

Romans
“The Spirit Gives Gifts to His People”
Romans 12:3-8

Let's read from Romans chapter 12, verses three through eight. This is God's word.

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 him. For as in one body we have many members of the members do not all have the same function.

So we, although many are one body in Christ and individually members of one another, having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them if prophecy in proportion to our faith, if service in our serving, the one who teaches in his teaching, the one who exhorts in his exhortation, the one who contributes with generosity, the one who leads with zeal, the one who does acts of mercy with cheerfulness.

Let's pray one more time, Lord, give us, we pray ears to hear what you're saying to us in your word. Apply it to our hearts. We ask by your Spirit we pray in Jesus name, Amen. And you may be seated. We're going to see in our passage that we need each other. We need each other's gifts. We serve each other with our gifts, and we should serve each other with good cheer for good fruit, serving the King and serving his kingdom.

I'm going to tell you first a story about, one of my children who might or might, might not be here today and definitely does not look like me. But the story goes like this. We were in the Nittany Mountains of central Pennsylvania one year when I was speaking at a family Bible camp, and our children were very little, seven down to five, you know, just a few months old.

And our oldest child was just old enough that we felt that she could, wander a bit at the edge of camp, you know, there there's the mess hall and there's the place where we meet, and there's cabins and baseball fields, and then there's some streams at the edge, and in those streams there are a variety of woodland creatures.

And she would find them and tell us about them. And near the end of the week, she came back, not with a woodland creature, but with a box prepared for the future. The box had crickets and worms and newts and fs and moss and grass and twigs, and she was not just telling me what she did. She said she came in and she said, I was made for this.

And we're talking about gifts today. She is not a forest entomologist today, nor does she study, amphibians for a living. But the organizational impact that made her not only gather newts and

fs and various other creatures, but also what she thought would be the food that would in fact not help them survive. But she was planning. And that planning is something that's remained to this day, organized gifts were called, and sometimes from a very early age, the first signs of who will be one day begin to emerge as God puts in us, traits that we don't earn, we don't deserve.

They're in us because someday they will unfold and we'll serve God by using them. Now, if we looked at Romans, which we have, we've noticed, first of all, that everything hinges on the redeeming work of Christ. We're maintenance image, and we're supposed to glorify him, and we don't. But Christ came to redeem us from that and unite us to himself.

And at the end of the long description of all of God's graces to us in Christ, we read in chapter 12, verses one and two. Therefore we should now dedicate our minds and our bodies to Christ in service. And that's the general principles which we studied last week. We actually offer God our bodies physically, our concrete life. And we're also not conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of our mind.

So we offer our bodies and our minds to God. And in verses 3 to 8, it tells us again that we offer our minds to God. Did you notice in verse three the way it reads? It says, by the grace given to me, I say something to all of you. What does he say? He says, you should not think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but you should think with sober judgment or literally sober thoughts.

Think, think, think, think thoughts. We just think through our Christian life. We should specifically, according to this passage, think through the gifts or the graces that God has given us and think it through with sober self appraisal according to the measure of the faith. Now, when the Bible says the measure of the faith, it does not mean that we should say, hey, how tall, how strong, how long is my faith, how faithful I am?

I'm more faithful than other people. That's not what it means. The measure of faith is the faith that is the measure. Specifically. Then, if you have a gift, you could possibly be proud or you could be confident. The faith teaches us to be both humble and confident. We're humble because the measure of faith says, Without Christ, without God's grace, you have nothing.

And so we're humble. On the other hand, the Lord loves us. He called us. He made this his image. He renewed us. He gave us his spirit. And therefore we should be confident. The measure of the faith is we should be both humble because of the gospel, because of our need of Redeemer. And we should be confident because the Lord is remaking us and giving us gifts.

So the measure of the faith, the measure, the faith is how we approach our gifts now we approach our gifts. Not again, then to compare with other people, but to ask, what am I supposed to do with my gifts? And the statement goes like this we need each other. We belong to each other. And though the body is many, we are also one.

Even as God is 3 in 1, and no one can live their life as a believer effectively alone. Let me illustrate, personally again. So a couple of years ago, I went to the doctor for my annual physical, and he gave me the lowdown on my numbers. My pulse was 48, my blood pressure was 115 over 65, my oxygenation was 99, and various other numbers were very good.

And he said to me, Dan, you're the kind of person that could live to be 100. You could also drop dead tomorrow.

He said that because we're all hanging on by a thread, you could drop dead tomorrow, but you're the kind of guy these numbers are the kind of numbers that lead to a very long life. I said, oh, I went home. I told Debbie what the doctor had said. I said, listen, the doctor said, you're going to need to live to be 98 because we're two years apart.

And I really don't think I can live a good life without you. Now, that microcosm of marriage, if you're married, happily married, that is to say, well, married. We're not happy all the time in our marriages. Of course we're sinners. But if you're well and happily married, you can hardly imagine a day when you would ever want to, or even be able to live without your spouse because we need each other.

Now. The analogy Paul uses is the human body. In fact, he compares the church to a body many times and specifically over in First Corinthians 12:13 and 14, 12 and 14, where he says the most about gifts, he says, look, you can't think of yourself as Christians, as the head being more important or the eyes being more important, the foot.

And we would say today the spleen, the heart, the liver are all important. You may have a wonderful head, you may have great eyesight, but if your liver isn't functioning, you're gone in a hurry. And if you can't see, you can live. But your life is truncated in various ways. And so we need each other, even as a body needs all of its parts.

We need all of our gifts. Now there's a Christian man who writes about leadership and management. His name is Patrick Lincoln. I'm sure that some of you have read some of his books, and in his books you can tell that he's a Christian and he doesn't explicitly come out

His most recent book called Six Types of Working Genius. He meditates really on gifting and he says, listen, an effective workplace has three big types of capacity. The first kind is ideation or ideation. Thinking up ideas. There's two parts, he says. Wonder why do we do things this way? Is there a better way to do them? And then another person in that school, the ideation school, invents, they get next to the wonder and they say, oh, that's a great question.

I think there is a way to do it better. But if all you have is wonders and ideas, you're going to get nothing done. You can have a lot of big ideas and nothing will happen. So he says what you need next is people with the gifts of activation. And activation is discerning. Is this dream you have? Is this plan you have something we could actually do here and now, and another person comes along and has the gift of galvanizing.

He rallies the troops, bears, shares the vision and recruits people and recruits funds. And then there's a third group, or implementers who persuade people to give it their effort and drag it across the finish line. And if you only have one of these groups, you're not going to get very far. That's the principle of gifting applied to business.

Now, when Paul talks about it, he's not discussing business, of course. And if you look at verses six and seven and eight with me, which would be popped up on the screen in just a moment, you will notice that of the gifts that he has here, just a handful, there are other lists of gifts that are longer. Of this handful of gifts, he says.

First of all, if you've got a gift, use it. If your gift is prophecy, use it according to the proportion of your faith. I'll talk about that a little bit later, but if you have gifts, you use them. If service. If you get the service, then in your serving. If your gift is teaching, then teach. Verse eight. If your gift is exhorting, then exhort.

So if you have a gift, use it. If you know what your gift is, use it. The second list says, here's how to use your gifts. If you have the ability to contribute, if you're generous, if you have funds or time, more about that a moment. Again, if you have the gift of contribution of generosity, then be generous.

Be open hearted. If you're a leader, lead with zeal and if you have mercy, exercise the gift of mercy with cheerfulness. If you have a gift, use it now. The New Testament has a series of gift lists. There are. Many of you would know this for lists, one has 20 items, one has only two. Some have six 1412 different sizes of gift lists and if you look at the list, the one that maybe sets all the others up is found in first Peter chapter four, verses ten and 11.

It just has two gifts. This is what Peter says. It says use your gifts to serve one another as good stewards of God's very grace. Whoever speaks as one who speaks the oracles are the very words of God. Whoever serves as one who serves by the strength that God supplies. Now, if you take it apart, we have then two kinds of gift gifts of the tongue, the mind and speech and gifts of the hands.

Serving other people in concrete actions. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we can divide gifts up different ways. Their private and their public teaching seems to be a public gift. Exhorting is probably usually private, encouraging people one on one or in small groups. But if you wonder

about your gifts, you can start by asking the question of my fundamentally, a thinker and a speaker?

Or am I fundamentally a doer of deeds? That's a basic division. Now, some of the gifts take a little bit of a definition. So generosity, for example, if you have that capacity, we think, well, that means money. We should be generous with our funds. That is true. And we are near the end of our period of giving to world missions.

And have you been generous so far? We want to finish it with more generosity. We're generous with our funds, but we're not just generous with our funds. That would be a mistake. We're also generous with our time because, you see, people need time. We have a school here and we have students who go to school. We have students who don't go to school, but many, many students have great abilities.

But somehow a difficulty learning a part of the skill set they need. So there are very bright boys and girls who struggle with math. Nobody knows why, but they do. They need someone to come alongside them and give them time. And there are other children who struggle with learning to read or learning to write. And so we need people who come alongside and generously give of their time to the school, to a child who might have great ability, but a little bit of a challenge at some spot.

Service also is not quickly or readily defined. We think, well, serving that's easy, but there are two ways we serve. We serve one on one directly hands on bringing meals to people or sick and so forth. But there are also people organize. We call them deacons. In fact, the word for service is diaconate, from which we get the word deacon.

And so you can be an organizer of service, or you can do concrete acts of service, even as you can have a secretary who answers phones and keeps the copier running. And you can have a secretary of defense or the secretary of the interior. And that is not a humble job at all. Now, the word or the gift that takes the most definition in this passage is the word teaching.

Now there's a sense in which we understand it perfectly well, and that is teaching is a gift the church needs, because Christianity is the most intellectual of all the religions that have ever existed. There's so much more theology to Christianity than there is to Hinduism or Buddhism or Islam. Now, Christianity is very simple. The basics a little child can sing and understand.

Jesus loves me. This I know, for the Bible tells me so. I'm weak. He's strong. We understand a child can grasp the gift of Christ. On the other hand, there's so much theology you can go and get a PhD in Christian Theology. Christianity is a religion of ideas. I don't know if you know the name David Sanger. He's the man who started or invented or promulgated Wikipedia, and he had some Christian background growing up.

And then he wandered away and with many, many others, declared himself proudly and happily to be an atheist. You may also have heard that a few weeks ago he declared that he's now a Christian and explained why he said, first of all, I found that the people in my life who were Christians were mature and gracious, and the atheists were a bunch of trolls.

That's .1.2. His Christian friends graciously were giving him Christian literature that appealed to him as a highly educated person himself. And those books, especially the ones that that showed that the universe is designed and therefore has a designer, led him to start reading the Bible, which he had not done for 50 years, and he became a Christian. So Christianity has a system of thought that that requires teachers, sound teachers, good teachers, teachers who operate in public, and then also exhortation, which is its twin, which, again, is usually a gift that we use in private, encouraging people, urging them with gentleness and a heartfelt spirit to press on in the Christian faith, of course, exhortation,

like anything else, can be public or private. I don't know if you know the story of Christianity when it came to Scotland, but when it did, Scotland was largely under the thumb of the French, and the French were Catholics, and staunchly so, and were not at all happy that Protestantism was coming to Scotland. And they did things like send ships to bomb their main castle, and they had far more troops.

But inside that castle was a man named John Knox. And John Knox was a mighty order. And they said, John Knox is worth more than two armies. And in fact, Scotland did prevail. And the French gave up, and Scotland became the birthplace of Presbyterianism. Well, we have to think a little bit more about teaching, because you're going to be calling a pastor before too long.

And I want to say a few words about that. I also want to tell you that what I must say next may be, something will sound a little bit different or new to some of you. I want to make sure you know that even if it's new to you. What I'm saying is actually main stream of expository of Romans and mainstream of theologians like Charles Hodge and Botvinnik and other names like James Packer and John Stott and Doug Mu and John Frame and Wayne Graham.

And I can give you a few more names. Okay. So what I must say is, you know, it's a little bit odd to some of you, but it is actually the main stream. So I want to say is teaching is pretty clear, but when you get to prophecy, things get a little bit unclear because prophecy is something is familiar to us from the Old Testament.

The prophets prophecy. I, and we hear what they have to say in the New Testament. Prophecy is described in first Corinthians chapter 14, verse 29 as something that is supposed to be tested. So in the Old Testament you hear a prophet, you're supposed to trust what a prophet says and

believe what they say. In the New Testament, prophets seem to have a lesser role in what they say should be tested, not simply accepted, but tested.

So prophecy seems to have two meanings one meaning the old test, one and the new. And there are various words that are like that. What am I doing right now? What would you call this? I am waving to you. But if I say a wave, this is a wave, right? But if I go to the beach and I see water coming in variably, we call that a wave.

And light is also a wave. Thank you. You're petering out on me here. So the word wave has various meanings. A lot of words are like that. The word sign in the Bible has various meanings. In one place, the Apostle Paul says the signs of an apostle are signs, wonders, and mighty deeds, meaning the sign, the proof. That's one meaning of sign is that you perform miracles.

Two meanings the word sign. Similarly, a prophecy has two meanings. In the Old Testament, a prophet is the spokesman of God, declared God's very words the world. We heed what they say in the New Testament, the person who holds the role is equivalent to that of a prophet is the apostles. The apostles are the one who declare, this is what God has to say.

Thus says the Lord. But a New Testament prophecy is generally described today by Christians as a powerful, penetrating application of God's Word. That's why you test what a prophet says. First Corinthians 14:29. Let 2 or 3 prophets speak. Let the others weigh or test what is said. We weigh it because it does not have final authority. So Charles Hodge says it this way the inspiration of the apostles was abiding, infallible and authoritative.

Close the canon. Whereas the inspiration of prophets in the New Testament, not the old, was occasional and transient. That's why you test it. Miracles in the Bible, when Jesus performs miracles, says, take up your mat and go home. People got up, took their mat and went home. Today we sometimes pray over people and when they're healed. So in Jesus day, a miracle was capital M every time the person was healed in the New Testament.

That's the story today. We pray for people and sometimes they get better remarkably, don't they? And we might call that a miracle, but it's a small M it's not the same. It's similar, but not identical. So it is with prophecy. Let me say it differently. Many, many pastors have an experience, and I heard the story about Pastor Reeder having experience like this just this week.

Many, many pastors have a moment when they feel like God is telling them something and they can't quite account for it. So one day I was in my office and a young man, I'm going to say 35 to 39 years old somewhere looked like a very athletic kind of guy, runner type person. came into my office, said, Doctor Dorian, I want to talk to you about Hope.

And about hope lost. And as I listen to him, I suddenly had a sense that he was in intense physical pain and that he'd had surgery and that it had failed. And that's why he was visiting me. And furthermore, as I looked at him, I said, it's his left shoulder. And it had almost certainty about this. Now, I wasn't sure you got to test it.

Sometimes you have an impression. He feels almost certain, and it's wrong. And so I tested it this way. I didn't say, hey, I have a feeling you had failed shoulder surgery a few days ago. What I said was, you know, one of the reasons why people lose hope is when they have serious pain and they go for surgery, like maybe surgery on their hip, and it doesn't work, and they remain in great pain.

And he said to me, there's no way you could know this, but I just had failed surgery on my shoulder. Now that doesn't happen all the time, by any means. And you know, when I have that sense, I'm not always sure of it by any means. But there is something like that that most theologians think goes on in Christian leaders.

It's what I hope you hope for and pray for in your next pastor. John Calvin said prophecy in this sense is the right understanding of Scripture, and a peculiar faculty in explain it. Jeb Packer said prophecy is a God prompted application of God's revealed truth. He also said every sermon or message that has a heart searching character may be called prophecy.

So it's not a new revelation. It's a restatement of the canon which is closed, given to us by the prophets and the apostles. And that's why sometimes when someone's a gifted teacher or preacher, gifted teachers include people that each Sunday school here now have a remarkable capacity to connect with people or to disciple young adults. And when someone's anointed by God, people say things like, how did you know what I was thinking about on the way to church this morning?

How did you know what I was wrestling with last night? Are you reading my email? Somebody of my family calling you up and telling you things. Well, of course the answer is no. But God does gift people in that way for the common good. That's the big idea. As we turn from preaching and teaching to your gifts, now, our gifts are for the common good.

That's what Paul says God gives gifts not for you to be proud about your ability, but for the common good and we exercise them. Let servants serve, serve, let teachers teach, let, exhort, exhort, let contributors be generous. Now that's we're shifting again to the spirit, the word for generosity. The Greek word is heartless, which means simple, not actually generous, literally simple means a person who gives simply gifts.

They don't give and hope. Someone's watching. They don't give and hope. Someone feels indebted to them. They don't give and hope that they are recognized for it in some way. They

simply give. They love to give. Let's think of a woman who has the gift of warmth in her neighborhood. She loves to bake bread and bake cookies, and people know it.

And when they come to her house, they just may get a slice of, you know, fresh cooked bread or some cookies that came out of the oven a couple hours ago. And the kids learn about it, and they love to come to her house. And that's a gift she has. And she's warm and she's kind. She gives out food and and kids who are coming from broken homes where mom is maybe kind of harsh or judgmental, just find their way to that house.

And sometimes they love that woman so much that they call her mom by accident.

And it's beautiful. And the kids track mud across the floor, and you have to go to the store a little bit more often because the kids are at your house a little bit more often, and that's the way the gifts work. There is a joy in the gifts. There is a kindness. There is a burden. It's a person's glad to bear.

Think with me also about the statement the one who leads should lead with zeal. Zeal is positive in our culture, it's often negative, but it means eagerness, gladness, passion. Do you know the 14th century and early 15th century, millions of Christians were slain in northern Africa and a million of Christians were slain in the Middle East. In large numbers were also slain in India because of global issues that were occurring, and because the Christian leaders in that area and the politicians in those areas did not lead with zeal, they did not stand up and say, this will not pass.

But Christianity today, as we understand it, is largely something that came from Europe because the leaders of Europe, who were defending the reformers who are rediscovering the gospel and proclaiming with power, defended the reformers, the gospel preachers, that I'm sorry to say it, but I have to say it that the Catholic Church wanted to wipe out at that time.

I'm not saying the Catholic Church is our enemy today, but it is true that Martin Luther and John Calvin and Swingle and various others were under a death sentence for decades. And if the armies could have gotten a hold of them, they would have died. And the leaders of Europe said, you are not taking John Calvin, you are not taking Martin Luther.

You're not to fight us. We stand. And it's not just something that happened years ago. It's his story to tell. Brian Winter Stein told me about this during the Global Missions conference. One of our missionaries, one of our missionaries, was proclaiming the gospel in a predominantly Muslim area, was picked up for proclaiming the gospel in a predominantly Muslim area, being jailed, got out, was picked up again, was beaten more, and a man from a neighboring tribe walked into the prison.

The leader of the tribe powerful clan, put his authority and power and influence on the line and demanded that those Muslim jailers release that Christian missionary. Today. And they said, okay, we will, but it will cost \$120. And they said, okay, that's fair enough. But he comes out today. And he was out that day because there was a leader of a clan and a tribe who was a Christian, who had zeal to bring that man out of prison and stop the persecution.

If you're a leader, you lead with zeal. And if you're merciful, you're merciful with good cheer, like that woman who baked bread and gives out cookies with good cheer, not resenting, not telling people who need your help. Why do you need my help again? If you have the gift of mercy, you're glad to give you practice your gifts faithfully.

Now, if you're wondering where you stand in all of this, there's something is going to pop up on the board here in a second. It comes from a man named John Frame. I mentioned his name a couple months ago and I mentioned him now. He says, here's a summary of the way gifts occur. Point one God gives gifts to humanity and to his people.

That is, Christians and non-Christians have amazing capacities to sing, to draw, to play musical instruments, to do many other things. And Christians have those same gifts. You have gifts from God. God's spirit enables people to discern their gifts validly, that is to say, imperfectly. We aren't always quite right about our gifts. Through a combination of self-examination and the confirmation of mentors, friends, and other labors.

In other words, if you think you have the gift of, let's say, playing the piano and somebody says, okay, we need a pianist, suddenly will you play for us? And they say, that was awesome. Can you play for us when we need a pianist? Again, that's a confirmation. And if they say to you, thank you so much for your efforts and you never hear from them again, that also is a confirmation that you might not quite be right about your gifts, maybe be gone, belong on another percussion instrument.

All right, number three God provides opportunities for you to develop and exercise your gifts. People recognize them, and God grants us wisdom to use our gifts to glorify him and to love our neighbor. That's how we find our gifts. We find joy. We find energy for it. It's allergy season. I'm going to take a sip of water for a second.

Hang on. It's not coffee. It's not coffee. It's water.

Because if you need coffee to preach, you're not supposed to preach. Just. I'm going to prove it here for a second.

Your pastor should. Your next pastor should be a man who has a love of this, of these things. A love. And using his gifts. We had a joy in using our gifts. And it's behind it all is the Holy Spirit.

Back to Mr. here. And he says, look, some people have dreams and other people galvanize and organize those dreams.

And the person who dreams loves to dream and the person who organizes loves to organize and finish things. We work in harmony and in unison, reflecting the very character of God Himself, who is three and one, one God, three persons, one in purpose, one in character. But the father plans redemption. The son accomplishes redemption. The Holy Spirit applies redemption.

There's no boasting in this. Paul does say, desire the higher gifts. There's a place for desiring more strategic gifts. Some gifts have a broader scope. Others have a more particular scope. But whatever. I guess maybe we should ask ourselves questions like this. What has God given me? Who needs my gifts? What deficit does God want you and me to remedy?

And where will I do it? What will be my home base? Who will be my people and for whom will I suffer? What pleasures or ease will I forego because I am using the gifts God has given me and using them always according to the call of God to serve the King, to serve the kingdom, and to do it with others.

Now I'm going to share a story that maybe 100 of you have heard for me before. I apologize, but it's one of my favorite stories and it goes like this. By the way, one of the people in this church knows the principle of the story and confirmed it to me just today. The story goes like this. It's the 2008 Olympics, and there's a man named Michael Phelps.

You've all heard of Michael Phelps, right? Michael Phelps is going for eight gold medals in one Olympic series. He eventually won 22 gold medals, but he's going for eight. It wants to be an all time record. One man earlier got seven. He's going for eight. It's just about a certainty that he is going to get four gold medals, because he's the fastest in the world by a margin in four races, so he's going to win those four.

And then there are three more that his relay team is expected to win. But there's one in which his team is expected to lose. And that is the four by 100 freestyle relay because over and over again, the French team just has better times. And if they're close, you know, if the race is close, they have the best freestyle swimmer in the world, a man named Alain Bernard.

And they're going to win. And so the race begins. And as it begins, the Americans are kind of tied, and then they're falling behind a little bit, and then they're falling behind a little bit more. And Phelps is not the fastest. So he's out of the pool by now cheering for his mates.

Jason Lezak is a relay specialist. He won eight Olympic medals for gold, two silver, one bronze before this point, but only one of them. As an individual, he excels in relays and he gets in the water and he's behind the fastest swimmer in the world. And after 50m, he is even farther behind. He went from half a body length behind to an entire body length behind.

And if you don't know, swimming and racing, that's a lot at the turn, he said in interviews. I said to myself, It's the Olympics. You can't give up. I don't want to give too much away. But this is possibly the most famous swimming race of all time. And the key player was thinking about quitting in the middle of it.

But he didn't give up. He kept swimming and he started catching up as he relaxed and the crowd began to roar and Bernard heard the sound and started looking around to see who's catching up on him. And it was Lezak, and he got tight a little bit and strokes got a little bit tight. And he also drifted toward Lisa Lane, which gave Lisa a little bit of a pulled a little bit of draft, just catching up more.

And with 100 to go, they're tied. And they touched the end of the pool. Seemed like it was simultaneous. And the scores flashed and Lezak had touched 1/100 of a second before Bernhard in a race that shattered the record by four seconds. And, Lisa, I could just swim the fastest 100m in human history as a relay specialist. When he was on his own, he couldn't do it.

But when he was swimming with his mates, when he was swimming on the team, he could do so much more. And that's the way it is with us, my friend. So many of us, 99% of us are relay specialists. We belong in a team. We're not so low enterprises. As you consider your gifts, ask the Lord, what's my gift?

Alongside whom shall I use it? How can I serve the King and his kingdom? Do I have confirmation? I have a hunch. I think I know what I'm good at, but Lord, give me confirmation. Give me opportunities to test myself. Let people feed me, encourage me, nurture me, mentor me, take me farther. Do I have zeal or a passion for this?

Am I willing to suffer for the people I can love and serve through my gifts? If the answer to that is yes, then you can serve the king. You can serve the kingdom, living the life that God marks out for us when he calls us to himself, not just as individuals, but into a family, into the body of God.

Let's pray.

Father, I pray you, give us joy, passion, zeal. Yes, Lord. The willingness to suffer not as you suffered. No one could ever suffer the way. Lord Jesus, you suffered. And yet, Lord, your suffering for our good is a model that we can take delight, but also pay the price of exercising gifts. Showing our passion or zeal for the capacities you chose to put into us.

Lord, I pray that each person here would know what their gifts might be. They would practice them with your Spirit's wisdom and grace and kindness and love. You build us all up together. We pray in Jesus name. Amen.