

Find and Use Your Gift!
Romans 12:1-21
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PREACHER: PASTOR ROY SUMMERS

“Anyone can be Anything?”

A week yesterday, Yvonne and I took our grandchildren, Charlie & Alfie to McDonalds—I’m aware that McDonalds may put us beyond the grand-parenting pale in the eyes of some! The toy in their “Happy Meal” was a booklet entitled, “I can be a Champion Runner,” intended to inspire the reader with the story of a real-world American runner from the 20th Century. The title caught my eye, “I can be a Champion Runner,” meaning every reader can be a champion runner. You, I, all of us can be champion runners! But let’s stop for a moment, can *anyone* become a champion runner, skier, footballer? Does *everyone* really have the potential to become *anything they wish* ? You will know this is a popular view today: “*Follow your dreams, you can become a Usain Bolt, a Hannah Hampton, an Einstein, whatever.*”

It’s a cruel lie, surely? We are each blessed with unique gifts by nature, and then shaped by nurture, and those gifts determine what we are capable—and not capable—of doing and becoming. We want to encourage our children to flourish but let’s not place impossible burdens and almost-certain-disappointment on their tiny shoulders.

In point of fact, the world knows “you can do anything” is a myth. In 2017 a young man applied for a sporting programme called “Discover your Gold” which puts sporting types through a series of tests which reveal, according to their physiology, their strengths and weaknesses, which sport they may excel in. “Don’t try that one, or that one, but try this one.” The programme told that young man to try “The Skeleton” - you know, that super fast bob-sled sport. And sure enough, because he had just the right combination of gifts, Matt Weston succeeded and won Gold for the UK just a few weeks ago in the Italian 2026 Olympics.

Why begin with this story? Well, on the one hand, you and I are called not to be conformed to the world’s thinking but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds; we’re called to challenge, to question every urban myth—and secondly; because, as in sport, so in the church, you and I have each been given a particular spiritual gift. We can’t serve the Lord in any way we choose to or wish for, we must serve in the way God has gifted us. In the “body” analogy Paul uses in Romans 12, we might have been made an eye—in which case our task is to see. Or we may have been created an ear—in which case our task is to hear for the sake of the rest of the body, and so on. We can’t do anything, only what God has gifted us to do.

And since no believer has all the gifts, we need one another. Since the eye cannot hear, it needs the ear, and since the ear cannot walk, it needs feet, and because the feet can’t hold a steering wheel, it needs the hands, and so on.

Have you ever felt, as a believer, profoundly inadequate, vulnerable, unable to cope on your own? That's not a bad thing. It may be the Lord's way of teaching us "you can't manage on your own, I never made you to manage on your own. I've placed you in a church community with lots of other gifts around you. Lean on your brothers and sisters, "carry one another's burdens and thereby fulfil the law of Christ."

This morning, we're going to explore from Romans 12 (and other parts of Scripture) spiritual gifts: one fact and two exhortations:

1. All of us have a spiritual gift

This is wonderful news:

"We have different gifts according to the grace given to us." (verse 5)

The Holy Spirit gives each believer a spiritual gift. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul puts it like this:

"All these are the work of the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines." (1 Corinthians 12:11)

It could be teaching, encouraging, giving, showing mercy, leading, administration, serving, evangelist, pastor, the list is long! What is it? Is it 78 different organs make up a human body?

Perhaps this is new teaching for you today. You didn't know that God has given you a spiritual gift that the rest of us need!

Or perhaps you do have a gift but because you think it's such a humble gift you are disinclined to use it. "It's only tidying up" "it's only making coffee."

In the church at Corinth lots of people wanted the showy, out loud, super-spiritual, in-public, "look at me" (wave hands) gifts—tongues, prophecies, whatever. Which made people with background, "run-of-the-mill" common gifts feel unworthy, and these people felt they didn't belong, *"If the foot (sooo essential but not seen but) should say, "Because I am not a hand (showy, visible), I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason to cease to be part of the body." (1 Cor 12:15)*

Whatever gift you have been given is absolutely necessary to the rest of us! When I worked at Yale Locks in Willenhall after my A levels, I discovered two dining rooms, one scruffy one for we blue-collar, practical workers and a posh one for white-collar office workers. In the church we should value equally all the gifts.

2. Let us find our spiritual gift!

Since God has given each of us a spiritual gift, let each of us find it, let us discover it. Here are 4 guidelines for finding your gift:

Step 1— Is it Serving or Speaking?

Begin with 1 Peter 4:10-11

“Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms. 11 If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.”

All the spiritual gifts divide into two categories, serving or speaking. Serving gifts are those many practical gifts that are essential to the smooth running of the church, from admin to finances to cleaning to setting up, to baking, to hosting, to cooking. And speaking gifts are any kind of speaking to one another gift: it may be one-to-one over coffee helping a brother or sister, it could be leading a home group, teaching in Young Church, leading a worship service, preaching. (It’s a big mistake to think that speaking gifts are only exercised from a pulpit. Speaking gifts are exercised in small settings just as much as larger ones.)

This is where to start, ask yourself what do you feel better equipped to do? Comfortable? Practical serving stuff or speaking stuff?

This division of gifts into serving and speaking is seen in the roles of elder and deacon. What’s the main role of elders? It’s a speaking role, whether home groups, one-one conversations, preaching. What’s the main role of deacons? Practical!

Step 2— be sober in your self-assessment:

“For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.” (verse 3-4)

Don’t be proud, be humble in your self-assessment. Do you really have that gift? And in what measure? Sober! When I was starting off as a preacher, I thought I was a better preacher than the pastor of my church! That wasn’t sober judgement! I can only admit that because it was 40 years have passed! Or to take another personal example, if today I thought I was a Charles Spurgeon or a Charles Wesley or a George Whitfield, I’d equally be failing to exercise “sober judgement.” Roy is just an ordinary church preacher, and I’m really content with that!

Step 3– Ask others

Step 3 - ask others around you. What do you think I am gifted at? They may say “yes I see that in you” or “not sure” or they might say “I think you may be good at *this*” referring to something we can’t see in ourselves. Moses did not see himself as a leader, but God had given him those gifts and God had to nudge him in that direction. I did not know I had the gifts for being a pastor, it was my elders who saw that in me. I was happily pursuing a career in science when they came along and messed everything up!

Ask elders in particular because church leaders, according to Ephesians 4 are called “to prepare God's people for works of service.” (4:11)

Step 4—Pray

The third step in finding your gift is to make it a matter of prayer. Pray the David prayer of Psalm 25:4, “Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me you paths.” and then the Isaiah prayer, “Here am I, send me” (Isaiah 6:8)

3. Let us use our Spiritual gift—let us all serve!

“If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; 7 if it is serving, then serve, if it is teaching, then teach; 8 if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.”

What Paul is saying is basically—get on and serve! Church is the place for serving on another!

So many folks here already serve! A good place to start, for those who can, is to sign up to one of the five teams which come here at 9.00am and leave at 1.00pm once every five weeks and serve, setting up the chairs, making the coffee, hoovering the floors, directing the cars. See Russ if you want to join a team.) One of the reasons we prefer smaller churches is because in smaller churches you cannot hide, you cannot be a mere consumer; everyone must serve.

But we should notice that Paul is not simply urging us to serve, he is telling us that there is a specific way to serve, a Christ-like, a Biblical way to use our gifts. We’re not to use our gift as the world might use their gifts, but use them as God would have us use the gift he has given. Let’s take two examples from Paul’s list:

Example 1: giving, verse 8: “If it is giving then give generously.” If God has given you lots of money, then give lots away. If God has given you lots of money, then Paul says, there's a Christian way to use that money, “give generously.”

Example 2: showing mercy, verse 8. That is helping someone who does not deserve it. It could be someone in your family, listen up parents! - someone who does not say thankyou, someone who has GDD: Gratitude Deficiency Disorder! How should we serve them? Begrudgingly? Are you ready? “if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.” with a smile on your face and a song in your heart!

On Wednesday my wife arrived at her dentist in Droitwich having forgotten something she should have taken. She called me and asked if I could bring the forgotten item all the way to Droitwich, one hour (when you add up both legs of the journey) out of my way! I wish I could say that my first reaction was one of good cheer, but as I drove, I remembered these words, and I realised that the only way to undertake this act of *radical mercy (!)* in a way that pleased the Lord was to do it cheerfully. A cheerful husband handed over the forgotten item!

The Supreme Servant

We have in the Lord Jesus Christ, the supreme example of servanthood. The whole of his ministry was serving others:

“the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Matthew 20:28)

He served the hungry, he served the sick, he served the demon-possessed, he served the thankless, he served his disciples, even washing their dusty feet on one occasion. Read the four Gospel accounts—the whole of his ministry was filled with serving others! And then as his final act, he served you and I, when he poured out his life on the cross, so that we might be forgiven and reconciled to God.

Let us worship him together:

*O what a mystery,
Meekness and majesty.
Bow down and worship
For this is your God,
This is your God.*