



## Romans 12:3-8 Small Group Questions and Answers

1. How does Romans 12:3-8 fit into the application section of Romans?

Romans 12:1-2 gives us the broad general principles for the whole of our Christian life. We are called to present our bodies as living sacrifices holy and acceptable to God which is our reasonable service” and we are not to “be conformed to the world” but we are to be “transformed by the renewing of our minds...” Then Paul sets out application for the individual believer, starting with the thought life: “Do not THINK more highly of yourself than you ought to think. Then from Romans 12:9 and following, Paul makes application for life with-in the body of Christ, toward the world and back to the relationship between believers with weak and strong consciences.

2. What particular danger is Paul warning against in Romans 12:3-8?

Spiritual Pride.

3. Why is spiritual pride so dangerous?

Spiritual pride “is the main door by which the devil comes into the hearts of those who are zealous for the advancement of Christ.” - Jonathan Edwards

Jonathan Edwards warned his congregation after the Great Awakening not to think that they had been cured of all self-righteousness.

4. How does spiritual pride manifest itself in a congregation?

“No one is immune to exaggerated self-esteem.” – John Murray

Once a man or woman starts to live for Christ and starts to present their bodies as living sacrifices, they are in danger of being puffed up with pride as they see so many around them not living for Christ.

On the other side, Jonathan Edwards warned: “When any person appears, in any respect, to be noticeably excelling others in his Christian walk, odds are ten to one that it will immediately awaken the jealousy of those about him.”

5. What is unique about the sin of spiritual pride?

Gerard Wisse explained that spiritual pride was a sin that only believers can commit when he wrote:

“Sins can be found in the believer--in the gracious soul--which will neither be found outside of the state of grace, nor can they be committed apart from grace. What then are these sins--sins which are exclusively to be found in converted people? We are not thinking here of David’s fall; however, we are thinking of Peter’s fall: his denial of the Lord Jesus. Judas was indeed capable of betraying the Savior, but he was not capable of denying Him.

We also think--to mention only one example--of being proud of one’s state of grace. Hear how Paul makes mention thereof when, having been made true before God, he testifies in deep self-knowledge: “...lest I should be exalted above measure” (2 Cor. 12:7). Therefore he had been given a thorn in the flesh. In this manner Christ taught him where he was vulnerable in the state of grace.



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6. What does Paul call believers to do in contrast to having a heightened sense of importance?

To think soberly as God has given to each a measure of faith.

7. What are some abuses and dangers regarding not thinking soberly about your own gifts and callings?

“If we consider ourselves to possess gifts we do not have, then we have an inflated notion of our place and function; we sin by esteeming ourselves beyond what we are. But if we underestimate, then we are refusing to acknowledge God’s grace and we fail to exercise that which God has dispensed for our own sanctification and that of others.” - John Murray, *Romans* (Vol. 2), p. 117

8. What is the remedy to both spiritual pride and to thinking too low of yourself and your gifts?

“True self-esteem—about which a great deal is spoken of in our modern world-- is not the result of some form of manipulation of our thinking (like the sort of thing that you get in the positive thinking movement, where you look in the mirror in the morning, “Day by day, in every way, I am getting better and better,” and then you try believing that that is true—and then the mirror is inclined to give you a nice raspberry ); true self-esteem comes from drawing near to the cross of Jesus Christ, and finding--as Archbishop Temple did when he bowed before the cross of Jesus and said, “What I am worth, is what I am worth to the God who gave the blood of His only Son for my salvation, and that is a great deal. Now that’s where true self-esteem is born.” – Eric Alexander

9. How are we to assess our spiritual gifts?

Spiritual gifts are usually natural gifts that are sanctified and enhanced by the Holy Spirit. We should ask ourselves, “What do I seem to excel at? What do I love doing? How have others pointed out gifts in my life? What ways is the church affirming my gifts?”

10. How should we view our place in the body and the use of our gifts there?

We should remember that we need each other and that we are united to one another by virtue of our union with Christ. We are to be zealous in seeking to bless others with the gifts that Jesus has given us--whether for the spiritual or physical well-being of the members of the one body.