

Three Gifts of Great Passion

Divine Design – Finding Your Fit in the Body of Christ – Part VII

Romans 12:8

Introduction

Once upon a time, there were four people. Their names were Everybody, Somebody, Nobody, and Anybody. Whenever there was an important task to be done, Everybody was sure that Somebody would tackle it. When Somebody did not do it, it fell to Nobody . . . and Nobody gladly did it. But, when Nobody tackled the job, Everybody got angry because it was Somebody's job. So, Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done in the first place.

Did you get that?!

Today, we come to the conclusion of our study on the subject of spiritual gifts, "Finding Your Fit in the Body of Christ".

We have defined a spiritual gift as: *a divine enablement to serve the body of Christ and the cause of Christ with special effectiveness.*

I would be remiss not to mention several warnings however, as we come to the close of our series.

Wrong attitudes in the use of spiritual gifts

I need to warn of four wrong attitudes about this subject of serving God in the arena of your special gift.

I will not do anything except those things related to my special gift

1. The first wrong attitude says, "I will not do anything except those things related to my special gift."

In other words, "I will serve in the area of my special gift only."

Try that attitude at home. If your wife asks you to take out the trash, say, "Honey, my spiritual gift is not service, but leadership. Haven't you been listening on Sunday mornings?"

Do not pull me into it – just take out the trash!

Tell your son or daughter to clean their room. With this wrong attitude, they might say, "But, Dad, didn't you know – my gift is not helps; I have discovered my gift is mercy?!"

You can reply, "That's good, because you're going to need a lot of it!"

The believer who sort of cocoons his life around the statement, "That's not my gift," is not only ignorant of how the body works, he is merely masking his lack of commitment to the work of Christ, as well as his own self-centeredness in the body.

I will do everything in any area, as long as there are needs

2. On the other end of the spectrum is the exhausted servant of Christ who has not really attempted to find God's special gifting in their life because they are running back and forth. Their attitude, of which I also warn, is, "I will do everything in any area, as long as there are needs."

The service is commendable, yet eventually, it is self-defeating. This is especially true when needs arise in areas where this servant has no desire, no training, no experience, and no objective.

The church needs much more than warm bodies filling ministry slots.

Have you ever been seated by an usher that you could tell did not really like people; that was seating you as a way of getting rid of you? Not in this church, of course.

Have you ever been taught by someone that you knew did not like to teach and had no ability to teach? Perhaps a fourth grade teacher was needed and they good-heartedly volunteered to fill the slot. Then, every year, they torture a new class of fourth graders!

Needs do not constitute the will of God.

I will never change my arena of service

3. Another attitude that needs a warning before we complete this study is the attitude that says, "I will never change my arena of service."

One of the interesting things to note, as you work through the New Testament, is that most, if not all of these special gifts could be described as developmental in the life of the believer. In other words, as you grow in Christ, you begin to teach others truth – maybe not one to many, but certainly one to one. You begin to have a heart of service and compassion for the needy. You desire to see God's work advanced, so you give to the cause from your resources.

Let me put it this way: *while every believer is empowered to serve effectively in at least one area of ministry, every believer will develop in other areas of ministry.*

This means that what you are doing today, in some special investment of time and energy, may change later. That is why you continue in prayer as you grow in Christ.

I am waiting for God to give me a special sign before I begin to use my spiritual gift

4. One more attitude that needs a warning is the attitude that says, "I am waiting for God to give me a special sign before I begin to use my spiritual gift."

Consider this sermon series the sign! God has given you the sign for seven weeks in a row now! The sign is here in large letters called "Romans" – God has spoken!

Hear also the words of Paul, written to Timothy; hesitant, reticent, timid Timothy. He wrote, "Timothy,"

. . . fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you . . . (II Timothy 1:6 NIV)

Timothy's special gift and place was in teaching. Paul encouraged him, "Do not neglect it. Do not let it die out. Use it. Fan the embers into flame!"

The truth is that every one of us has a place in the puzzle of Christ's church. That means that every one of us has a role to play – so play it!

Remember, as in any puzzle, there is no such thing as an insignificant piece anywhere on the board. All the pieces directly or indirectly interlock. We borrow and depend on each other's special contribution as we display the full puzzle picture to the world of the grace and glory of our Designer, Jesus Christ.

Spiritual Gifts of Giving, Leadership, and Mercy

Now, in Romans, chapter 12, verse 8, the final three gifts are provided in this short list by the apostle Paul. They immediately stand out because each one is given a description by the apostle Paul, as to how they should be exercised.

Notice verse 8, which gives each gift followed by the description.

. . . he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

Giving

The first of these last three gifts is the gift of giving. This gift could be defined as, "sharing whatever you have with joy and generosity."

We already know that God loves a cheerful giver, as II Corinthians, chapter 9, verse 7, tells us, right? We already know of many passages that challenge us to give financially to the work of Christ.

The truth is that God must change all of our hearts to ever bring us to give anything away. Yet, the one empowered with a special gift of giving, has a hard time keeping anything for themselves.

This is like the heart of a child who so easily gives. The older we get, however, the more we learn to hoard and clutch.

I remember, as a child, sitting in church one Sunday morning with my three brothers. The offering plate came to us and my younger brother Tim, who was normally in children's church, but was sitting with us that Sunday, held the offering plate when it came to him, took off his clip-on necktie (do you remember those?), and put it in the plate. We whispered, "What in the world are you doing?"

Timmy whispered back, "He said we were supposed to give our ties and offerings."

Now, many years later, I would say my brother Tim was already beginning to evidence a special gift of giving.

The word Paul uses for "giving" is the compound word "metadidomi". This word implies, "giving with abandon". Like the other two gifts at the end of this list, giving is a passionate gift.

Let me make several observations about this gift of giving.

Giving is not reserved for the wealthy

1. Giving is not reserved for the wealthy.

Do not think that giving has anything to do with your career or your salary. It can be evidenced by a group of poverty stricken Christians in Philippi who were commended for their generous gifts (Philippians 4:16).

You might be interested to know that people who make less than 50,000 dollars a year give more of their income to charitable causes than those who make more. The truth is, the more you make, the harder it is to give it away!

Think of it in this way. If you have one hundred dollars, it is easy to give ten dollars away (some of you might be saying, "No it isn't!"). If you have 100,000 dollars, it is a lot harder to give 10,000 of it away. If you have one million dollars, it is even harder to give 100,000 dollars away.

You might be thinking, "Hey, I'd like for God to let me test that theory!"

Well, you *can* test that theory. Ask yourself, "How am I doing with what I have right now?"

Would that we were all more like John Wesley, the leader of Methodism several hundred years ago, who wrote, "Money can not stay with me. It would

burn me if it did. I throw it out of my hands as soon as possible, lest it find its way into my heart."¹

Giving is not relegated by pride

2. There is another observation I want to make. The gift of giving is not relegated by pride.

The gift of giving does not ask for applause. It does not have to be recognized – unlike the example of Ananias and Sapphira who strutted down the aisle with their contribution, expecting the apostle Peter to praise them for their gift (Acts 5:1-11). It does not have to be listed in a program or have its name put on a brick or plaque.

Paul describes the gift of giving with the word, "liberality". It could be rendered single-mindedness; sincerity. There is no ulterior motive, it just wants to give.

Giving is not related to an amount

3. The gift of giving, thirdly, is not related to an amount.

It is the attitude, not the amount that distinguishes the gifted giver. With single-minded passion, this person resources the work of God and the people of God with everything they can possibly give away. May their tribe increase.

Leadership

Paul mentions another passionate gift. Notice verse 8 of Romans, chapter 12, again.

... he who leads, with diligence ...

The word translated "lead" can be rendered "manage". It appears in the qualifications of an elder and deacon in I Timothy, chapter 3. Those who hold these offices are to manage or lead their households and their children.

In I Corinthians, Paul speaks of the same gift, but uses another Greek word which means, "to administrate or organize". It is a word for someone who steers a ship.

This gift has the idea of dependability in Titus, chapter 3.

You could define this gifted individual as: *one who manages some task for God, providing guidance by example and dedication.*

Godet wrote, several generations ago, this description of the gift of leadership:

*Think of the numerous works of charity which believers had to create and maintain! Pagan society had neither hospitals nor orphanages, free schools nor rescue missions, like those of our day. The church, impelled by the instinct of Christian charity, had to introduce all these institutions into the world. Christian communities took up these needful objects and had of course, at their head [leaders] charged with the responsibility of the work.*ⁱⁱ

One of the great needs in the church today, is for men and women to grasp this gift of leadership. It is not easy, however, which is why there is rarely a waiting list for leadership roles.

There are plenty of people who will help, but few who will lead. There are plenty who will bring a covered dish, but few who are willing to organize the potluck! (I am speaking in a language that Baptists can understand!)

Why are so few willing to organize? To put it simply, it means you are out in front, paying the price of leadership. In fact, the Greek word for leadership implies, “someone who steps forward”. Stepping forward is often synonymous with standing alone! Few people want to pay the price of standing alone.

Dr. Ken Gangel, in his insightful book entitled *You and Your Spiritual Gifts*, gave the account of one scene from a popular television show from the 1970’s. Evidently two children were left alone when their sitter did not arrive. The boy was around eight and his sister was around six years of age. They found themselves alone one evening while their parents were out on a dinner date. They somehow made their supper without burning the house down and then, it was bedtime. The older brother, who had taken the leadership role, decided it was time to tuck his little sister in for the night. As he turned off the light and prepared to leave the room, his sister asked, “But who will tuck you in?”

The boy took in a deep breath, as the newly appointed leader, and said with shaky confidence, “Nobody needs to . . . I’m in charge, remember?”

To this, his sister sighed and said, “I guess that’s the trouble with people in charge – they have no one to tuck them in.”ⁱⁱⁱ

That is well said. Perhaps that is the very idea that keeps you from taking a step forward. You know what it feels like to, in effect, tuck everyone in and make sure everyone has their place and has what

they need, and then, at the end of the day, stand alone.

You are the one that God has gifted with that sense that tells the rest of your brothers and sisters in Christ, as the apostle Paul did,

Follow [me], as I follow [after] Christ. (I Corinthians 11:1 NIV)

The demands and challenges of leadership were unmistakably obvious, as Paul reminded the Thessalonians when he wrote to them,

For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you . . . but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day . . . in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example. (II Thessalonians 3:7-9)

This is the one who takes risks so that others can enjoy security. This is the one who labors so that others can find rest.

Where are those who will accept the hardships and rigors of ministry demands and lead? I speak to a core team of leaders over some ministry; I speak to someone who wants to start something or sees something that needs to be organized and put on its feet.

You are the one who goes into a dark room, finds the light switch, and beckons the others to come in. You are the one who walks across an old wooden bridge to see if it is strong enough for other people to use. You are the one with the map on which you have clearly marked the roads ahead of time.

It is little wonder that this gift is considered synonymous with the gift of administration. You just seem to sense where things ought to be and what it will take to get there.

Beyond that, you are willing to pay the price to see that a ministry happens.

No wonder Paul added the descriptive word in Romans, chapter 12, verse 8,

. . . he who leads, with diligence . . .

The word “diligence” is the word “spoude,” which can be rendered, “with zeal”!

In other words, you do not hesitate; you are not indecisive, you are the one in front of that class, that ministry, that relief effort, that outreach . . .; you know the costs; you suffer the pain; you pay the price. You are like Paul who offered himself to the

church and was willing to pay the penalty of leadership.

The church is in desperate need of those who will take that step forward and:

- tackle a job;
- manage a team;
- pay the price;
- turn on the light . . .

for the cause of Jesus Christ.

Mercy

Now, the final piece of the puzzle, given in verse 8 of Romans, chapter 12, is,

. . . he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

This is the gift of mercy (“eleeo”).

One Bible scholar defined this gift simply as: *The gift of sympathy. The gift that opens the heart of the sufferer.*^{iv}

Note that this is not someone who opens their heart to the sufferer, but someone who opens the heart of the one suffering. This is the person who constantly looks for the “hurting” people in the congregation. This is the gift that provides the salve for both physical and spiritual wounds. It is this gifted believer who is divinely endowed with special sensitivity to suffering and sorrow.

If you think you have the gift of mercy, but leave people bleeding all around you and do not even notice, then you had probably better continue the search for your gift.

This person has the ability to notice misery and distress that may go unnoticed by others, and then, has the desire and passion to help alleviate the affliction. This gift involves much more than just sympathetic feeling – it is feeling put into action.^v

This is the Good Samaritan who puts the injured in their jeep and takes them to the hospital and then, sees that the hospital bill gets paid. In fact, this is the person who builds a clinic for people who cannot afford to go to the hospital.

Frankly, the world is a bit surprised by the mercy givers. That is because they run counterculture – they look out for everyone but number one.

So when someone seems to go out of their way to be kind, you automatically think, “I wonder if they’ve got something up their sleeve?!”

When someone brings you a free lunch, you think, “There’s no such thing as a free lunch, so something must be up!”

I recently read in Sam Gordon’s commentary on Ephesians, the story of the a Texan man who was shopping at Sam’s Club with his wife one afternoon. He absentmindedly left his keys in the ignition of his car. When he came out of the store, his Cadillac sedan was indeed gone. He contacted the police department, filled out a report, and the police gave them a ride home.

The next morning when he opened the curtains, he could hardly believe his eyes. His pride and joy Cadillac was sitting in the drive-way. In addition, he discovered that the car had been detailed inside and out – the carpet shampooed, the exterior waxed, the wheels armoralled. But that was not all. Lying on the front seat was an envelope with a note which read:

Dear friends, I’m so sorry for taking your car. It was a terrible emergency, please accept my apology for any hardship. I want you and your wife to enjoy this Saturday’s home game at the Dallas Cowboys stadium . . . here are two seats at the 50 yard line. Again, I’m so sorry I put you out . . . thank you so much!

Can you imagine?

That Saturday afternoon the man and his wife enjoyed great seats and a wonderful time at the game. When they got home, they discovered the entire house was empty. All of their belongings had been stolen by thieves who knew where they would be and for how long! The thieves had developed plans all along for something much greater than stealing a car.

If that ever happens to you; if someone gives you free seats at the North Carolina State University versus the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill game, do not go. Instead, give me the tickets, so you will be safe!

Perhaps you are on the other end of this situation. Perhaps you actually did something good for someone and they repaid you with anything but kindness.

Have you ever treated your waitress with kindness and offered her compassion when you knew she was having a difficult day, only to have her snarl back at you? Have you ever held a door for someone and they did not thank you for it?

I heard one guy say he held a door for a woman and, as she walked through, she sarcastically said,

“You don’t have to hold the door for me because I’m a lady.”

He said, “I didn’t. I held the door for you because I’m a gentleman.”

I love that line! In fact, I have been waiting to use it, but no one will cooperate!

My wife and I enjoyed the friendship of an elderly couple as I finished seminary. They were a dear couple in the church who loved everyone. She always had candy in her pocket for kids and he was always quick to show care and concern. One young man in his twenties had recently come to the church. In fact, he had professed faith in Christ. His second or third visit to church one morning, led to an invitation to Sunday dinner from this elderly couple. They had a wonderful time. The next day, when the couple returned home after having been out awhile, they discovered that all of their valuables had been stolen. He had unlocked a window in the dining room during their Sunday dinner, and had later come through that window to steal all of their things.

Do you really want to show mercy? Maybe you have, and you have been burned too!

It is interesting that the apostle Paul would specifically describe the demonstration of showing mercy in this way,

... he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

Why did he use that descriptive word “cheerfulness”? Because you who show mercy to enough people are going to start to wear thin on getting any “thank you’s” and “bless your hearts”. You will run the risk of being burned and you might lose your cheerful demeanor which is so important to the distribution of mercy.

Conclusion

All three of these gifts require that internal, Spirit controlled, Spirit generated passion.

- The one who has the gift of giving, might be tempted to not give so liberally the next time. They were never acknowledged; they

were never thanked. But the Spirit gives them the grace to keep giving.

- The one who has the gift of leadership might be tempted to slack up; to shirk from the challenges of managing moving parts; to become weary when so few seem to be listening. But the Spirit moves them to step forward anyway.
- The one who has the gift of mercy might be tempted to do it out of duty; to do it with a sense of drudgery; to lose the cheer and grace and winsome smile that parts the clouds and brings the light of God’s Son into the scene of despair and need.

We might be tempted to say, “I’ll wait until I get a special sign from God to serve . . . I’ll only serve in a comfortable spot . . . I’ll never do more than I really have to do . . . I’ve always done what I’m doing and I don’t want the hassle of change.”

We will start sounding like the parable that we began our discussion with today. “I expected Somebody to do that . . . Anybody can do it instead of me . . . Everybody seems to be letting Anybody or Somebody tackle the work, so I’ll just watch Somebody and Everybody and Anybody that wants to serve.”

May that never be the picture on the puzzle box we create. May that never represent you and me and us!

Father, how we need You to give us a double portion of passion, diligence, grace, and desire to serve with our special gifts. Help us, as we find our fit in the body of Christ, that we together, might display the full picture of what this puzzle is supposed to be – what the church should look like and act like and sound like for this family of believers. We pray that we might glorify You, our divine Designer, and advance Your great name and Your great cause. In Jesus name, Amen.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 6/12/2005 by Stephen Davey.

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ⁱ Randy Alcorn, The Treasure Principle (Multnomah Publishers, 2001), p. 68.

ⁱⁱ James Boice, Romans: Volume 4 (Baker, 1995), p. 1587.

ⁱⁱⁱ Kenneth Gangel, You and Your Spiritual Gifts (Moody Press, 1975), p. 15.

^{iv} Ibid., p. 50.

^v John MacArthur, Romans: Volume 2 (Moody Press, 1994), p. 177.