

## Romans 12:3-8, Let's be Servants, 1/10/21

Have you ever been a part of a phenomenal team [Picture]? Maybe it was a sports team that came together to win the big game, or a work project where your group crushed their goals, an orchestra or band that was so in sync with each other? Maybe it's your squad in Call of Duty that just dominates together... All of those great teams always have some critical factors in common. They know and believe in their mission, everyone has a role they are serving the team in, whose whole impact is far greater than the sum of its individual parts. It feels great to be part of team like that.

Have you been on a dysfunctional team [Picture]? Those have some things in common as well. They often don't know or believe in their mission. People don't know what they are supposed to be doing, too many people are doing the same thing, or only a few people doing all of the work, often that team is dominated not by service by selfishness, not a common goal. You can't wait to get off of a team like that.

We are going to see this morning that Jesus designed the church (Title Slide) to function like a great team- on the same mission, everyone working together in the roles they are gifted to do, whose whole impact is greater than the sum of its individual parts. We can either be a phenomenal team, or a dysfunctional team. So what kind of a team are we and what kind of a teammate are you? Because there is a lot on the line. People coming to Christ, needs being met, a community to serve, a heritage of faith to pass on to the next generation. Paul shows us how to be a great team by being a great teammate.

### Romans 12:3-8

<sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function,

<sup>5</sup> so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. <sup>6</sup> We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith;

<sup>7</sup> if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; <sup>8</sup> 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.

Today we are going to see four keys to becoming a great teammate: key Serve:

### #1 Serve Humbly

<sup>3</sup> 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.

Sober judgment- Accurately, clearly. Almost everyone in western culture has a self-image based on OPO (Other people's opinions) and MOA (My own achievement), and so by nature of our culture's values, our self-image is usually either too low (worthless, unattractive, loser, irrelevant) too high (a hero, Mr. Right, powerful, better than others, self-made)...but Christians have access to a completely different self-image because of the gospel. On one hand, we were so needy and so helpless that God had to save us entirely through an act of grace (not earned), and by his power (not yours), by Jesus Christ (not us)! And so we should not think of ourselves too highly. And on the other hand, we should not think of ourselves too lowly, the gospel tells us that we are made in the image of God, we are so loved and prized by him. Ephesians 2:10 We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared beforehand. Tim Keller- *"The gospel is this: We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope."*

We are all equal at the foot of the cross, which has great implications in how we serve one another in the body of Christ because the gospel is the great org chart equalizer in the body of Christ. We have a saying, *"At BVBC, everyone is a doctor and everyone is a patient."* Everyone has something to give and everyone has something to receive. That includes me. One of many examples- just this week I called a woman from church to pray for some challenges her granddaughter was facing. But she also was asking how we were doing as we continue to grieve Shannan's dad's passing and so I shared a little about how challenging the holidays were and she gave me some simple but profound counsel that was exactly what I needed in the moment. And I told her, you just ministered to me because that was from the Lord. She holds no formal position in the church, she doesn't have a degree in theology...but she was a doctor and I was a patient. That is how the body of Christ was designed to function- Every member ministry.

## **#2 Serve Harmoniously**

*<sup>4</sup> For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, <sup>5</sup> so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.*

The body is a favorite analogy for Paul to describe the function of the body. He uses it in Ephesians 4 as well as 1 Corinthians 12. And it's such a great illustration because it is so obvious and self-evident. Our body demonstrates one of our core values- Unity in diversity. All our parts have a unique function (which we will talk about in a second) but they are all designed to serve in harmony for the good of the body. Let's put this in action for a second- everyone put your hands in the air, now wave them like you just don't care. Now what part of your body did that? My hands...arms? Brain? Ears? Bones? Muscles and tendons? Do you know that one little action my caused by thousands upon thousands of members within your body working in complete harmony with one another? Guess what, *this is how the body of Christ is designed to work. In harmony together. And what is the goal? Ephesians 4:16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.* The growth and maturity each member and the whole church so that we can

accomplish the mission God has given us to make disciples. So we are emphasizing our unity, now let's emphasize our diversity.

### #3 Serve Uniquely

*<sup>6</sup> We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith;*

*<sup>7</sup> if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; <sup>8</sup> 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.*

There are 4 primary texts in the New Testament that tell us about our spiritual gifts.<sup>1</sup> We don't have time to look in depth at all of them but let me share a few summary statements about the gifts that we learn from these passages.

- Gifts are distributed by the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12:4
- Gifts are particular spiritual abilities for the purpose of serving others. 1 Peter 4:10. On one level you say, shouldn't everyone do all these things? Yes, but some will be particularly effective and come alive when they do. These are not merely talents, Gifts are spirit empowered so that when you exercise them, they have spiritual effect. Someone can be a great singer but it has no spiritual effect on others. But you could have another person spiritually gifted in music that has less talent but when they sing or play it makes you come alive and God ministers to you. And there purpose is not so that people think you are great, they are to serve others. So think of it like this, the Holy Spirit has given you a gift to give to others. It's a spiritual regift. Not to be used on yourself and not for your glory, but God's.
- Every Christian has at least one gift. Romans 12:6. This means of course that there are no spiritually unemployed Christians. One of our goals is to have 100% spiritual employment at BVBC. No one is merely sitting and soaking like sponge, but is being wrung out in service to others.
- There are different gifts for different people. Romans 12:6  
Did you know that every single person have a unique heartbeat? No two people have an identical heartbeat. In fact, there are software companies now preparing to use heartbeats as a new method of biometric authentication.<sup>2</sup> So prepare to see that in the next Mission Impossible movie...and possibly even your smartphone. Well, we also all have a unique spiritual heartbeat design by God for ministry- using our personalities, passions, our experiences, our aptitudes and our spiritual gifts.
- Three Categories of Gifts: Speaking, Leadership and Support. And you can see those categories in the list Paul gives here in Romans 12.  
**Prophesying**- Two ways this term is used, Foretelling (Speaking on behalf of God about the future) and Forthtelling- either preaching from the word of God, or exhorting someone privately about a word you believe the Lord has given to you for that

<sup>1</sup> For more study you can visit- <https://mintools.com/gifts-list.htm>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/innovation/using-your-heartbeat-password-180961952/>

individual. Now some churches take very strong stances on whether the gift of prophecy still exists today, or if it closed with the finishing of the word of God, called the canon, this is an area where we leave room for different convictions. We have people from reformed and Baptist backgrounds and those from Pentecostal or other charismatic backgrounds. All are welcome here. But if you believe you have the gift of prophecy- two things I want you to know: 1) That gift must be used in submission to and in conjunction with the Word of God. So if someone says to you, "I have a word from the Lord for you", always test that with the Scriptures. 2) Exercise that gift in humility. You do not carry the weight of Scripture or the prophets of the Old Testament. If you did, that means we should write down everything you say and put it in the Bible.

**Serving**- this is the word "diakonia" where we get the word deacon. Means a servant. Someone that is like- hey, what do you need me to do, I'll go do it. They like to roll their hands up and get messy.

**Teaching**- Expounding the Word so that it's clear to understand and practice.

**Encouraging**- Those who are skilled and who love to put wind in other people's sails.

**Giving**- Those who love to share what they have with others- money, resources, connections.

**Leading**- Those who have the ability to be decisive and oversee systems and people with a level of care, clarity and organization.

**Mercy**- Those whose heartbeat is to care for those in need.

You can see the categories of Speaking, Leading and Supporting- But whether upfront or behind the scenes, they are all critical. I might get the microphone and Larisa may lead the music, but thank God for those who clean the seats and bathrooms in between the services, and make sure our voices sound OK and people can see us on the screen.

Thank God both for those who have the gift of giving and those who administrate the budget and spending! Thank God both for those who lead ministries, but also for those who quietly send meals, write cards, pick up supplies to those going through hard times that you may never even hear about.

- **There is no exhaustive list.** I believe this is purposeful, because not every church and not every location will have all the gifts or need all of the gifts. But God will always give each church what they need based on their unique mission and purpose God has given them.

#### **#4 Serve Faithfully**

Notice these gifts are not automatic- Paul says we have to do something with them, we must exercise them faithfully. *If giving, then generously, if leading then do it diligently.* If a tree falls in the forest and no one is there to hear it, does it make a sound? If you have a gift but it's never used, never cultivated to help and serve others, is it make a sound? Does it have any effect? No. Your gifts are a stewardship and you are accountable to God for what you do with it. No only must we exercise our gifts, but gifts can be developed for greater effectiveness. **2 Timothy 1:6- Fan into flame the gift of God given to you.** If you have leadership gifts- read books, go to seminars, get more experiences, get feedback. If you have mercy gifts, learn how to effectively help people without hurting, how to set boundaries. Jesus said, those who are faithful with little will be given more. But those who are not faithful, even what they have will be taken from them.

Recap, 4 Keys to becoming a great teammate: Serve Humbly, Harmoniously, Uniquely, Faithfully

### How do we discern our spiritual gifts?

Now some of us know our spiritual gifts- we have taken inventories, read books, we have our gifts on a nameplate on our desks... others have a big question mark.

### Venn Diagram of Ability/affinity/Affirmation<sup>3</sup>

**Ability-** What are you good at? What can you do with more ease and speed than most others?

**Affinity-** What are you passionate about? What needs am I drawn to? Where do I come alive? What bothers me the most about things not being done in the church? When you see something around here that is lacking, instead of just complaining about it, maybe that's God's invitation to do something about it. You had trouble getting connected? Join the connection team!

**Affirmation-** Where do people tell me God is using me? Where am I affirmed in my fit? A small group is a great place to test that out.

Just start somewhere...God loves to steer a moving ship. Don't sit in your momma's basement waiting for someone to ask- you take the initiative! **Connection Card**

**Title Slide-** Transition to commissioning

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<sup>3</sup> J.D. Greear used this scheme.