

May 24, 2020

Speaker: Eric Naus **Series:** This I Believe – The Book of Romans

Passage: Romans 12:3-8

Community Group Questions: “Body Life in Christ”

Read Romans 12:3-8 aloud as a group and then work through the following questions.

1. In Romans 12:1-2, the Apostle Paul launched into the “practical side” of Romans by urging Christian believers, in view of God’s mercy in the gospel, to offer their lives as living sacrifices to God in worship, and to be transformed through the renewing of their minds. Now, in verses 3-8, Paul explains that this transformation process is meant to take place in community – in the body of Christ. We are not meant to live our Christian lives alone! Every Christian is meant to grow in the company of others. In your experience so far as a Christian, how has your individual walk with Christ related to your connection with a local church community? In your opinion, how important are other Christians for your growth?
2. In verses 3-5, Paul tells us not to think about ourselves too highly, but rather, to think about ourselves with “sober judgment” (realistically, humbly, sensibly). How do we do this? By thinking about ourselves in the context of others! Notice how verses 4-5 unpack the theology of union with Christ as it relates to community: because every believer is “in Christ,” they are a part of his body, and therefore, they are a part of one another, just like individual body parts belong to the body as a whole. If we really comprehended this theology, how would it humble us and change us in our interactions with one another as Christians?
3. We would find it troubling to find body parts lying alone on the sidewalk. Why don’t we find it equally troubling when Christians try to live out their faith disconnected from the body of Christ in the local church? In what ways do you personally need to grow and change so that your thinking is more “corporate” as a Christian?
4. In verses 6-8, Paul instructs us to act like a body. He explains that each Christian has been given at least one gift from God which should be developed and used for the building up of the body. These gifts are often described as “spiritual gifts” because of Paul’s teaching in 1 Corinthians 12, that these gifts are empowered by the Holy Spirit. Paul’s use of the word “gift” here communicates the idea that these gifts are graciously given to us by God. It is an undeserved privilege to serve in these ways! Take time to compare the various lists of gifts that are mentioned in the New Testament (see the attached chart). Notice that no single list contains all the gifts, and therefore, these appear to be sample lists – they represent the types of gifts that Paul expected to see in the church of his day. Presumably, there might be many more gifts than the ones listed here (like the gift of music or prayer or patience, for instance). Notice also, as you compare these gift lists, that some are more like abilities (for example leadership), and some are more like roles (like apostle or pastor). Some are more overtly supernatural (like speaking in tongues), and some are more mundane (like mercy). Some are specific (like teaching), and some are categories (like “those who speak” and “those who serve”). Still, some of these gifts are stations of life

(like marriage and singleness). As you look at all these gifts together, and compare and contrast the various lists, what overall impression do you get about how God has designed spiritual gifts to function in his church? Why do you think God has designed things in this way?

5. Paul lists 7 gifts in Romans 12:3-8, including prophecy (sharing an impression or message that the Spirit brings spontaneously to mind with another believer, in order to encourage, exhort, or strengthen them. This gift should always be subject to the authoritative teaching of God's Word – see 1 Cor. 14:29 and 1 Thess. 5:19-20), service (humbly meeting the needs of others), teaching (explaining and applying God's Word), exhorting (encouraging and challenging others), contributing (joyful contribution of finances and other means), leading (directing others both in supervision and by example), and showing mercy (taking a special interest in helping the most vulnerable). As far as you can tell, has God gifted you with any of these gifts? What other spiritual gifts have you recognized in your life so far? Take time to go around the circle of your community group and affirm what gifts you see in one another. As others share about you, do you agree with their assessment?
6. What things have been most helpful for you in discovering your spiritual gifts? What would you recommend for someone who has no idea how God has gifted them for the body, but wants to find out?
7. How are you using your spiritual gifts uniquely in these days when the Corona Virus Pandemic has forced us to shut down much of our organized church life? How do you plan to use your gifts when we come back together?

Prayer suggestion: Along with sharing prayer requests, take time to thank God for the way he has uniquely gifted each member of your community group. Pray that he would strengthen the use of these gifts, by the power of the Holy Spirit.