

An Organism More Than as Organization 2025
Romans 15:1-7 1 Corinthians 12:1, 4-15, 27

Romans 15:1-7 (The Message)

Those of us who are strong and able in the faith need to step in and lend a hand to those who falter, and not just do what is most convenient for us. Strength is for service, not status. Each one of us needs to look after the good of the people around us, asking ourselves, “How can I help?” That’s exactly what Jesus did. He didn’t make it easy for himself by avoiding people’s troubles, but waded right in and helped out. “I took on the troubles of the troubled,” is the way Scripture puts it. Even if it was written in Scripture long ago, you can be sure it’s written for us. God wants the combination of his steady, constant calling and warm, personal counsel in Scripture to come to characterize us, keeping us alert for whatever he will do next. May our dependably steady and warmly personal God develop maturity in you so that you get along with each other as well as Jesus gets along with us all. Then we’ll be a choir—not our voices only, but our very lives singing in harmony in a stunning anthem to the God and Father of our Master Jesus! So reach out and welcome one another to God’s glory. Jesus did it; now you do it!

1 Corinthians 12:1, 4-15, 27 (New Revised Standard Version)

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses. For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot would say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

It happened to be very early on a Sunday morning in Greece,
that the professors and seminary students in our travel group
were all gathered among the ruins of the ancient city of Corinth.
We had paused to read some Scripture passages and worship together
where once the church, the Christians of Corinth might have been,
but there was no Church of Corinth there anymore.

According the biblical historians,
it was not that the church in Corinth ran out of money or resources.
Certainly not that there was any shortage of people in need to serve,
or those with whom they could share the truth & the Good News
about God’s gracious mercy & love, & desire to heal & save.

And the church didn’t fail because of an earthquake, a fire or flood,
or even from an external attack or pressure from Roman persecution.
Scholars agree that in truth, they stopped being the Church
when they stopped believing and behaving as the Church.

It seems that Christians in ancient Corinth were having difficulty
understanding that we are all equally **parts of the body of Christ**.
It seems some had decided that their particular gifts and talents

were somehow superior to others & so that made them more important.

The Apostle Paul had started the church in Corinth,
but after he moved on some problems had developed.
One of the significant issues they were struggling with in Corinth
was divisive conflict over misunderstanding spiritual gifts, vs. 1,

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. (Or,
don't take this lightly, it's important.)

The problem in Corinth was that some parts of the body, some people
believed and professed that they were better, more useful & needed,
than those **they chose to perceive** as less worthy
& not contributing as much to the body of Christ.

But as Paul explains, vs. 4-6,

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the
same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is **the same God who activates all of them in everyone.**

So really, it's about God, not us or the judgments we choose to make.

God provides the appropriate skills, understanding and resources,
all that is needed to fulfill the Church's mission well,
and all are indispensable in accomplishing that mission,

for the truth is, no one has all the gifts needed,
and no one has none of the gifts that are needed.

To clarify, as Paul explains in his letter, vs. 12, 27, 14-15,

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one
body, so it is with Christ. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. Indeed, the body does not
consist of one member but of many. If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,"
that would not make it any less a part of the body.

By grace and by faith we have all been grafted into the body of Christ,
a metaphor representing the church, our faith community & family,

where we develop and live out our faith as we participate
actively and usefully in the life and mission of the Church
as an expression of our shared faith and commitments.

It's about how we are choosing to respond to the graciousness of God,
with a life of growing faith, of discipleship and useful service.

The Church of Jesus Christ is uniquely where we grow in God's grace,
which equips us each to serve the Church's mission and purpose,
so that together, we can make a difference in this world.

So, one of our primary tasks then,
is to discover our own gifts and help others discern their gifts,
so, to use them for the blessing and building up of the whole body,
for that is an important way we as Christians grow in our faith.

And all of it comes as a gift in wonderful abundance from God
so, there really is no place for human pride, ego or arrogance,

as if some gifts in particular made them superior disciples,
more favored by God or more useful & needed than anyone else's,
or theirs more necessary than what anyone else has to offer.

And since all gifts are **equally dependent** upon God's grace alone,
that truth serves to unify all believers into the body of Christ,

which means that God's grace is far more important & critical
than anything else about us or whatever we might accomplish,
for by God's grace alone we are all equally loved, worthy & precious.

What God chooses to give is always appropriate and fits perfectly.
And though some may be more publicly visible than others,
all are equally a reflection of God's grace and purpose,
and all are needed for the church to fulfill its mission.

And God intends by our unique gifts to show that we need each other,
and that we each one mix together like the ingredients of a recipe.

Paul further explains why we are each given these gifts, vs. 7,

To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

It is all about God's purpose and will, the Church's call and mission
for building up the body of Christ to serve & make a real difference.

So, each is given at least one gift as a reflection of God's grace,
which is true evidence that our God is faithful, kind and good,
and that ours is a God of wonderful intentional-diversity.

Yes, a single soloist can sound lovely and carry a tune,
but how much better and how much more inspiring when many voices
blend together so they can sing and merge into a rich harmony.

So too the Church, the people of God are called to serve together.
In faithful humility, as we are called to combine and blend
our individual and particular gifts, skills and offerings,
all of us to serve together joyfully for the glory of God,

much like the joyful laughter of happy children playing together,
all for God's purpose of building up the Church for its mission,
each suitable and appropriate for their particular context.

**That is the shared and meaningful life together that our Lord
intends and desires for all his beloved and blessed people.**

And Paul's message to the Corinthians and to us is that,
any emphasis on any individual or their gift is out of balance,
for God blesses us through our diversity and interdependence,
which leaves no room for harsh judgement, superiority or division.

All of us are each one entrusted with blessings for the whole body.

God bestows wonderful gifts for benefit of the whole church,
giving to us as grace and blessing **beyond our salvation**,
equipping us to do something extraordinary - to do ministry.

So, each person's gifts are uniquely & equally important & necessary,
but too often we allow our own agenda and sinful pride to divide us.

Some Christians withhold their gifts, or are unwilling to commit,
and never get around to using the gifts God entrusted to them,
which is essentially refusing to live out God's gift & blessing,

which is sort like going to an amusement park like Disneyland
and just standing in line without ever getting on the ride.

That's tragic, for there is no greater joy or fulfillment possible,
than when we freely and appropriately offer and use of our gifts.

Nothing is more satisfying or rewarding than doing
that which we are equipped and gifted to do well.

**It is a great wrong and total waste to be just ok or good enough,
when the Lord had called & equipped us to be great & sensational!**

By Grace God has called and equipped each one of us,
and has also uniquely and specifically fitted every one of us
to complement each other with our individual gifts,
so that together we can accomplish God's mission & purpose,
as we are all being shaped and seasoned through our faith-community.

Church is like a stained-glass window, an amazing work of visual art
that's gathered & called to display and proclaim the glory of God.
And each one of us is a tiny shard of glass in that window
uniquely refracting the light of God passing through.

Each uniquely participating in making the whole picture
depicting wonder and beauty, and proclaiming the glory of God.
Each piece is necessary and chosen with care by the Artist.

Though any single shard is tiny and insignificant on its own,
but the Divine Artist combines them to produce amazing wonder.
Our individual piece is to shine gloriously within God's masterwork.

The ideal as it's described in Scripture is that each one of us
lives out the full blessing and abundant satisfaction
of freely serving joyfully with our particular gifts,
as a tangible effect and true evidence of our faith.

Friends, let us never forget that God loves all of us infinitely,
and has given us all wonderful things that we can accomplish,
wonderful opportunities to serve joyfully for the common good,
and to live out a meaningful and fulfilling Christian life,

for as long as we live,
there is always some way that we can make a difference,
which is a most critical truth for us to live and trust in hope now,
especially during these stressful, difficult and uncertain times.

Today we are going to ordain and install church officers,
servant leaders who have been called and equipped by the Lord
at this particular time to serve here in a particular way for
building up this body of Christ toward mission & outreach.

Elders, those who serve to rule, dream and govern this church,
and deacons, who serve
to guide and carry out our ministries of compassion.

We are all, each one of us, abundantly gifted in many wonderful ways,
and we are all a necessary part of this body, this church,
and it's through the faithful exercise of our gifts,
that our faith grows and matures, and stays alive.

**I urge you, that as we celebrate their call to serve faithfully,
please reflect on your own blessings, gifts and call to serve.**

Remember to you too are called and gifted by God to make a difference,
therefore, in your heart and mind, apply the vows you hear
to whatever service and ministry God has entrusted to you-

-- and through our obedient and faithful and active participation,
we can grow closer and deeper, as the Lord intends,
we can find ways to serve, to be a blessing to others,
and we can share the gifts of grace that we've been given.

Together, we are a living organism and not just an organization.

Consider God's word and truth we heard read from **Romans 15**,

Those of us who are strong and able in the faith need to step in and lend a hand to those who falter, and not just do what is most convenient for us. **Strength is for service, not status.** Each one of us needs to look after the good of the people around us, asking ourselves, "How can I help?"

May our dependably steady and warmly personal God develop maturity in you so that you get along with each other as well as Jesus gets along with us all. Then we'll be a choir—not our voices only, but **our very lives singing in harmony** in a stunning anthem to the God and Father of our Master Jesus!