**. As we look at all of the passages together below, it's very clear to see that the giftings are not listed in any certain order (*except for the Gifted Men*), neither are they organized by the category of the gift— **The Gifted Men**, the **Temporary Sign Gifts**, the **Permanent Speaking Gifts** nor the **Permanent Serving Gifts**. Back to our Romans 12 text!

Romans 12:6-8—*6 Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; 7 if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; 8 the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.*

1 Corinthians 12:7-11— *7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 8 For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.*

1 Corinthians 12:28-31— *28 And God has APPOINTED in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues* [language]. *29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30 Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? 31 But earnestly desire the higher gifts....*

1 Peter 4:10-11—*10 As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: 11 whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.*

13. What do you notice about these 4 passages of Scripture describing the spiritual gifts?

Leadership (Romans 12:8) refers to the skill of piloting a ship (i.e. managing the helm of the ship, charting the course, knowing the destination, and keeping the ship on course); essentially it is **direction and decision-making abilities**. Leadership is also translated as *"administration"* (ESV, LSB, NASB), *"governments"* (NKJV, ASV), and *"guidance"* (NIV). It is the ability to recognize a need (an objective), to act quickly to determine the structure of what is required to meet the objective, to mobilize a group of people to act, and then guide them to reach that objective. The Greek word assumes that the leader **has wisdom and the ability to solve a problem by taking principles from the Word and making practical application.** (1 Timothy 5:17) There is a difference between someone who has **wisdom in leadership** and someone who has **the gifting of the word of wisdom** (above). The **wisdom in leadership is an enablement from the Holy Spirit for someone to wisely approach and reach an objective**. Many people have skills, and even wisdom, in leadership who do not have the verbal, proclaiming wisdom that **is given by God**. Certainly, the gift of leadership is necessary for the pastoral staff and elders that lead the church, but it has to go beyond the church leaders; it MUST extend throughout the body of Christ. (Hebrews 13:7, 17) **(JM–PEG-2)**.

Serving (Romans 12:7, 1 Corinthians 12:28) is **a supporting gift, a helping gift**; it is also translated as *"ministry"* in the NKJV. "Help" literally means "to take a burden off of someone else and place it on yourself." It is the gift that **comes alongside leadership**. They have **the responsibility of implementing all of the things that the leadership is doing.** The gift of serving/helping is the gift that allows everything to occur. The people who have this gift are able to give every kind of practical help through any possible way. (Acts 6:1-3, 1 Timothy 6:2, Philippians 2:25-30) **(JM–PEG-2)**

Giving (Romans 12:8), the **gift of giving** is only mentioned in one verse, Romans 12:8—*"...the one who contributes, in generosity...."*; the Greek word means to "super give," the same Greek word used for *"deacon"* and *"deaconess."* Giving includes **sacrificially sharing or supplying others from one's own resources, or possibly distributing what has been given by others**. (2 Corinthians 8:3–5, 11) This is not limited to only physical finances or goods, but in the giving of one's self to meet the needs of others. **(NIVSB)** The gift of giving is to be accomplished with singleness of mind and with **no consideration of self**. It is not a public gift. Giving with pretension and public display is not a gift—it's hypocrisy. Paul makes it clear that the spiritual gift of giving is generous, sincere, liberal, openhearted, unselfish giving. The believer who gives with a pure heart and attitude does not give to receive thanks or personal recognition, but to glorify God, who has fully given Himself for the sake of His children. **(**2 Corinthians 8:9) **(JM–PEG-2)**

Mercy (Romans 12:8) means **"pity," "compassion," or "sympathy," a term that is characteristic of the nature of God**. The gift of mercy concerns compassion of the heart. *"Mercy"* is often confused with *"grace,"* when we talk about God's grace or God's mercy, we sometimes don't distinguish between them. **Grace** is extended to men **in relation to guilt**, *a result of their sin*. **Mercy** is extended to men **in relation to misery**, *a result of their situation*. *"Grace"* is God taking care of our sin; *"mercy"* is God taking care of the mess we are in. (Proverbs 14:20-21, Proverbs 14:31, Hosea 4:1-2a) God is merciful in that He freely, without any worthiness on our part, takes us out of our misery and meets every need. In the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), the man is motivated solely by compassion: he has no ulterior motive and knows there will be no response or recompense from the stranger, and absolutely nothing to be gained except the joy that comes from showing the mercy/compassion that was in his heart. This is the beauty of the spiritual gift—the pure selflessness generated by the working of the Holy Spirit. "**The poor, the orphans, the mugged, the beat-up, the**

maimed, the rejected, the demon-possessed, and the despised who are the recipients of mercy throughout the pages of the Bible." (**Matthew 9:27-29, Matthew 15:21-28, Matthew 17:14-15, Matthew 20:29-31, 34, Acts 9:36-40**) **(JM–PEG-3)**

Faith **(1 Corinthians 12:9)** is **a supernatural capacity for believing God**; for someone with this gift, **obstacles are only "challenges" or a bother** because they have **the ability to believe what others cannot see**. The gift of faith is not the same as *saving faith*—all believers have received that. It is also not common/generic faith by which all believers lead their lives. This is a special gift, limited to certain Christians, who possess **an all-encompassing ability to trust God**—an **unusual capacity** to believe God in the face of a fierce storm, in the face of enormous barriers and difficulties. (**Matthew 17:20, 1 Corinthians 13:2, Matthew 21:22**) This is the essential kind of faith that supports and undergirds all members of the Body because all spiritual gifts benefit and strengthen others. **(JM–PEG-3)**

Discernment (or *"discerning of spirits"* or *"distinguishing between spirits,"*) **(1 Corinthians 12:10)** means "to judge through, to see through to the truth, to truly evaluate something"—simply, **to evaluate the spirit, whether it is God/the Holy Spirit, or a false/evil spirit other than the Holy Spirit** (masquerading as the H.S.)**.** In the early church, this gift was the "guard dog"—the patrol, the monitor, the protector of the church. The Spirit of God gave a **supernatural ability** to certain people who could determine what was true from that which was false; this was, and is, a vital gift for the protection of the church. (**1 Thessalonians 5:21, 1 John 4:1-6, 1 Timothy 4:1**)

In **Acts 16:16-18**, Paul knew that the slave girl was not operating from the Holy Spirit, but from a demon spirit. **The gift of discernment was given to recognize the Satanic counterfeit**. Though some believe this gift is no longer needed because we can always recognize a counterfeit by comparing what someone says or does with Scripture, MacArthur believes there is no place in the Scripture to indicate that the gift of discernment has ceased, so it seems this gifting is profitable in any period of history. The church needs protection today from false doctrine as much as she ever did.

1 Thessalonians 5:21 tells us, *"... test everything; hold fast what is good."* Believers should never, without question, accept anyone who claims to speak in the name of the Lord; every teaching must be tested. **(NIVSB)** In 1 John 4, the apostle John provides two doctrinal tests for believers to bear in mind **to determine truth from error** and **false teachers from true teachers**. First, ***"by this you know the Spirit of God**: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God."* (4:2-3) This does not mean that someone who believes Jesus existed as a person "*is from God,"* but **they must acknowledge and proclaim that Jesus is God incarnate in human flesh**—He is fully human and fully God. The second test—*"We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. **By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error**."* (4:6) The essential idea here is **they must follow apostolic doctrine, which was preached by the Apostles and established as God's Word in the New and Old Testaments, and they must accurately and faithfully speak God's Word.** **(JMSB)**

A Christian with the gift of discernment can intuitively (by the enabling of the Holy Spirit) identify truth from error and hypocrisy from genuineness. They have the capacity to **see through** what *might seem apparent on the surface* to the *inner core of its deceitfulness*. **(JM–PEG-3)**

Applications for Discernment:

- To Identify **Demonism**—"I don't know what it is, but something is wrong." "Something is not right." They are protecting the church.
- To Identify **Carnality**—I [MacArthur] think the gift can even be used to perceive the intrusion of carnal elements into worship. In any ministry throughout the church, there are people who might be ministering in the flesh. There are some people who can read that, while the rest of us don't know what is going on.
- To Identify **the True Spirit**
- To Identify **Truth from Error**— Someone with the gift of discernment might be able to determine who is right and who is wrong in a situation. **(JM–PEG-3)**

14. What thoughts or questions do you have concerning the **Permanent Serving Gifts**?

"There is a beautiful progression in these gifts. This is how God ministers to His body: Prophecy proclaims the truth. Knowledge clarifies the truth. Wisdom applies the truth. Teaching imparts the truth to someone else. Exhortation demands that it be obeyed. All of them come together as we minister to each other so that the body might be built up. Luther said, 'Teaching is directed to the ignorant, exhortation to those who know better.'" **(JM–PEG-1)**

As we are winding down our prolonged wander through 1 Corinthians 12, verse 31 brings us to a transition point in Paul's teaching about the Body and the spiritual gifts; He tells us, *"But earnestly desire the best gifts."* What are *"the best gifts?"* Skipping over chapter 13 for a brief moment, in 1 Corinthians 14:1, Paul shifts from his "relatively disordered" list of the gifts in 1 Corinthians 12— [in terms of MacArthur's categories, meaning that the gifted men, the temporary sign gifts, the permanent speaking gifts and the permanent serving gifts are all somewhat woven together]—to an explanation with somewhat of a hierarchy of *"the best gifts."* (**1 Corinthians 14:1-5**)

15. What are his 2 exhortations in 14:1?

16. What does he seem to identify as *"the best gift?"* (14:1)

17. Looking back if needed, what is his intended meaning for what we should "especially" desire?

18. What is his rationale? (14:2-5)

Finally, in 1 Corinthians 12:31, Paul says, *"And yet I show you a **more excellent** way."*

Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

Paul now shows the "***more excellent** way"* to exercise **all** spiritual gifts—**the way of love**. He does not identify *"love"* as a gift; rather, it is a fruit of the Spirit. (**Galatians 5:22-23**) **(NIVSB)** We know that Paul DID speak in tongues (**1 Corinthians 14:18**), but he is also using **hyperbole**—i.e. tongues (the language) of angels—there is no indication that Paul, nor anyone in the Bible, spoke the tongues of angels. What was NOT hyperbole was the realization that if he did not speak in love (with a selfless concern for the welfare of others), it would be nothing but noise! **(NIVSB)** That's the whole point!

It is important to remember from context that the purpose of Paul's teaching on the spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians and his purpose in Romans was very different. (Refer back at pages 157-158) Romans is **pure instruction**, while Corinthians involves **a lot of correction**. The Roman church was NOT in need of correction, since there is zero evidence that they were in error. **(GPL)**

Read Romans 12:6-8

19. As a reminder, moving back to our key text, Romans 12, how were the spiritual gifts distributed? (3d, 6a)

20. What does Paul tell us we should do? (6b) Why do you think he instructed us to do that?

In verse 6, it seems clear that Paul regards **all of the spiritual gifts**, though they differ from believer to believer, **as endowments of grace given from Jesus Christ**! He alone is the source of all the giftings, and the giftings are not the same for each believer. **(JFB)**

21. Into which of the categories that we discussed are the 7 gifts of Romans 12? What do you notice about them?

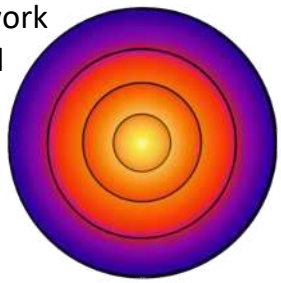
It's interesting to note that **NONE** of the miraculous gifts are listed here, or even hinted at. Paul is simply **describing the unity, yet diversity, in the Body of Christ** and **giving the Roman believers instructions in how to serve and edify each other as members of a unified Body**. The phrasing of verses 6-8 is parallel in construction, indicating that God has given each person (*"the one... the one... the one... the one... the one"*) the **exact gifting**/enablement in the **exact measure** or proportion (*"according to the grace given to us"*) needed to accomplish what God has given each of them to do. (**Ephesians 2:8-10, 2 Timothy 2:15**)

> "It was never designed that all Christians should be equal. God designed that people should have different endowments. The very nature of society supposes this. There never was a state of perfect equality in anything; and it would be impossible that there should be, and yet preserve society. In this, God exercises a sovereignty, and bestows his favors as he pleases, injuring no one by conferring favors on others; and holding me responsible for the right use of what I have, and not for what may be conferred on my neighbor." **(BSB)**

Preview Romans 12:9-21

In this final section of Romans 12, Paul sets down more than 20 clear cut exhortations that must characterize a Spirit-filled Christian life. MacArthur believes that the **heart** of the Book of Romans begins in 12:9—Paul's intent for this letter to the Romans was to call believers to live a certain kind of life, **consistent with the reality of their true selves** as believers and disciples of Jesus Christ. This new lifestyle must, of necessity, encompass **EVERY** aspect of a believer's life—family, friendships, work, aspirations, priorities, entertainment, etc. **(JM–BbB-1)** (**Matthew 7:13-14, Matthew 10:37-39, John 15:18-19**) In this section, he presents the explanation for Romans 12:1, what it means *"to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God."*

From these exhortations in Romans 12:9-21, MacArthur provides a practical framework or model for classifying these principles for living the Christian life which are general enough to pertain to every area of life, yet specific enough to be directly applicable to any circumstance a believer faces. It is most definitely not a comprehensive list, but offers a broad spectrum of relevant instruction. His structure involves a**n ever-expanding circle of responsibility**. **(JM–BbB-1)**



Circles of Responsibility for Living the Christian Life

Read Romans 12:9

The first Circle of Responsibility in our structure is personal, it begins with **US**. [This is not to say that we are the center of the universe! 😱] These first three instructions/responsibilities are prerequisite **attitudes** for **each** of us as **individuals** regarding the way we are to live. These are **beliefs** and **convictions** which are deep within us, *not actions or behaviors*, although these foundational attributes will make themselves known through our actions.

- **Genuine/Pure Love—12:9**

It is no surprise that Paul begins this section with love; after he had explained all of the spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12, he spent a whole chapter on love–what love is and what love does. Here in Romans 12:9, Paul also goes directly to love and how the spiritual gifts function with the foundation of love. (**1 Corinthians 13:13, Romans 13:8, Galatians 5:22, John 13:34-35, 1 Peter 4:8**)

The NIV says, *"Love must be sincere,"* but the LSB, NASB, and NKJV versions are all translated as, *"Let love be **without hypocrisy**,"* which is crystal clear! This love must not be a superficial love, but a genuine, deep love that is "cleansed of self-fulfillment and self-aggrandizement," but loves others in a pure way for the sake of Jesus Christ. This type of love reaches out to others to care and support, and to meet their needs. **(JM–BbB-1)**

Hypocrisy is slick and deceitful; it is incompatible with love. Judas was most likely the greatest sinner of all because of the depth of his hypocrisy, feigning affection toward Jesus, yet actually filled with hate and greed. (**Luke 22:47-48**)

> "Christians will demonstrate the genuineness of their Christianity by the genuineness of their love. Everything without love equals nothing." **(JM–BbB-1)**

- **Hatred of Evil—12:9**

God is radically unlike us because He cannot tolerate sin or evil. Sin and evil are the antithesis of God's holy nature. (**Isaiah 6:3**) Anyone who truly loves the Lord and others must by definition hate what is evil. (**Psalm 97:10, Proverbs 8:13, 1 Thessalonians 5:22, Proverbs 6:16-19**)

A truly righteous person fiercely hates evil because of what evil is, not because of what he may suffer if he practices evil. He will hate evil because God hates evil. People who hate evil only because they may get caught or have to endure negative consequences are at the very least extremely immature and selfish, and most likely not a believer at all. A believer should hate evil because he loves holiness. **(JM–BbB-1)**

- **Commitment to Doing Good—12:9**

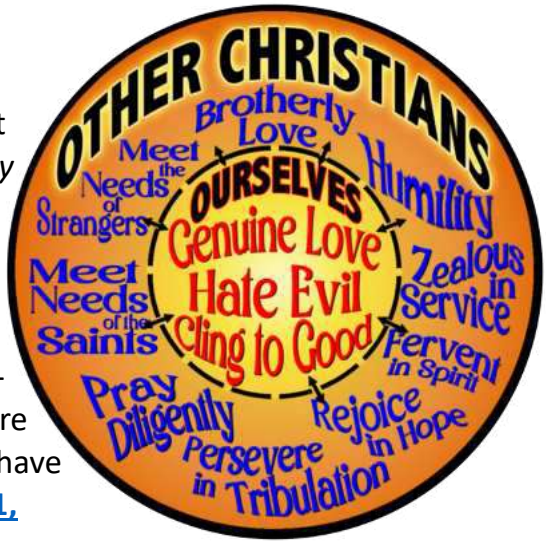
"Hold fast" or *"cling to"* in LSB, NASB, and NKJV versions, means to cleave, "to stick like glue." This same word is used to speak of the marriage bond, meaning stick to what is good, and don't ever

leave it! The "good" isn't what may appear to be good, but that which is inherently/ intrinsically/fundamentally good—perfectly good from the inside out! (Philippians 4:8, Psalm 1:1-2––notice the progression of evil— "First you walk; then you stop to see what's going on. Pretty soon you've taken your seat.") **(JM–BbB-1)**

> **"The proof of your salvation is your love of righteousness and hatred of sin, even though you might still do evil things." (JM–BbB-1)**

Read Romans 12:10-13

The next circle in our framework begins to expand in 12:10-13 to include others, specifically, the family of God, yet it still relates to all of our individual lives. There is not an absolute distinction between the instructions/responsibilities to ourselves and to others—notice the broken line and arrows between the two circles. [Sorry they are so tiny! 😉]



- **Brotherly Love—12:10**

  Again, we have a variety of slightly different translations—*"Love one another with brotherly affection"* (ESV); *"(Be) being devoted to one another in brotherly love"* (LSB, NASB); and *"Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love."* (NKJV) This love is a friendly, affectionate, familial love—a common bond that extends beyond culture, language, time, place, age, and circumstances—though outwardly we may have literally nothing in common, there is an **immediate sense of affection** and **unity** with someone we have never met, yet that one belongs to the family of God. (1 John 5:1, Ephesians 4:32, 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10, Romans 5:5) **(JM–BbB-2)**

- **Humility—12:10**

  "Showing honor" or *"preferring one another"* carries the idea of leading the way, not waiting for someone else to show honor, respect, or meet our needs—we should take the initiative to honor others, to respect and appreciate others more highly than ourselves. Through the transforming power of the Gospel and empowerment of the Holy Spirit, this attitude of humility (taking our eyes off of ourselves and exhibiting a genuine preference and concern for others) expresses a greater love for others than our love for self. (Philippians 2:3-4, Romans 13:7, Ephesians 4:1-3, 5:21) **(JM–BbB-2)**

There are still personal concerns within the second Circle of Responsibility toward the family of God. Paul now branches off from general exhortation to focus on three essentials relating to an individual's manner of serving the Lord.

- **Zealous in Service—12:11**

  Paul is essentially exhorting believers to not grow lazy in the work of the Lord, to remain fully committed to pursuing God's will while the Lord's work can be done. (John 9:4) We need to be wise in avoiding the pitfalls of our modern culture that focus so much on leisure and entertainment, instead we must grab hold of the ministry Christ has given us, being diligent to use our spiritual giftings and placement within the Body. (Galatians 6:9, Ecclesiastes 9:10, Ephesians 5:15-17, Hebrews 6:11-12) **(JM–BbB-2)**

- **Fervent in Spirit—12:11**
  "Fervent" means "to boil with heat;" we should not settle for being lukewarm or cold in regards to the work of the Lord. (Revelation 3:15-16) The Christian life ought to be filled with passion, eagerness, excitement, joy, and devotion. This fire was personified in the lives of Paul (1 Corinthians 9:24-27), Apollos (Acts 18:24-25), and Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25-30). **(JM–BbB-2)**

- **Serve the Lord—12:11**
  The first two phrases of Romans 12:11 actually characterize this third phrase— zeal and fervency should distinguish the believer's life. Intense love and dedication to the Lord Jesus brings a sense of satisfaction and joy that can never compare to anything the world has to offer. Each of these elements more completely describes what it means *"to present your bodies as a living sacrifice."*

22. Look back at Romans 12:6-8. How is our devotion to serving the Lord expressed through the gifts of the Holy Spirit?

Romans 12:7 instructs us concerning **practical** ways of serving the Lord and caring for others by meeting their needs, but *"serve"* in 12:11 means an **intense service of slavery**. The emphasis here is seeing ourselves as (and **BEING**) **slaves of Christ**, giving total service to Him alone, with eagerness and zeal. (Galatians 5:13-14) **(JM–BbB-2)**

Paul absolutely knew that this commitment would not be easy because of the **intense opposition** from an ungodly, worldly system. Jim Elliot, a Christian martyr in Ecuador, knew this, like Paul and so many others, who remained faithful, devoted slaves until their final breath.

The three exhortations in 12:12 provide comfort and encouragement in the midst of the intensity of our service to the Lord Jesus. These exhortations are definitely for the family of God, but are also exhortations and reminders for OURSELVES, connecting back to the first circle of our framework.

- **Rejoice in Hope—12:12**
  Those who serve the Lord rely on the **hope for the future, our eternal reward**. When we serve the Lord, we have a "built-in" heavenly focus, **an anchor point**. That hope and promise of eternity bring joy and strength to the faithful Christian, in spite of the indifference, opposition, and suffering we meet, and the failures we experience. **(JM–BbB-2)** We need to constantly remember to grab the rope tied to that anchor—our hope for the future, the day when we will rest from our labors and receive His reward. God receives honor and glory by our hope and trust in Him, especially when we can rejoice in that hope. **(MHC)** (John 14:1-3, Romans 8:18-25, 1 Corinthians 15:50-55, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

- **Persevere in Tribulation—12:12**
  Persevere, translated in the ESV as *"patient"* means "to stay under," to endure; a believer can stay under the pressure, affliction, or distress because they know what is coming—their eternal reward for faithfulness. (**Hebrews 10:36, John 16:33, 2 Timothy 3:12-13**)

> "We endure pain, rejection, animosity, the struggle with Satan and his demons, and everything else that defies what we are trying to accomplish for God's glory." **(JM–BbB-2)**

- **Pray with Diligence—12:12**
  We are charged to *"be constant in prayer"*—diligent, careful, attentive, committed. This is our call to communion with Him; as we bring our struggles and needs to Him in prayer, He sustains us, strengthening our faith, giving us everything we need to continue following Him faithfully. (**Romans 8:26, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, Acts 1:14**) **(JM–BbB-2)**

One commentary suggests keeping the order and the verbs of the original—"'**In hope, rejoicing; in tribulation, enduring; in prayer, persevering.**' Each of these exercises helps the other. If our 'hope' of glory is so assured that it is **a rejoicing hope**, we shall find the spirit of 'endurance in tribulation' natural and easy; but since it is 'prayer' which strengthens the faith that begets hope and lifts it up into an assured and joyful expectancy, and since our patience in tribulation is fed by this, it will be seen that all depends on our 'perseverance in prayer.'" **(JFB)**

- **Meet the Needs of the Saints—12:13**
  In verse 13, Paul finishes the Circle of Responsibility related to the family of Christ. As we have observed, and experienced ourselves, the world we occupy is focused on acquiring things—possessions of every imaginable kind, but also ease, pleasure, entertainment, experiences, more Facebook friends, or likes on their social media posts. However, followers of Jesus are responsible to **give, supply, share, or provide for the needs of those around them**, especially those within the family of God. *"Contribute"* means communion, sharing, partnership, fellowship. In essence, we are partners with other saints, so if/when they have a need, our responsibility is to share our resources with them; after all, we don't really own anything in the final analysis! What we have has been given to us, so we are merely managing those things for the Lord. (**James 1:17, Acts 2:42-45, Hebrews 13:16, 1 Timothy 6:17-18**) (JM–BbB-3)

- **Meet the Needs of Strangers—12:13**
  Paul encourages us to *"seek to show hospitality;"* in LSB it says, *"pursuing hospitality,"* in NASB it is *"practicing hospitality,"* and in the NKJV *"given to hospitality."* Pursuing hospitality is a display of **love for strangers, not just for those in our inner circle**. In NT times, travel was difficult and often not safe, so believers opened their homes to strangers, especially other believers. In the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37), a lawyer putting Jesus to the test asked Him, *"Who is my neighbor?"* Jesus' point in the story is that your *"neighbor"* is **whoever is in your path with a need**. He didn't mean that we should just hand out our possessions or money left and right until it is all gone; that would not be the **stewardship that God expects**. Rather, with the blessings God has given us, when He puts someone in our path with a need, we have the opportunity (and responsibility—remember the circles!) to meet it. (**Mark 12:29-31, Matthew 25:35-39, 1 Peter 4:9, James 2:8**) **(JM–BbB-3)**

Read Romans 12:14-16

Our third Circle of Responsibility gets a little wider, reaching beyond the family of God to embrace all people in general, and yet, it still doesn't lose sight of relationships to other Christians and responsibilities for ourselves (notice the white arrows).

- **Bless the Hateful—12:14**

Here Paul begins with the most difficult people that we may meet— the hateful—and how we should respond to them; he is echoing Jesus' teachings. (Matthew 5:44, Luke 6:28) We are to bless those who treat us badly. At least in theory, the people of the world who don't know Christ are going to respond to others based on how they are, or have been, treated in the past—if they are shown kindness, they are likely to respond with kindness, and to love with love, etc. But in this situation, they are not responding or treating us as brothers/sisters in Christ; that's because they are not believers (we sometimes expect them to act like Christians even when they aren't). Our natural human response would be anger (and hatred?); we might desire retribution or even revenge. Therefore, to reveal the distinctiveness of being Christian, responding from the power of the Spirit living within us, we need to **return love to those who hate us, and kindness to those who do evil to us**. The Greek word for *"persecution"* means "to pursue someone with the intent of doing harm." We are to respond to those harboring evil intent by **blessing them, desiring that God's goodness, grace, and mercy would be poured out upon them**. (Luke 23:34, Acts 7:60, 1 Peter 2:21-23) **(JM–BbB-4)**

- **Rejoice with the Happy—12:15**

Another response which distinguishes Christians from the world is being able to **genuinely delight in someone else's joy or rejoicing in their success**—requiring the **complete absence of jealousy**. In contrast, the ungodly are often thrilled at the misfortunes or failures of others, but that is not the response of a faithful Christian who genuinely loves others, hates evil, clings to what is good, etc. (see the other circles above!) (Proverbs 17:5, 2 Corinthians 2:3, 1 Corinthians 12:26-27) **(JM–BbB-4)**

- **Weep with the Heavyhearted—12:15**

In the same way we are to enter into the joy of those around us, so too we are to **sympathetically recognize and share in the sorrow of others**. We live in a world that is increasingly insensitive and seemingly untouched (out of touch?) with the brokenness experienced by others, but, at the same time, absolutely indignant over trivial matters—callous and remorseless toward the massacre of millions of babies, yet outraged at the mistreatment of animals. What an absurd contradiction! However, the faithful believer must recognize the misfortune and sorrow of others, showing tender-heartedness and encouragement towards them. (Romans 12:20) **(JM–BbB-4)**

- **Treat Others with Humility—12:16**

Paul tells us, *"Be of the same mind toward one another,"* meaning we should **treat everyone on the same level, not giving preference to some and hostility toward others**. (Romans 15:5, Philippians 2:1-4, James 2:1-9, 1 Corinthians 1:10) He indicates two things that will help us to think and act with humility, treating everyone the same:

1. *"Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly."* We should not pursue high people, positions or any other things that are highly admired, popular, or influential in the world's estimation. Rather, we are to be inclined to associate with people of low position—the 'common folk,' ordinary people who do common ordinary things, and those who are poor, uneducated, or disabled—those who can never pay us back. (**Luke 14:12-14**)
2. *"Never be wise in your own sight."* Albert Einstein said, "The difference between stupidity and genius is that genius has its limits." We are both cautioned and exhorted to **realize our own limits**; we don't and can't know everything, and everything doesn't begin with me (in reality, nothing begins with me)! **(Proverbs 3:5-7, Jeremiah 9:23-24)** **(JM–BbB-4)**

> "Be reconciled to the place God in his providence puts you in, whatever it be. Nothing is below us, but sin. We shall never find in our hearts to condescend to others, while we indulge conceit of ourselves; therefore that must be mortified." **(MHC)**

Read Romans 12:17-20

The final and widest Circle of Responsibility encompasses even those who are our personal enemies and how to respond to them, yet it also reaches back to the other levels and involves our own hearts that determine the way we are to live.

- **Refuse to Retaliate—12:17a**
  Verse 17 is similar to verse 14; we are to **avoid our natural reaction to respond with evil when evil is done to us**. Now, there are OT verses that seem to allow a harsh response, i.e. *"Eye for eye, tooth for tooth...."* (Exodus 21:24), but these OT laws are written regarding **public law, systems of justice**. These are not concerning private revenge, which 12:14, 17 are referring to; that is not our role; that responsibility belongs to the government. Christians are not to retaliate. (**Matthew 5:44, Luke 6:28, 1 Thessalonians 5:15, 1 Peter 3:9**) **(JM–BbB-4)**

- **Respect What is Right—12:17b**
  We are instructed to 'premeditate' our goodness so that we're not caught unaware when someone wrongs us. When (not if!) someone perpetrates evil against us, if we're always "in our own zone" and unprepared for what might be coming, we could naturally have a sudden, strong and inappropriate reaction that is dishonorable to those around us, but more importantly, dishonorable to God. Therefore, we have to **intentionally prepare for how we can respond when malicious deeds come our way**. If our reactions are considered and preplanned, when evil opposition occurs, we will not be left to deal with our own raw emotions, but can respond with kindness/goodness/ love/patience that is from the Holy Spirit. (**2 Corinthians 8:21, 1 Timothy 3:7, Proverbs 3:3-4**) **(JM–BbB-4)**

- **Pursue Peace—12:18**
  This is so incredibly practical! Paul's desire is for us to **live in peace with others**, but he prefaces it with the phrase, *"If possible...."* We have all experienced relationships with some people, that no matter how hard we try to make peace, it becomes virtually impossible. When we have tried

everything we can, but peace is still not achieved, the next phrase can offer comfort to us, *"so far as it depends on you...."* This middle phrase also indicates that **it takes two to make and keep peace**; we have the responsibility to **check our own hearts** to *make certain that we are not the source of the conflic*t, even when their condemnation of us or quarrel with us is unfounded. As well as checking our own hearts, we also need to *refuse to compromise our principles or doctrine to pacify another person*; we must not compromise or violate the Word of God. We have to keep in mind that **the truth divides as well as unites**. (MHC) (**Mark 9:50, Matthew 10:34-35, James 3:17-18**) (JM–BbB-4)

- **Assist Your Adversaries—12:19-20**
  12:19 continues in the same vein; **we must not execute justice ourselves**. "Avenge" means to punish; we are not responsible to judge or punish others for their evil. In our sinful flesh, we know that "getting even" with someone is what instantly comes to mind, but the Lord has given us a remedy for that type of thinking and response—***"leave it to the wrath of God."*** We have to let it go because we know that **judgment and vengeance belong to God alone**. The OT reference is from **Deuteronomy 32:35-36**. The Lord is an infinitely just Judge, and His promise is that He will repay; He will deal with sin; no sinner can or will ever escape his just reward. **(JM–BbB-4)** (**Nahum 1:2-3, Psalm 94:1-3**)

  > "The Christian must be free from the desire to 'get even.' Such release from the instinct for revenge is possible because the believer knows that God will right all wrongs in His own perfect judgment." **(RSB)**

  Verse 20 is a quotation from Proverbs 25:21-22. The last phrase is quite thought-provoking. Apparently, there was an ancient Egyptian ritual that a man was required to perform when he wanted to demonstrate public shame and a spirit of repentance for something that he had done. Carrying a pan of burning coals on his head represented the burning pain of shame and guilt. Paul maintains that when we treat an enemy with love by showing kindness to him, a burning shame for the evil he has done is created in him. When believers lovingly help and bless their enemies, it should bring shame to them for their hate and animosity, but **perhaps it will bring them to repentance.** **(RSB, NIVSB, JM–BbB-4)**

Read Romans 12:21

The final verse of Romans 12 is a summary of all that has come before, and the reminder to *"not be conformed to the world."* (Romans 12:2) The world and unbelievers cannot begin to understand this concept, that **in all the conflicts and hostility on this planet, those who seek revenge are conquered, and those that forgive are conquerors.** It is a conscious choice to yield ourselves to the transforming power of Jesus, so that we would *"not be overcome by the evil"* in this world. **(MHC)** Indeed, our purpose must be to bless, that we may display before the world a complete rehabilitaDon of our hearts and life through Jesus Christ. **(JFB)** We must determine to defeat the unholy designs against us, either by changing them, or by preserving our own peace.

23. What did you select as the Key Verse(s) in Romans 12? Why?

24. Create a **basic** outline for Romans 12.

25. Write a summary of Romans 12.

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