

"It's Your Serve"

What's the Point? part #5

I Corinthians 12:12-27

[60] Good morning. It is so good to be with you again. What an amazing God we serve. Look around you for a moment. Tell someone next to you, "You're not here by accident." We are here to worship, to grow, and to serve together. We can't do this alone. This church has supported each other through thick and thin and will continue to do so. What a great place to be. What a blessing from God.

Would you please pray with me? Lord, if you have something to tell me, I'm ready to listen. Search me and know me, God. Look into my heart and see where I need to change. Help me live in your eternal way. In Jesus' name, we pray, amen.

[61] Let's do a quick review, shall we? By the way, all these sermons are available on our website and YouTube Channel. If you're having trouble falling asleep at night, go online and listen! But seriously, my messages are there to share.

Our first week, we learned that "You and God form the most important love relationship of your life". We dreamed what could happen in everyone gave that relationship the time and attention it needs.

We discovered some truths to help that relationship thrive. Truth #1: You were created to worship God, to honor God with your life. Mark 12:30 says, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." Truth #2: You were formed for God's family, to fellowship and connect with other Christians. Romans 12:5 says, "So in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others."

Truth #3 we covered last week: You were created to become like Christ, and to take responsibility for your own spiritual growth. Matthew 5:6 says "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled."

[62] Today, we're going to talk about two of my favorite subjects: body parts and gifts. I want to make a little confession here. I don't like my nose. I don't mean that I don't like the way it looks. I happen to have seasonal allergies.

If I get near a lot of smoke, or cats, or dust, I start sneezing violently. They say a sneeze can travel 100 miles an hour. I'll bet mine go 200 or more. Seriously, there are times when I wish my nose would just go away.

But I need my nose. It does some very important things, like holding up my glasses and alerting me to when dinner is cooking. My nose isn't always my best friend, but I'm glad I have it. It is uniquely shaped to do two important things for my body: breathe and smell.

[63] The truth I want to tell you today is this. You were uniquely shaped for ministry. When we connect our unique gifts with the passion God has shaped us for, amazing things happen. And when we don't use those gifts, our lives are wasted.

I want to ask you three questions this morning. Answer them in your heart, honestly. These are questions about your expectations in this life.

Question 1: Will I consume or contribute?

Question 2: Am I a getter or a giver?

Question 3: Do I expect others to serve me or do I try to serve others?

We are all gifted. The choice we face is whether or not to use our gifts. If you are a consumer and choose not to use your gifts, you will find that life is empty, lonely, and meaningless. But if you live to serve others by using your gifts, you will find the joy and significance that God intended for you.

I hope you are a server. If not, what I'm about to tell you won't help, so go ahead and try to get a little nap in. But if you want a meaningful life, then I invite you to consider how to serve others.

[64] In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul tells us, God wants us to use our gifts. And before you say, "Well, that was because those Corinthians were super-Christians," let me tell you, they were the Frankensteins of the Body of Christ. Corinth was known as a place to have a good time. Sailors came from every direction, and goods traveled throughout Greece and the Roman empire. There were temples on every corner to a whole bunch of Greek and Roman gods. Corinth had an "anything goes" culture.

This is where God planted a church. Believe me, the church in Corinth had issues! But here's the amazing thing. Paul knew they had a vital ministry.

Despite the diversity of religion, the promiscuity, and the revelry, Corinth was the example of the church, what we call the Body of Christ.

[65] Paul says in verse 12 that the Body is one unit, made of many parts, as Christ is one. Paul appeals to the Corinthians not to be divided, but to be united through Christ. Their society had different values, upbringing, and social status...literally slaves and the wealthy coming together in the church, and Paul tells them, "You are One Body."

The modern church also needs to practice unity in the midst of diversity. What a shame it would be if everyone in this church to looked alike and thought alike! Here's a secret I've learned: If both of us agree, one of us isn't necessary. We need diversity and we need unity, not just one or the other.

Paul reminds the Corinthians that the different body parts cannot just go off and leave on a whim. They all belong to the body. I can't cut off my nose if I'm having an allergy attack. I still need it! And Paul tells the church, we need each other. God is the one who has arranged the parts in a perfect relationship, so they could all function together. What God has joined together, let no one separate. (see Mark 9:10)

[66] No body part can walk away, and none can tell another to leave either. We all matter. Here's a card a friend of mine sent me once. ("I'm the belly button.") Isn't that great? Even belly buttons are important!

When one part suffers, we all suffer. When one part rejoices, we all should feel great. Even if you weren't at VBS, you can still celebrate that ministry! We are all in this together. That holds true inside our own church and in the whole community.

[67] The body is made up of many parts, all of them important, and all of them belonging to each other. So what? Your gifts are no good to anyone if they are not used. If you understand you were shaped for unique ministry, then you must discover and use your gifts to serve others.

Are you a nose, an eye, an ear? A leg or an arm? Do you know what your passions are? Your talents? Take an inventory. If you said yes to Jesus, you are gifted! It's automatic. God never makes mistakes.

Also, it's important to use your unique gifts, not gifts that someone else has. If you're not a people-person, being a greeter is probably not the best way to

help the body of Christ! Maybe you're better with your hands, and love mission projects. Maybe you cook. Maybe you pray. Maybe you can be a companion for someone at the end of their life. Whatever your gift is, use it.

As you learn to use your gifts, beware of those who try to prevent you from unleashing your passion. There are gift-stealers out there, who will try to tell you not to serve. Don't listen to them. Listen to God's voice. You have a gift, unique to you. Find an outlet for it.

Every body part matters. Every gift matters. Don't let setbacks stop you. You were uniquely shaped for ministry, to serve, so discover how you are gifted, and go serve others. Don't wait for someone else to tell you what to do.

[68] I realize, many of you listening have never been challenged to discover and use your unique gifts. It seems so obvious, maybe no one has ever told you what I'm telling you. Or maybe you've never tried to discover your gifts. How can you do that? I have a few ideas. Go over to St. Vincent's DePaul, or Habitat Restore, or Little Brother's Friends of the Elderly, or Salvation Army and offer to volunteer. Sign up to be a greeter, a coffee hour host, or a Children's Church leader. Come join the prayer team, offer to help with the youth or college students. Maybe it will work out, maybe not. Either way, you will learn something. Don't stop trying until you find your niche.

[69] Another way to discover your gifts is to take a survey. There are hundreds to be found online. Google "spiritual gifts test" and take one. I offered one suggestion in the bulletin. (www.spiritualgiftstest.com/tests). You might discover a gifts you never knew you had and learn to use it.

The simplest way is to ask someone what they think your gifts are. It's risky, I know, but that's what we are all here for. We are the Body. We need each other to grow and be challenged. We can help each other discover our unique gifts. I would not be up here preaching today if someone hadn't told me I have a gift for pastoral ministry. I wasn't so sure. I went through some struggles and valleys before I finally said yes to God. Have you been through a valley? Has someone walked with you? Your pain might be thing God uses to start something new. Ask around. Allow your brothers and sisters to help you discover your gifts.

[70] It comes down to the simple fact that if you ask in prayer, God will show you how you can serve others. The Church is the Body of Christ. We need

all the parts working together: eyes, ears, noses, hands, feet, hearts, lungs, stomachs (that's me!), appendices, big toes, little toes, and belly buttons. Where would this church be without generations of secretaries, treasurers, ushers, greeters, Sunday School teachers, VBS helpers, video technicians, trustees, even pastors! Those who sew, cook, clean, build and pull weeds. Those who sing, pray, give, witness and serve. The body can't function without all the parts working. You can't experience true meaning in life if you're not serving.

Look, I'm still new here. I don't know all the areas there are to serve. But I have already seen many needs in this community. I spoke to a mom recently that simply asked, "Would my children be welcome here? Would they be accepted and respected?" She's not the only one asking. Would we be ready for them? Not one person I've met in this church yet has told me that they think this congregation needs to shrink. If that's true, we need to do a heart check. Every one of us must seriously ask, "How will I be a part of what God is doing in this church? What am I willing to give so that everyone who encounters this body of Christ will know the unconditional, forgiving, life-transforming love of Jesus?"

Change is inconvenient, uncomfortable, might make us anxious. However it is necessary to make disciples of Jesus Christ to transform the world. A life of service is a life worth living. You were created to serve. Discover your gifts and use them for God's glory. Let's pray.

Memory verse:

"Each one should use whatever gift they have received to serve others."

I Peter 4:10

Reflection questions:

1. Are you more likely to consume or serve? Why is that?
2. What is one thing you are passionate about?
3. What is your greatest longing for the church?
4. What is your deepest longing for the world?
5. How could God calling you to serve in the Body of Christ and the world?

Online resource: www.spiritualgiftstest.com/tests

Based on Rick Warren's "The Purpose-Drive Life", 2002, with Doug Fields Youth Ministry resources.