

“HAVING GIFTS THAT DIFFER: SERVING GIFTS.”

Rev. Robert T. Woodyard

First Christian Reformed Church

August 24, 2025, 10:30 AM

Scripture Texts: Romans 12:6-8; I Peter 4:7-11

Introduction.

Last week we looked at three speaking gifts and this week we consider four serving gifts. All these definitions, characteristics and cautions will be on the church web page tomorrow, or just ask me for a copy.

These gifts “serve” the church or enable God’s work by providing support in both spiritual and practical areas. They are about putting others first or meeting the needs of others so they are free to exercise their spiritual gifts.

Remember all these traits are commanded of all of us. The difference for some is they have a special enabling or anointing and do their gift above and beyond what is normally expected, or more freely or more frequently or more fruitfully than the rest of us.

There is an interesting difference between what Paul says about the speaking gifts and what he says about the serving gifts. Paul adds an exhortation, or a caution against a particular temptation that those with these gifts might have in doing their gift.

The Serving Gifts, enabling God’s work.

Serving/Helping (helps, service)

Romans 12:7 if service, in our serving.

I Corinthians 12:28 gifts of ... helping.

I Corinthians 12:15 they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints.

Serving is the Spirit-given special ability given to some to serve and strengthen the body of Christ by identifying unmet needs in the Body of Christ and beyond, and to use whatever resources necessary to practically meet those needs; and by offering others assistance in exercising their spiritual gifts. People with this gift...

Helping/Serving Characteristics:

- Enjoy and seek out ways to serve behind the scenes and without public recognition.
- Rejoice in the success or fruitfulness of others.

- See what needs to be done before others do, are detail-oriented and offer practical solutions.
- Look for ways to be of assistance to others and find great joy in freeing others from responsibilities so that they can exercise and share their spiritual gifts.

Helping/Serving Cautions:

- Have difficulty saying “no,” can become overextended physically and/or emotionally.
- Easy to feel taken for granted if not affirmed in your support role.
- Take too much ownership in helping others or don’t let others help.
- Devalue your contribution to the Lord’s work, and don’t see your service as a spiritual gift.

These people are essential to the life of the church. They are the ultimate team players of Christ's church. They see the value of serving in support of the body, for the common good.

If the Spirit opens your eyes and heart to see a need, a weakness, something lacking, or falling through the cracks, take that opportunity to serve, to come along side, to bless, to visit, to lift a burden, make a meal, share some kindness.

Giving (generosity)

Romans 12:8 the one who contributes, in generosity.

Romans 12:13 Contribute to the needs of the saints.

Acts 4:34–35 believers shared generously so none had need.

Giving is the Spirit-given special ability given to some to serve and strengthen the body of Christ by freely, joyfully and sacrificially supporting and funding various kingdom initiatives through significant personal and material contributions above and beyond the ordinary duty of tithes and offerings expected of all believers.

People with this gift...

Giving Characteristics:

- Plan and purposely give over and above the 10 percent tithe, in order to see God's kingdom advanced.
- Find great joy in giving and take a strong personal interest in causes or people needing help.
- Strategically seek out ways to increase your resources, in order to contribute more for God's kingdom work.

- See your resources as tools for God's use and recognize God's ultimate ownership of everything.

Giving Cautions:

- Pride in your generosity; or try to gain influence or position through your gifts.
- You can become critical of how others spend money or expect others to give like you do.
- You may be misled into giving to causes which do not further the cause of Christ.

Why does Paul say what he says about this gift? Not “to the one who contributes, contribute,” but with generosity. Not “to the one who gives, give,” but “to the one who gives with generosity.” Why would someone with this gift need to be urged to give generously?

Because it is often the case those whom God has given much, tend to hold on to it. After all, a reason they have a lot of money is by not giving it up easily. And they think the reason other people need money is because they haven't been as careful as they were. So they resent giving it away.

The word liberal is interesting, liberal as in liberality. We all know that liberals love being liberal with other people's money, and we resent them for it. But are we liberal with our own money, which of course isn't our own money, it is God's money He has given us to be liberal with.

When you give to the church, do you feel a delight to have the privilege and blessing to give to the financial needs of the body, no resentment, not begrudgingly, not stingy or miserly, without ulterior motives or hidden agendas.

By the way, it is not just the wealthy who have this gift. In fact, it is more common among those who are not wealthy at all.

If you have money, give it liberally, generously, selflessly, joyfully. Thankful for the privilege of doing what God does with all His gifts.

If time, give generously, if counsel or wisdom, give generously, if hospitality or a meal, give generously. From whatever the Spirit has given you, from that storehouse of resources give generously.

With the new members class last week I urged them to make the blue envelope their first priority in giving to the church. Just like you take care of your own household before you give to other things, so take care of God's household before you give to other things. God has given you what He wants you to give to His house, don't rob Him of it.

Deacons, don't be stingy with the churches' money. Give it away liberally. And as far as I know I think you are, so this isn't a rebuke. As you handle God's money that He has made you stewards over, be generous, be liberal, set an example with God's money that all of us should follow with the money God has given each of us. Be liberal with God's money.

Mercy

Romans 12:8 the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

Matthew 25:36 I was sick and you visited me.

Luke 6:36 be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.

Mercy is the Spirit-given special ability given to some to serve and strengthen the body of Christ by ministering to those who suffer physically, emotionally, spiritually, or relationally, with love, care, compassion, comfort, sympathy and kindness that translates into cheerful acts of service that alleviate the suffering. People with this gift...

Mercy Characteristics:

- Are a "love-in-action" kind of person who is drawn to opportunities to practically meet the needs of others.
- Are one who is patient with those who are sick or in need; even outsiders and outcasts.
- Tend to place the needs of others ahead of your own.
- Grieve with those who grieve.
- Are most fulfilled when visiting people in need -- in hospitals, nursing homes, shut-ins, prisons, or wherever God directs you.

Mercy Cautions:

- You may base decisions more on emotion rather than reason.
- You may be critical of people who appear less sensitive to others.
- You may have difficulty saying no to a need even when you should.

Those with the gift of mercy are exhorted to show mercy with cheerfulness. Don't spoil your gift or put a damper on it by showing mercy with a complaining spirit or pride, or lack of love. Show mercy cheerfully. Let your face minister to others with a smile, with a joy. And don't be too proud to allow others to serve and help you.

This gift takes many forms, assisting the poor, coming along side the weak, helping someone with a disability, lifting the burden from someone on overload, caring for

someone infirmed, ill, bedridden or house bound. God's mercy to us should make us merciful to others.

Leadership (ruling, governing)

Romans 12:8 the one who leads, with zeal.

1 Thessalonians 5:12 Those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord.

Leading is the Spirit-given special ability given to some to serve and strengthen the body of Christ by providing vision and direction, stimulating spiritual growth, applying strategies, and achieving success, with a willingness to take responsibility, organize and direct. People with this gift...

Leadership Characteristics:

- Are naturally drawn into leadership roles and naturally grasp the "big picture." You are able to see the final results of major undertakings well in advance.
- Find it easy to motivate people – both individually and in teams – to work together in achieving goals for God's kingdom.
- Are able to let go of responsibility and delegate it to others.

Leadership Cautions:

- You may become insensitive to individuals carrying out the details of the vision because of focus on the big picture or get too far ahead of the people being led.
- You can be dominant or demanding, making the project more important than the people.
- It's possible to become prideful.

To the one who leads, with zeal, or in some translations, with diligence. Why tell them to be diligent? Why would a leader be lazy, slothful? Because leadership is hard, and when you do it, it is not uncommon for people to not like you. Spiritual leadership is especially important because souls are at stake and that is a heavy burden.

Thank your elders who are God's protection over you. As Scripture says,

Hebrews 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

You who lead, elders, deacons, teachers, leaders, facilitators, see your gift as a divine gift, a God-given calling, so exercise it in a way that honors the giver and the givers intentions.

Leading, ruling, exercising of authority is a serious gift from God. It is meant for the good of the body, for their safety and security spiritually, to keep watch day and night over the flock.

Summary of the Distinctions:

Serving shows **Christ's hands** meeting practical needs, with humility and faithfulness.

Mercy shows **Christ's heart** compassionately relieving suffering, with cheerfulness.

Giving shows **Christ's generosity** to the needy, sharing resources, with sincerity.

Leading shows **Christ's headship** over His body, with zeal and diligence.

Conclusion.

Remember your gifts are not yours. And the church didn't give them to you. They are God's gifts, from Him to you for you to use for Him in His church.

How has the Spirit gifted you these ways? Are any of these gifts in you in seed form waiting to be watered and nurtured through small ways of starting to serve? Are there ways God wants you to be a blessing to others because of the gifts the Spirit has given you? Life Groups are one great way to start, to explore and experiment with your gifts.

It's alright to take baby steps. What's not alright is to keep your gift buried out of fear or feelings of inadequacy or comparing yourself to others. Don't let Satan will try to discourage you or lie, or make you think too lowly, bury your gift.

Look around at the needs in the body through the lens of our own gifts and see where God would have us use our particular gifts. Use your gift to identify what you should be doing.

Get busy serving and speaking according to the measure of faith God has already given you, according to the grace He has given you.

You are part of the body, you have a part, the body needs you, you need the body.

Respond in faith to what the Spirit is doing and step out in faith to what He wants you to do. Pray, ask for help, be humble and be bold in the Spirit.

I Peter 4:10-11 As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: 11 whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.