



# A MINISTRY FOR EVERY MEMBER

WEEK 1  
06.03.18

## FOCUS VERSE

### I Peter 4:10

As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

## LESSON TEXT

### Romans 12: 4–8

4 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:

5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;

7 Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching;

8 Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.

### I Corinthians 12:20–28

20 But now are they many members, yet but one body.

21 And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

22 Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary:

23 And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness.

24 For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked:

25 That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.

26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

28 And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.



## FOCUS THOUGHT

Every member of the body has a ministry. Let us all serve in our given ministries.



# CULTURE CONNECTION

## A Prayer for Wealth

**G**od, You missed another opportunity the other day. All You had to do was let me win the Publisher's Clearinghouse Sweepstakes, and I could have paid off the church mortgage, helped that young family struggling with an unexpected job loss, given to Compassion Services International, donated to Bible colleges, helped support both foreign missionaries and those in North America, and had enough left to pay off that hospital bill and put some away for retirement.

Maybe I didn't pray hard enough or I let some doubt in. I know I'm supposed to learn how to be abased and how to abound, but it seems to me I'm getting to be an expert on the former and haven't had nearly enough practice in the latter.

Could it be that You want me to address all those issues with more prayer instead of more money? Have I fallen for the deceitfulness of riches? For a person who doesn't have much money, it surely seems that more money is the answer. But maybe that's not the way You want to bring me through this struggle. Maybe that's not the way You want me to serve the church. It seems I have so few talents and abilities with which to minister, and so few opportunities to use even those. Teach me to be faithful in these few things until I learn to rule in the many. When I start fantasizing about what the world calls wealth, draw my attention to the true wealth You supply every day. Thank you for your abiding love. Amen.

## OUTLINE

### I. GIFTS OF THE CHURCH

- A. Equipping Gifts
- B. Spiritual Gifts
- C. Service (Ministry) Gifts

### II. MINISTRY FOR MANY MEMBERS

- A. Differing Parts of the Human Body Have Different Functions
- B. Members of the Body of Christ Have Diverse Service Gifts

### III. UNITY AND DIVERSITY IN MINISTRY

- A. All Parts Necessary in the Body
- B. No Division in the Body
- C. All Members Care for One Another
- D. Diversity of Ministry

### IV. EMBRACING OUR MINISTRIES

## CONTEMPLATING THE TOPIC

From the beginning of time, humanity was ennobled by a God-ordained purpose that brought both authority over and service to His creation. Adam was placed in the Garden "to dress it and to keep it" (Genesis 2:15). God could have made the Garden to be a

self-maintaining place of unprompted perfection, but instead it was a place requiring human attention, labor, and prudence. Paradise is not a place of continual idleness and self-indulgence, but of divine purpose and service. After all, when we first meet God, He is working. So to be made in His image, is to be made for work.

When God redeems a human being, He places that person into a new garden—a paradise known as the church, the body of Christ. Like the Garden of Eden, the church is not a place of spontaneous perfection. It requires continuous dressing and keeping by the believers acting as God's stewards. Every member has a vital ministry in the church.

## SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

### I. GIFTS OF THE CHURCH

#### A. Equipping Gifts

Ephesians 4:11 deals with ministerial offices filled by divine gifting, not merely by human appointment or election. One of Christ's gifts to the church is gifted people. These people have a divine calling expressed as specialized

gifts of ministry. Sometimes the modern church does not know what to do with this verse. We are familiar with pastors and evangelists, and the word *teachers* may bring to mind Sunday school, but we are frequently not as familiar with someone being called apostle or prophet.

While a called minister of God will often fulfill a number of ministerial roles over a lifetime, both successively and simultaneously, this passage speaks of a special gifting through which God provides some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers. Apostles, and to a lesser extent prophets, have ministries primarily associated with the whole body of Christ. Pastor-teachers are principally connected to a local congregation. While the ministries of these individuals are directed inward to the church, the ministry of an evangelist is outward, toward the lost.

The word *apostle* refers to one sent as a legate or ambassador. While this applies to the twelve Apostles of the Lamb, there were also many other apostles mentioned in the New Testament. From these New Testament examples, we see that apostles often did the work of a modern missionary, spreading the gospel to unchurched areas, establishing and setting in order local congregations, coordinating the combined efforts of congregations, and working with a council of local pastors to ordain church leaders or discipline wayward clergy.

A prophet is one who speaks for (or in the place of) God. While this includes foretelling the future, it is primarily forth-telling the mind of God. The gift of prophecy and the office of prophet are connected, but not everyone who exercises the gift of prophecy is a prophet. In the case of the office, it is the prophet that is the significant gift, not prophecy.

The New Testament church expected prophets to be among its members (Acts 2:17; 21:9; 22:10). The church at Corinth apparently contained more than a few (I Corinthians 14:29–31). According to I Corinthians 14, prophecy is intended to build up the church by edifying, exhorting, and comforting the believer (verse 3) and convincing, judging, and revealing the heart of the sinner (verses 24–25).

The word *evangelist* refers to one who

proclaims the good news of Jesus Christ. The task of an evangelist is to serve as the spokesperson of the church in declaring the salvation message to the world. First Corinthians 12:27–28 repeats three of the four ministerial gifts listed in Ephesians 4:11 as being “set . . . in the church.” Because of its outwardly directed ministry, the office of evangelist is not mentioned. An evangelist’s role is similar to that of an apostle (II Timothy 4:5). However, the evangelist does not establish new congregations or exercise authority over local church leaders. While everyone in the church is called to evangelize, the evangelist is specially gifted by God for this essential work.

The words *pastors* and *teachers* are two descriptive titles for the same office. This is clearly seen in the Greek text of Ephesians 4:11. Teaching is the primary method by which the pastor feeds the flock of God; therefore a pastor must be “apt to teach” (I Timothy 3:2; II Timothy 2:24). Without skill as a teacher, all other qualities and abilities of a pastor will avail little.

*Pastor* means “shepherd” and refers to loving care, leadership, and protection of the church. Ephesians 4:11 is the only place in the King James Version of the New Testament where the word occurs. The verb form “to shepherd” is often used to describe the work of local church leaders. In the New Testament, the titles *pastor*, *teacher*, *bishop*, and *elder* are used interchangeably to refer to the same office.

God gave these offices to the church so the believers could be equipped for their works of service to the body. Except for the evangelists, the primary purpose for which God gave these ministers is not to win the lost, but to perfect (complete and mature) those who have been born again. Equipped believers then fulfill the ministry of the church (verse 12). Of course, apostles, prophets, and pastor-teachers are also members of the body, but those who believe it is the pastor’s job to fill the church with new converts do not understand the proper role of this equipping gift and may endanger the healthy functioning of the church.

God’s goal for the gifted officers is that the church may come to “the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God” (verse 13) and full maturity according to the measure

of Christ Himself. There is a real danger that we will be childish in our faith, running after various wrong doctrines and being deceived by false leaders (verse 14). To counter this, God has established the church as a body, fitly joined together under His headship, in which every member contributes to its health and growth, “edifying . . . itself in love” (verses 15–16).

## B. Spiritual Gifts

In addition to equipping believers through gifted leadership, Christ empowers them for ministry through the supernatural manifestations of the gifts of the Spirit (the *charismata*). These gifts are not founded upon human talents or abilities but are energized by the Spirit Himself. While a number of *charismata* are mentioned or exemplified in the Bible, I Corinthians 12:7–11 specifically identifies nine that are distributed to members of the body for the advantage or betterment of the church.

These nine gifts can be divided into three categories based on their function in the body. The word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, and the discerning of spirits are revelation gifts providing some insight from the mind of God to the mind of the believer. The gift of faith, gifts of healings, and working of miracles are power gifts producing supernatural events. Finally, prophecy, various kinds of tongues, and the interpretation of tongues are communication gifts providing God’s direct messages to a specific person or group of people.

The word of wisdom supernaturally discloses the mind, purpose, or will of God for a specific time and situation, while the word of knowledge reveals information pertaining to a specific person, event, or situation. The latter reveals the facts of a matter while the former provides divine understanding, prudence, and insight into a matter. *Word* in the title of these gifts carries the meaning of expressed content and implies that these gifts operate as just a small glimpse into the infinite wisdom and knowledge of God.

Discerning of spirits is considered a revelation gift because it provides a glimpse into the spiritual world. Through this gift one may correctly differentiate between divine, angelic, demonic, or human activities, attitudes, or motivations. It is the spiritual gift by which the church may fulfill the command of I John 4:1

to “believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God.”

The word *faith* means confidence, belief, assurance, persuasion or trustworthiness, or the body of propositions forming the content of one’s belief system. Because God gifts all believers with faith (Ephesians 2:8), without which it is impossible to please Him (Hebrews 11:6), it is difficult to distinguish this faith from the special gift of faith. A clue may be found in I Corinthians 13:2 in which faith is connected to the power to remove mountains. As a power gift, faith may be described as the dynamic catalyst by which the promises of God are transformed into actions in the material world. Like the other gifts, it is energized by the Spirit of God and is not dependent on human abilities or talents. Therefore, magical thinking, wishful ideations, and the use of incantations are not part of the operation of this gift. It operates as God desires, when God desires, and through whom He desires.

The gifts of healings are another route through which God provides restoration for the sick. The need for healing is a direct result of the curse of sin that came about because of the Fall. Physical healing is part of God’s plan of redemption. Every Christian will one day receive absolute healing in a glorified body immune to suffering and death. Before that ultimate healing, provisional healings are experienced daily within the church. The plural title of this gift may indicate that any specific physical malady has associated with it a particular gift of healing. Thus, even as physicians specialize in given areas of medicine, the gifts of healings may “specialize” in particular areas of healing.

Natural law describes the orderly and general way the world works. A miracle transcends natural law and is therefore inexplicable by reference to any natural process. Miracles are supernatural. Put another way, natural law is a description of the way God acts in and through nature, whereas a miracle is the way God acts beyond nature (supra-naturally) on special occasions and for unique purposes. The working of miracles is a spiritual gift intended to bring about miracles through and for the benefit of the church.

The three communication gifts produce Spirit-inspired, spontaneous messages orally

delivered through a member of the body acting as the mouth of God. When delivered in a language understood by both speaker and hearer, it is a manifestation of the gift of prophecy. When delivered in a language not known to the speaker, the gift of various kinds of tongues is being manifest. When the language is not known to the hearers, the gift of interpretation of tongues is necessary so the meaning may become known.

Just as God gifts all true Christians with faith, so speaking in unknown tongues is for all believers. Speaking in tongues is the God-ordained sign of receiving the Holy Ghost. Believers may pray in tongues, worship in tongues, sing in tongues, and give thanks in tongues (I Corinthians 14:15–16). However, when communicating a message from God, prophecy is the preferred gift because it requires no interpretation. First Corinthians 14:1–25 deals extensively with the superiority of the gift of prophecy over the gift of tongues but also preserves the vital importance of unknown tongues as a tool for prayer and praise.

All these manifestations of the Spirit are intended for all of us, but not necessarily for each of us. “But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will” (I Corinthians 12:11). This diversity is necessary for the functioning of the church: “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ” (I Corinthians 12:12).

### **C. Service (Ministry) Gifts**

The gifts so far mentioned are only some of the gifts God gives to the church. The fruit of the Spirit (Ephesians 5:22–23) grows within each member as we mature in Him. These represent gifts of godly virtues.

In this sense, the gifts of grace listed in Romans 12 are also virtues. They represent enduring callings and affinities God gives to individuals so the church may “overcome evil with good” (verse 21) through loving service to the church and the world.

## **II. MINISTRY FOR MANY MEMBERS**

### **A. Differing Parts of the Human Body Have Different Functions**

The various gifts to the church are almost always discussed within the context of unity. The unity is organic rather than simply mechanical or structural. This unity is represented by the human body, which consists of many parts each having differing functions. A fully functioning body is completely dependent on the proper operation of a multitude of smaller structures.

### **B. Members of the Body of Christ Have Diverse Service Gifts**

Some of the organic structures of the body of Christ are listed in Romans 12:6–8. They are prophecy (perhaps preaching), ministry (rendering service), teaching, exhorting (giving encouragement or consolation), giving, ruling (providing leadership, direction, and guidance), and showing mercy (compassion, pity). Those who have been granted the grace of prophecy should prophesy (preach) in proportion to faith. Those who have the grace of ministry (the role or task of a servant) should use it for providing help. Teachers should instruct, exhorters should provide encouragement, givers should give with sincere generosity, leaders should be diligent, and the merciful should be cheerful.

These instructions demonstrate that the roles of showing mercy or encouragement are no less important than the roles of prophet or teacher. They also demonstrate clearly that people should not intrude into roles for which the Spirit has not equipped them. Teachers should teach, exhorters should encourage, and prophets should prophesy. That does not eliminate the possibility that any one individual in the church may be granted multiple gifts of grace. It is likely that one who is faithful in one service will be gifted in others. (See Matthew 25:21.)

Beginning at Romans 12:9 and running through the end of the chapter are more functions of various structures of the body of Christ. This is not intended as an exhaustive list of service gifts, but it provides examples of the overarching necessity of diversity within unity.

## **III. UNITY AND DIVERSITY IN MINISTRY**

First Corinthians 12:12 states, “For the body is one, and hath many members.” It

was not until recently that we knew how many members a body has. The adult human body contains about one trillion cells for every kilogram (2.2 pounds) of body weight. There are more than 210 types of cells, each with its own unique function. When cells of the same type cluster together, they form living tissue. In turn, organs are formed from tissues that work together to perform a specific activity.

Sometimes a cell will cease to perform its proper role in the body and instead begin to relentlessly multiply. These cells may invade and take over healthy tissue, form tumors, or flood the body with dangerous abnormal cells. Thus, a single cell not performing its proper function can eventually lead to the death of the entire body.

It appears there were many cancerous cells in the church at Corinth. Unfortunately, this was not limited to Corinth. When Paul sent Timothy to Philippi to comfort the believers and inform him concerning their circumstances, he wrote, "For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's" (Philippians 2:20–21). It is almost inconceivable that all those present with Paul except one faithful man were concerned only with their own wellbeing. Thankfully, as a healthy body begins with a single healthy cell, so a healthy congregation can begin with one person who will naturally care for the state of the church.

### **A. All Parts Necessary in the Body**

Even at the cellular level, the health of the body is dependent on every member faithfully performing its given function. Those members who seem to be the least important are indispensable (I Corinthians 12:22). In the body of Christ, greater honor is bestowed upon those members we might think to be lacking in honor, and unattractive members are blessed with greater esteem (I Corinthians 12:23). "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty" (I Corinthians 1:27). The body may be able to survive losing a nonfunctional member, but it cannot remain healthy and fully effective without every member fulfilling its proper function.

### **B. No Division in the Body**

While it is easy to distinguish Bill's arm from his ear, we usually do not distinguish Bill's arm from Bill. That is, if Bill's arm does something, then Bill has done it. If Bill's ear hears something, then Bill has heard it. Indeed, it is impossible for Bill's arm to do anything without several parts of his body working together, and Bill's ear is deaf without its various connections to the body. We do not arrest the hand of a thief, award the legs of a runner or praise the larynx of a singer.

The members of the church can be classified by office, calling, or gift even as the cells of a body can be classified by function. But the body is the undivided wholeness of the cells, and the church is the united totality of its members (I Corinthians 12:12). There is no division.

### **C. All Members Care for One Another**

All the cells of the human body work together for the survival and well-being of the body. If the body is healthy, it provides just the right environment for the health of all its members. All believers work together for the well-being and advancement of the church. The vitality of each member of the body depends on the vitality of the church. The church ministers to itself, providing for the needs of each member through the service of each member. If one member suffers, all members suffer with it; if one is honored, all rejoice with it (I Corinthians 12:26).

### **D. Diversity of Ministry**

I Corinthians 12:29–30 presents a series of rhetorical questions related to the gifts: "Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?" The answer to all these questions is no. As manifestations of the Spirit, any believer may experience any one of these from time to time. But as gifts and callings, they are uniquely given to select individuals for specific purposes.

It is tragic when any one gift is missing in a local church, but it is also tragic when one is emphasized above all the others. For the church to emphasize one gift at the expense of minimizing the others is to deny the very purpose for which gifts are given: the benefit of the whole body of Christ.

## IV. EMBRACING OUR MINISTRIES

In discussing the Jews' rejection of Jesus, the Book of Romans states, "As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes" (Romans 11:28). Because of their animosity toward the church, the Jews made themselves enemies of God. But because of the promises made to their fathers, they were still beloved of God. Their unbelief did not cut them off from these promises because "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Romans 11:29). God never regrets the gifts and calling He bestows. They are irrevocable, even when met with unbelief and rejection.

If we are part of the church, we have been gifted for the work of the ministry. God will never change His mind and rescind our ministries. He chose us to fulfill that ministry because it pleased Him. This is true for all members of His body. "But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him" (I Corinthians 12:18).

We have been commanded to "covet earnestly the best gifts" (I Corinthians 12:31) so we may embrace fully the ministry for which God has chosen us, exercising the authority and responsibility God has granted us to serve one another. "As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good

stewards of the manifold grace of God. . . . If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ" (I Peter 4:10–11, NKJV).

## INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

Each member of the body of Christ has a vital role to play in the nurture and healthy function of the church. God has set specific gifts and callings in the body so each member may be guided, equipped, and empowered to fulfill his or her service to the church and the world. The members are not the same, nor do they perform the same functions. God suits the gift to the purpose and empowers each individual to uniquely minister as He has decided. Some functions within the church may seem more important, more robust, or more praiseworthy, but it is all the church working in unity that accomplishes the work of Christ.

Cells that cease to perform their proper functions in the body endanger the life of the body. It is our choice whether we promote the vitality or the toxicity of the body. God's free gifts for the equipping, empowering, and service of the body provide all that is necessary for us to participate in a healthy and powerful church. ■

## REFLECTIONS

- Discuss how the ministries belonging to all members of the body differ from the ministries listed in Ephesians 4:11. Is there a qualitative difference between a licensed minister and a lay minister?
- Provide some specific examples of how the revelation gifts minister to the church. Do the same for the power gifts, communication gifts, and service gifts.
- What can a local church do to encourage its members to discover and embrace the gifts God has chosen for them?
- What preparations or instructions might individuals undertake to better equip themselves to exercise their gifts?
- Ask a few members of the class to discuss how they discovered and acknowledged their gifts and what difference that has made in their walk with Christ and their relationship to the church.