

SIX MARKS OF A DISCIPLE

DEVOTIONAL

*“For the Kingdom of God is not just a lot of talk,
It’s living by God’s power.”*

I Corinthians 4:20

GRACE

Transformed by Jesus

When you hear the word “grace” what do you think of? How would you describe or define “grace”?

Are you ever drawn in by the “before and after” images you see on your favorite show? Maybe it’s a kitchen renovation – before: dark cabinets, formica countertop, olive green appliances, peeling linoleum floor; after: white cabinets, farm sink, granite countertops, stainless steel appliances. Or maybe you are intrigued by the restoration of a classic car – once rusty and disintegrating, it’s now restored to its original gleaming condition. Understanding the “before” makes you appreciate the “after,” right? And so it is with our salvation. In order to fully grasp what we have because of Jesus, we need to begin by understanding who we are before coming to Christ.

Read Ephesians 2: 1-3. From these verses, list the details which describe who you were before coming to Christ: **“Once you ...”**

Romans 6:23 explains it this way, “For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard.” Whatever the “before” picture of your life looked like, you have to admit that it fell short of God’s standard of sinless perfection. We all begin there – “all have sinned.” What a hopeless predicament we are in: made in the image of God, yet unable to be in a relationship with Him because of our sin.

However, Ephesians 2:4 (NLT) says, “But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much...”

Two promising words open this verse; write them here: “ _____ ”

What is it about God that compelled Him to act? Take a look at the rest of verse 4, and in the box below write the words used to describe God:

Read Ephesians 2:4-7. This is the “after” picture of who you are! List who you are now because of Christ’s death and resurrection. **“Now you...”**

Once you... *But God*... Now you - That's your testimony, your salvation story! This same outline is seen in Titus 3. Let's take a look at that:

Read Titus 3:3. As you did with the Ephesians passage, list the details in this verse which describe who you were before coming to Christ: **"Once we ..."**

Notice how the next verse begins, "But when God our Savior revealed His kindness and love..." (Titus 3:4 NLT)

Hope is interjected with the three opening words: "_____ _____ _____"

What do verses 4 and 5 say this reveals about God? Write this in the box below:

The next several verses detail who we are because of Jesus' work on the cross. **Read verses 5-7** and list what you find: **"Now we..."**.

So it is God's work, His intervention that takes us from the "before" to the "after". What exactly is it that He did? **Read I Corinthians 15:3-4** to see how the Apostle Paul summed it up. What three things does Paul say are most important to understand about Jesus?

Have you transferred your trust to Jesus? Realizing that you come to God with a sin-tarnished life, have you accepted Jesus' sacrifice on the cross on your behalf? If so, you have opened the way to a relationship with the God who created you! If you have never before done this, you can do it now by simply praying and telling God that you put your faith in Jesus today for forgiveness, a brand new start and a full life.

Reflection and Prayer:

What does God's grace look like? Look at the words you listed in the boxes earlier. This is a glimpse of what God is like. In other places in the Bible He is described as

"Gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness."

(Exodus 34:6, Psalm 86:15, Psalm 103:8, Nehemiah 9:17, Joel 2:13, Jonah 4:2)

In closing, journal a prayer reciting back to God what you have observed about Him and about His grace in these scriptures today.

Is there someone in your life who you wish knew about God and His grace? Write that person's name here:

Now pray for this person to come to know Jesus and have a "before and after story" of their own.

GO

Sharing the Gospel of Jesus

Let's begin today where we left off - You have understood the grace which God offers to you in Christ, and have said "yes" to His offer of salvation.

Read Romans 10:9-13 to see how the Lord describes you now.

Verse 13 assures us that... *"Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect.
They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on Him.
Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*

In the above verse, circle the people who are able to have a relationship with God through Christ.

Do you see how inclusive it is? Jew, Gentile, Everyone! Does this bring some people to your mind? Who do you know who needs to know Jesus? (Brainstorm, being as thorough as possible as you list them here...)

Perhaps you thought of quite a few people. **Now read on in Romans 10 - verses 14-15**, and list here the four questions which are asked in these verses:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

*"The point is: Before you trust, you have to listen.
But unless Christ's word is preached, there's nothing to listen to."* Romans 10:17 MSG

Why doesn't God sweep us up to heaven right away after we have accepted Christ? Because we are to be the voice that talks about Him to those around us. We speak of the hope He gives in the midst of a broken and dying world. Jesus uses two analogies to explain our presence in this world: Salt and Light.

What does salt bring to a mixture?

The very thing that makes salt valuable is that it is different! If you've ever made a recipe and omitted the salt, you've noticed the difference. Food just tastes flat without it! And so it is in our world. As a believer, you are different from what surrounds you, and the value you bring into this world is your saltiness. You are here to both flavor and preserve the world in which you live.

Read Matthew 5:13

The Message version reiterates it this way,

“Let me tell you why you are here. You're here to be salt - seasoning that brings out the God-flavors of this earth. If you lose your saltiness, how will people taste godliness? You've lost your usefulness and will end up in the garbage.”

In addition to referring to believers as “salt,” Jesus also calls us “light.”

What is the function of light?

Read Matthew 5:14-16.

As the lamp is placed on the stand, the Lord has placed you a strategic place. He has given you a platform from which to be a blessing; “to give light to everyone” in your unique way.

Where, specifically, has the Lord placed you? Throughout a week, where are the various places you will go?

Realize, you have been “placed on a stand” by the Lord in these places.

Maybe you feel like you don't have all the answers to the questions people may ask as you talk about the Lord. In John 9, the blind man who was healed by Jesus was bombarded with questions just moments after he encountered Jesus. "Who healed you?... What happened?... Where is He now?... What's your opinion about this man who healed you?... What did He do?... How did He heal you?" In response, the man stuck to a very simple message, "I know this: I was blind, and now I can see!"

You can rest in the simple message you know, "I was far from God because of my sin, but Jesus' sacrifice opened the door for me to find forgiveness, and I now have new life and hope."

Once I... but God... now I...

Reflection and Prayer:

Look back in this lesson to the list you made on page - of the people in your life who need to know Christ. Put your hand on that list, and pray (aloud, if possible) that you will be salt and light to them.

You serve as God's ambassador, an authorized representative and messenger, to those people. In closing, consider what II Corinthians 5:20 says,

*"So we are Christ's ambassadors;
God is making His appeal through us.
We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!"*

Pray through this verse, personalizing it into a prayer below:

Dear Lord, Help me to...

Amen.

GROWTH

Pursuing Jesus Personally

“What is the formula for success?” If you were asked that question, what would be three things you would say are essential?

There is a place in scripture where God Himself answers that question. He says, “...Then you will be successful in everything you do.” And He adds “...Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do.” Are you curious about the details which surround these sweeping statements?

Read Joshua 1:7-8 and list below the instructions which are given in these verses:

Reading God’s word is essential to growing in your relationship with Him. Maintaining a close relationship with God is what the Bible refers to as “abiding” or “remaining” in Him. John 15:4 (CEV) explains it this way,

*“Stay joined to me and I will stay joined to you.
Just as a branch cannot produce fruit unless it stays joined to the vine,
you cannot produce fruit unless you stay joined to me.”*

Circle the words “vine” and “fruit” in this verse, and then read the verse again.

Picture a pumpkin patch: bristly vines winding across a field, large emerald leaves soaking up the sun. In order for the fruit to burst off the end of the branch, the branch must stay connected to the vine. Why? Nourishment from the vine is essential to fruitfulness.

Are you hoping for your life to be fruitful - to look different from those around you who are just struggling to make it through? There is no substitute for God’s Word. It is His message to you, the essential things He wants you to understand about life!

What, exactly, does this fruitful life look like? **Read Galatians 5:22-25.** List here the marks of a fruitful life:

Supernaturally, the Bible nourishes you and fills you with God's character qualities. As you read and meditate on your Father's Words you take on the family resemblance and come to reflect the Father.

But it's not just a passive glance at the Bible which does this work. Look back over the list you made at the beginning of this lesson from Joshua 1. Put a star by one thing on that list which you need to give more attention.

Connection to God through His Word also produces another result in our lives. John 15:7 (CEV) puts it like this:

*"Stay joined to me and let my teachings become part of you.
Then you can pray for whatever you want, and your prayer will be answered."*

Allowing God's life-giving nourishment to flow into us through His Word sustains us and gives us a yearning for what He wants to see done in His world. Our prayers are a reflection of what He has taught us - His priorities become ours, and we pray to see Him work in specific people and situations.

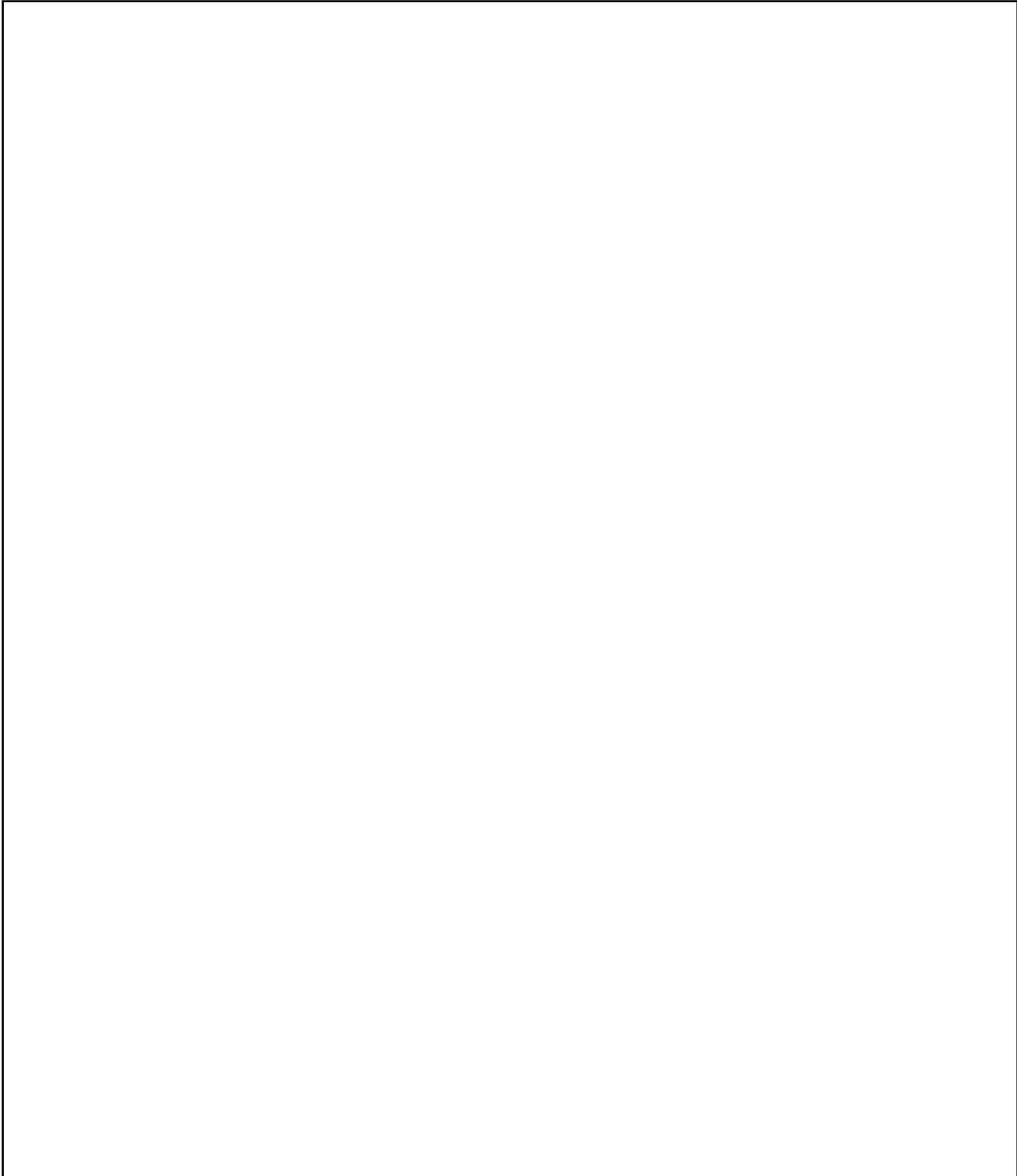
Read Philippians 4:6. Sum up this verse in one short sentence:

The Message version of the Bible paraphrases Philippians 4:6 this way,

*"Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray.
Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers,
letting God know your concerns.
Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness,
everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down.
It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life."*

Reflection and Prayer:

A successful, fruitful, prayerful life - this is what God is growing in you! As you have learned today, God's Word is an essential component of this. Remember what you put a star by earlier in this lesson? Pray about that now, asking God to help you be more attentive to that priority. Use the space below to journal a prayer about this.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the student to write a prayer. The box occupies most of the lower half of the page.

GROUP

Pursuing Jesus Together

Have you ever been part of a group that you really enjoyed? Maybe it was a team, a club, a group of friends. What did that feel like?

An old TV show had these lines in their opening song,

*“Sometimes you want to go where everybody knows your name, and they’re always glad you came.
You want to be where you can see the troubles are all the same,
you want to be where everybody knows your name.”*

There’s something within us which longs to connect with others. It can be a powerful thing. And it is a God-given yearning. In fact, a yearning to be with other believers is an overflow of the Holy Spirit’s work within us.

Look at what happened in Acts chapter 2, as people heard Peter preach about Jesus:

“That day about three thousand took him at his word, were baptized and were signed up. They committed themselves to the teaching of the apostles, the life together, the common meal, and the prayers. Everyone around was in awe – all those wonders and signs done through the apostles! And all the believers lived in a wonderful harmony, holding everything in common. They sold whatever they owned and pooled their resources so that each person’s need was met. They followed a daily discipline of worship in the Temple followed by meals at home, every meal a celebration, exuberant and joyful, as they praised God. People in general liked what they saw. Every day their number grew as God added those who were saved.” (Acts 2:41-47 MSG)

Underline the things which made this group unique.

What would have felt like to be a part of this community?

What you read above from Acts chapter 2 is the chronicle of the beginning of Church. This is the pattern of what God intended for us to experience when we come together as believers.

Hebrews 10:25 exhorts us to “not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another – and all the more as you see the day approaching.”

Why is it tempting to give up on church?

There are two facets to our participation in church:

- Gathering for Sunday Corporate Worship
- Involvement in Small Group Discipleship

Let’s look at what the scripture has to say about each of these.

Gathering for Sunday Corporate Worship: Read Psalm 95:1-7

What does this passage say we are coming together to do? List here all the phrases which begin with “let us.”

“let us....

“let us ...

“let us...

“let us ...

“let us...

“let us ...

Why do we do this? Because of who our God is. List the ways He is described in these verses.

So we show up at church to join with other believers in worship of our great God. Not because the church itself is perfect, but because our God is.

Here’s how Colossians 3:26 describes what we are doing when we meet together as believers:

*“Let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts.
For as members of one body you are called to live in peace.
And always be thankful.
Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives.
Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom He gives.
Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts.”*

Hearts ruled with Jesus' peace...joining together as one body...filled with the message...teaching and counseling each other...thankful voices raised in worship: this is Church! It is more than just listening to some music and hearing a message; it is interconnected lives growing in a God-ward focus.

Joining in the Sunday Morning Worship Service is a starting point for this growth. Then Small Group membership builds on this.

Involvement in Small Group Discipleship:

Small groups, or community groups as we often call them, are a place for more intimate fellowship and growth. "As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend," Proverbs 27:17 tells us. Our sharpness and usability in the Lord's hand is increased as we rub shoulders with believing friends in close fellowship. This is the purpose of the small group setting.

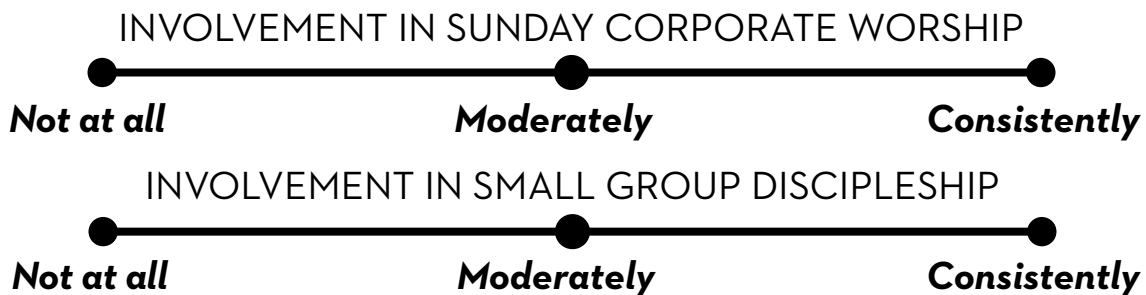
Galatians 6:1-2 highlights two facets of this type of fellowship:

"Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ."

In these verses, what are two things the "brothers and sisters" challenged to do for each other?

Reflection and Prayer:

How about you? Realizing the important role these groups play in your own growth, how would you rate your involvement in these two areas: *(circle the line to indicate where you are)*



Now spend some time in prayer, asking the Lord how you should move forward in these. Then listen to what direction He gives you. Jot your thoughts on the lines below as you pray:

GENEROSITY

Giving back to Jesus

When Fall unfolds and the days get shorter, have you ever noticed how the squirrels go into high gear? They frantically run around collecting food, trying to prepare for the winter ahead. Dashing back and forth, they hide their nuts all over the place. Do you know that squirrels even fake-hide their nuts sometimes, just in case another squirrel is watching, hoping to foil any squirrels who would try to get their treasures? Each squirrel scurries around, trying to get to the good stuff before another squirrel gets it. Have you ever wondered if they actually eat all of the nuts they collect? How many end up just disintegrating where they were hidden?

It sounds a bit like the culture we live in, doesn't it? People frantically trying to amass treasure for themselves. Gathering, storing, hoping to get the good stuff. Each one protecting their assets from others who would try to get at it.

But God looks at our resources differently.

Jesus tells us, "Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be." (Matthew 6:19-21 NLT)

Fill in the following, based on these verses:

Don't store up " _____ " "

Why?

Instead store " _____ " "

Why?

You see, the Lord knows that your heart will follow your treasure. The Message version says it like this:

*"The place where your treasure is
is the place you will most want to be,
and will end up being." (Matt. 6:21)*

You will be emotionally invested wherever your treasure is, and this will bring direction to your life.

Step back and think for a moment: What is of lasting value?

Is your treasure in these things? Are you investing with attention and intentionality into the things you listed which are of lasting value?

Read Psalm 24:1, then complete this statement:

_____ belongs to the Lord.

Now read Proverbs 3:9-10.

In verse 9, the word “honor” has to do with weightiness and means to “give proper weight or respect to.” Who is deserving of this respect? The LORD. When you see God’s name written like that in your Bible, it is the word “Yahweh”. This is God’s personal name, the name He has had throughout eternity. When you see God’s name written this way, let it remind you of His eternal nature.

With this understanding of the words for “honor” and “LORD”, paraphrase Proverbs 3:9 into your own words:

Giving a proper weightiness to the Lord means you release to Him the “first” and the “best” part of what you produce. We are tempted to keep the first and the best for ourselves. After all, that is what everyone around us seems to be doing. But verse encourages you to transfer your trust away from what you’ve been able to amass, relying on God instead.

Read Proverbs 3:10 again.

What does this verse say will be the result of this transfer of trust?

Perhaps as you have been pondering this lesson today you have been focused on your financial “treasures.” Your financial resources are part of the assets God has entrusted you with. But there is more! Your resources include:

Your time

Your person

Your relationships

Your tangible things

Your unique gifting

You have been entrusted with these things for a season, while you’re here on earth. Jesus paints the picture in a memorable way. **Read Matthew 25:14-30** to hear what he says about this.

It’s a story of three guys who were entrusted with varying resources by their master. What did the two “wise” servants do with the resources they were entrusted with (vs. 16, 17)? Look carefully for the words which describe their activity.

In contrast, what did the “wicked and lazy” servant do? (vs. 25)

Fear can hinder us from investing and working and earning on behalf of the Master. What fears hold you back?

Reflection and Prayer:

Ask the Lord for one next step you should take with your time or financial resources. In prayer, listen to what He says. Then pray for a willingness to follow through.

In the box below, write the step you believe God is asking you to take:

GIFTS

Empowered by Jesus

There it sat in the driveway. Once shiny, it had collected dust over the months and years which had elapsed. The tires deflated, paint faded, it suffered the neglect of disuse. The car had been a gift from a loving Grandpa who thought it would delight his grandson. However, this young man never made use of it, choosing instead to stay home most of the time, or bum a ride when necessary. He never put the effort into learning to drive the car. The apprehension which held him back was hard to explain...

What do you feel when you read this story? What questions does it make you ask?

In a similar way, our loving God has bestowed on us gifts which He intends will delight us as we exercise them! These spiritual gifts are meant to be useable, and are intended to lead us into specific ministries and opportunities to care for and serve one another in order to build the body. As you identify and learn to use your gifting you can arrive at the destination which God intends for you. "In His grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well," Romans 12:6 tells us. How sad that some Christians, held back by apprehension or unfamiliarity, fail to exercise their God-given spiritual gifting. Don't let that be true of you!

Read Romans 12:4-8

What is the source of each person's unique gifting? (vs. 6)

This passage provides a listing of various spiritual gifts, using repeated "If...then..." statements. Fill in the following using verses 6-8:

If your gift is... then...

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

As you look down the list of gifts, you'll see that these are all things which Jesus did while He was here on earth. It is as if He has now divided up all His responsibilities and has delegated them to believers. We function as "Christ's body" here on earth, continuing the work He began.

Reread verses 4-5 and paraphrase them below:

How do these parts work together?

Read I Corinthians 12:14-22. What are some points from these verses which are important to remember about the many parts of the Body of Christ?

As each person exercises their gift, something powerful happens. **Read Ephesians 4: 15-16.** What is the end goal as believers employ their gifts?

Reflection and Prayer:

Look back over the list you made on the previous page from Romans 12 and take a moment to ponder which gift is your strongest. Ask yourself these each of these questions,

- From your own life experience, is there one gift which you see yourself frequently and naturally exercising? _____

- Is there an area which people have affirmed you in, saying you are gifted at it? _____

- Is there one gift which brings you joy or satisfaction or exhilaration as you exercise it?

- Do you find yourself repeatedly having opportunity to exercise one of these gifts? _____

Now take some time in prayer, asking the Lord what you should do to further exercise the gifts he has given you. As you pray, write below any ideas that come to mind. Realize that these are things He may be asking you to do.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write down ideas that come to mind during prayer.

(We encourage everyone at Christ Community to take the Spiritual Gifts class which is offered periodically to further understand their unique gifting. If you haven't taken this class, jump in on it the next time it is offered!)

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GENEROSITY

Giving Back to Jesus

We are so glad you decided to make the time to study the Scriptures on these important topics. May the Lord produce much joy, thanksgiving, and fruit in you as you continue your journey to look more like Jesus!

