



Sermon Transcription • Romans 12:1-8 (NIV)

Neither Too High Nor Too Low

Pastor Jeff Bucknam

[Please Note: This transcript has been lightly edited for ease of reading. Also, some headings have been added in square brackets to aid the reader in locating portions of the sermon.]

If you have a Bible, I want to invite you to open it to Romans. The book of Romans, our old friend. Chapter 12. Romans 12. While you're turning to Romans 12, I'll tell you a quick story. Baseball season is just ending or has just ended for my family. Very involved in baseball, my son plays, and my older son played for a number of years. I was a coach for a little while. This actually only a one-year stint, and that was a good thing, I think, for all of us. My team was called the Blue Jays, which is very funny because I have a Blue Jays shirt. I am not a Blue Jays fan, but I get to wear it around when the Blue Jays lose every year. And so, I was the assistant coach on the ten-year-old Blue Jays. And the ten-year-old Blue Jays had my son, who was a pretty good player, and my friend's son, who was the head coach. And his son was, like, an amazing player. Okay. Besides those two guys, we had a whole lot of other kids who were not as of strong players. Some of them had some medical challenges. We loved our team, they were fantastic. Some of them had some medical challenges, others had never played baseball before. Very rarely would they catch the ball. I do remember on one occasion, one of the kids had lined up another kid, about five feet from him, and said, "I'm going to pitch to you." Right? Seriously, he's like five feet away. And this kid wound up and threw it and broke the kid's nose. So, this is the kind of team we're dealing with here. So, one of my most memorable moments was - what used to happen was that my son and the other coach's son would have to play kind of up the middle of the field. One of the guys would be at shortstop, which is kind of in the middle of the field, and the other guy would either be pitching or in center field, so that if the ball went anywhere on the field, one of the two guys would run like crazy to get it. On this one occasion, the ball got hit by the other team, and grounded to the shortstop, okay. My friend's son was there. And he picked the ball up and he looked over to first base. And there was this boy there who had never played baseball before and had not caught the ball all year long. And he was like, standing there, like about seven feet off the base with his glove in the air. And, so, my friend's son made a decision, a business decision, in this moment. He decided that it would be far better for him to run himself straight across the diamond and try to beat the runner than throw it. So, he did. And it was a foot race between the shortstop and the guy here. He lost, but he got over there, and the first baseman - instead of saying, "Hey, why didn't you throw it to me?" - he patted the kid on the back and said, "Good job!" Right? So, there's a moral to this story. The moral to the story is: in order for a team to properly function, every teammate must be capable of doing the job they're asked to do. Yes? You know that in your workplace, you know that in sports teams, you know that in all of your life, and especially that's the case in the Church. And what you're going to find in Romans 12, is that being emphasized. That, what God has done in his Church, is he has gifted every one of us with abilities. You shouldn't think too highly of



yourself, but you also shouldn't think too lowly of yourself. God has gifted you with an ability that you have so that you can serve the Church. And many of us just sit on those abilities, and it really does ruin it for everybody. We are basically standing at first base with our glove up in the air, while everybody else is running around trying to win the game.

So, look, we're going to look at this passage together. You'll notice it's in the book of Romans. We have been studying the book of Romans off and on for – this is our fifth year. Right! We are going to finish it this year! [cheers] Amen! Right. We will do a good chunk of it this fall, and then we'll take a break for the Christmas season, and come back to it in the beginning of the New Year, finish it off. Right. Praise...praise Jesus! We are in the section of Romans, though, that is all about application. You're going to want to come and hear what Paul has to say in this back section of Romans. It's actually a fantastic finish to the book. So, here's what I want to do today: I want to give you an argument, Paul's argument in this passage. The passage is Romans 12:1-8. Here is his argument, three stages to it: number one, you are graced; number two, so think rightly about yourself. So, you're graced, so think rightly about yourself; and thirdly, especially in relation to your gifts. You're graced, so think rightly about yourself, especially in relation to your gifts.

[You are Graced]

Here's the first of those. You are graced, verses 1 – 2 of Romans 12.

“Therefore, [important word, preachers always like to say, when you see a *therefore*, you should wonder what it's *there for*. It's built, it's built upon everything that came before. Therefore,] I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

We ended last year on that passage. I preached a sermon on those two verses. It's a great passage of Scripture. Here's what I want you to see this time. I'm not going to go through the entirety of those two verses, but I just want you to see something really, really important. It starts with that word *therefore*, and then, affixed to that, *in view of God's mercy*. The commands that follow from the apostle Paul, there's a lot, you should read through Romans 12. It's like bullet point commands, all of the commands that follow. All of the things that you and I are called to do are predicated, are built, upon the fact that God has graced us. The law, in other words, the commands of God, follow the grace of God always. Always. This is what we call gospel logic. The mercy of God that leads to the offering of our bodies as living sacrifices, right? God chose the mercy, and we respond. We don't obey in order to gain approval from God. We obey *because* we've got approval from God. That's the gospel. All the commands are being done in response to grace. This is, by the way, it's all over the Scriptures if you have eyes to see. You'll find this, especially in the Old Testament. When God comes to the people of Israel, even when he comes and he gives them the Law, you know the Law, Mount Sinai, the Ten Commandments. He predicates the giving of the law on what they have experienced already in terms of his grace. So, you'll see, Exodus 20, they come – when I say experienced because of his grace, I



mean they, God rescued them, came to them, rescued them, apart from anything they did, out of the land of Egypt. They crossed the Red Sea, something they could not do unless God was with them and made it happen. He drowned Pharaoh in the Red Sea; he brings them across. And now he's going to give them the Law. And when he gives them the Law, Exodus 20, right, this is the beginning of the Ten Commandments. Listen to the first line of the Ten Commandments. Moses comes down from the mountain, he's got the tablets there, first line, Exodus 20:1-3,

“And God spoke all these words:

‘I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.
You shall have no other gods before me.’”

Notice the order. He gets them all together, here's the law, but before he says, “Okay, I've got some things I need you people to do,” he reminds them that before they're going to do the stuff, they should remember the grace. “I saved you. Therefore, go and do.” You get this also, Leviticus 11, if you've read your Bible, Leviticus is what usually you get to at the March of every year. “I'm going to read the Bible in one year.” You get into March and Leviticus kills you. Right? It's the listing of God's laws. But Leviticus 11:45,

“I am the Lord, who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy.”

Hey, I get it. It's not “I need you guys to be holy.” It's “remember grace, my acting for you, apart from anything you've done. Therefore, respond.” Another one, Leviticus 19:35-36,

“Do not use dishonest standards when measuring length, [right, don't cheat people when you're trying to sell things to them, don't use dishonest standards when measuring length] weight or quantity. Use honest scales and honest weights... I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt.”

“Why should you be honourable and have integrity in your business? Because I'm the one who saved you. Not because you get to earn something, like I'm going to be up there, <strange voice> ‘You get an extra credit star. Oh, I see all those things you're doing, maybe I'll welcome you into Heaven one day.’” No! God has established justification for – he's justified you before himself. Now, go. You find this in stories in the New Testament as well, that try to illustrate this point. Remember the story about this little guy named Zacchaeus? <singing> Zacchaeus was a wee little man, and wee little man was he. </singing> No? [laughter] Yes. Some of you remember this song. Right, he's a little guy, he's a tax collector, which means he was like the chief of sinners, really wealthy guy. Wanted to see Jesus, so he climbed up a little tree. Remember, they wore robes those days, so, this was a very shameful thing for a very prestigious man to do. Alright, to climb up into a tree. Honourable men don't do that. But he did. So excited about Jesus. He climbed up there so he could get a good look. Jesus stopped right under the tree, looked up to this guy, who everyone thought was like the most wicked of sinners ... collaborator with the Romans, despicable man. Looks up and says, “Hey, Zacchaeus!” – they had not met before – “Zacchaeus, I'm coming to your house for lunch today.” Now in those days, going over to



someone's house to eat was a sign of friendship. It's a sign of acceptance. So, the most wicked guy around, right...Donald Trump is in the tree, right? [laughter] And Jesus stops and says, "Yo, Trump! You know, we're going to Earl's." [laughter] So they go. And halfway through the meal, Zacchaeus stops and says, "I've got something to announce: I'm going to give away half of all the money I have [which is a significant amount], and if I've wronged anyone [which tax collectors, that's what they did, wronged them. Talk about measuring with dishonest scales. If I've wronged anyone], I'll repay them four times the amount." What's happened here? Notice the order of events. Grace begets radical obedience, yes? It didn't start with Zacchaeus saying, "Hey, Jesus, here's the stuff I'm going to do for you. I'm going to give away half my money." And then Jesus says, "Okay, I'll come over to your house then." No, grace leads to obedience. This is gospel logic. This is the way it works. So, you know, if you want a hint, if you really want to follow Jesus, if you really want your heart to warm toward him, if you really want, in your deepest sense, to do what it is that he's called you to do, don't focus on the command as much as you focus on the grace. Remind yourself of where he's brought you from. Remind yourself of what he's done for you. And you will find overflowing in your spirit a desire to lay down at his feet, wash his feet with your hair and perfume, to get up in a tree and respond by giving away whatever. Radical giving, radical worship, is the result of radical grace. So, my big point here: everything in Romans 12 and following then, is predicated on Romans 1 – 11, where Paul talks about the grace that you received in Christ apart from works. Isn't it amazing what you've been given? Okay, so, therefore, this is how you ought to live. So, the rationale, the reasoning here, is that God has graced you, therefore offer yourselves as a living sacrifice, and what does that look like? Well, don't be conformed to this age but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. You used to live according to a former manner of life, a former age. Now you've entered the Kingdom of God, let the Kingdom of God mould your thinking. But in specifically what way, Paul? Here you go.

[So Think Rightly About Yourself]

Remember what I said: you are graced, that's the first one; second, so think rightly about yourself. In what way should your thinking be changed? What's the first way in response to the grace of God? Verse 3, Romans 12:3,

"For by the grace given me [he means there his apostolic authority, for the grace given me] I say to every one of you [all you individuals out there]: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you."

So, the first mind-renewal thing that should happen to you when you switch from the kingdom of this world and this age to the Kingdom of God's dear Son, is that you should have a mind renewal about *you*. You shouldn't think as highly about yourself as you used to. You shouldn't be as focussed on yourself, as you used to. This command to not think too highly of ourselves than we ought to is, let's be honest, it's really countercultural for us living in the 21st century in Canada, is it not? If there's anything we are taught from a very early age these days, it's that you should be...you should be focussed on yourself. You should have, to use the language of our culture, that you should have high self-esteem. In fact, we have a process that we've built into our schools to try to lead kids to higher



self-esteem. That's the problem, in fact, that we say is around us. I was a child of the 1980s. I remember when I was a kid, getting trophies when I was a little boy. The beauty of a trophy when I was a little boy, when you played soccer or something is, that your friends didn't get it. Right? So, like, I got the trophy, and I'd go over to my friends and I'd be like, "Hey what's up?" You know? "I won the trophy. It says Most Valuable Player. Me." And the kids were like, "I don't like you." And then they'd strive next year to get it. And if they won it, they'd walk by, "I'm sorry, I can't hear you with my trophy in my ear." That kind of thing, right. You held it over everybody. I feel that doesn't happen now. And of course, you know why. Because we say it all the time. Because everybody gets a trophy. I've been part of teams with my kids, where at the end of the season, there's a pile of trophies. Like, we didn't win anything, we didn't win a game. But there's a pile of trophies, you know, and the front one says Most Encouraging, and the second one's like, Most Annoying. And then, most... [laughter], <high voice> "I got the Most Annoying!" </high voice> You know. Everybody gets a trophy, that's different, right? And that change, actually, if you look at the history, that change actually happened in the 1980s, there was a real movement of self-esteem. That started to be mocked, actually, in early days. If you are my age, you'll remember a guy named Stuart Smalley on Saturday Night Live. He used to sit in front of the mirror - it was, Al Franken was the actor, - he'd sit in front of the mirror, look at it, and say these words, "I'm good enough. I'm smart enough. And doggone it, people like me." And we all, in the 90s, laughed at that, like, "Aww ... he's making fun of all that." Now, I've shown that to my kids before and they say, "What's the joke? I don't understand. This is what we're supposed to do, right? We're supposed to think that we're great and amazing." Well, yeah, that's the way that my kids have been taught.

Jean Twenge in her wonderful little book *Generation Me*, which focuses on the early stages of the millennial generation, who are awesome by the way, I'm not trying to pick on them, we're all in this together. She wrote this interesting little, she's talking about the self-esteem culture, and she told this story. She said,

"One Austin, Texas father was startled to see his five-year-old daughter wearing a shirt. [Five years old, kindergartner, shirt] that announced, 'I'm lovable and capable.' [So, the t-shirt,] All of the kindergartners, he learned, recited this phrase before class, ['I'm lovable and I'm capable.'] and they all wore the shirt to school on Fridays. It seems the school started a bit too young, however, because the child then asked, 'Daddy, all the kids are wondering, what does *capable* mean?'"

Sorry, some of you will get that later. Right, you shouldn't be - you're not capable if you don't know what *capable* means. That's part of the problem. But we have our movies that teach us this sort of thing over and over again. Right. Our movies about self-esteem, our kids' movies. You just go to watch any Disney movie these days, it's really the focus. "You can be whoever you want to be and don't let anyone else tell you different. And all the bad people in the world are trying to tell you to conform to something, and all the good people in the world are the ones who let you be whatever it is that you want to be without any...without any limits." And so, movies like *The Greatest Showman*, there's a song in that film called "This Is Me." The chorus, I'm not going to sing it, "This is me / Look out 'cause here I come / And I'm marching on to the beat I drum / I'm not scared to be seen / I make



no apologies, this is me.” Or dear Elsa in *Frozen*. “Let it go.” “It’s funny how some distance makes everything seem small / And the fears that once controlled me can’t get to me at all / It’s time to see what I can do / To test the limits and break through / No right, no wrong, no rules for me / I’m free / <singing> Let it go, let it go / Can’t hold it back...” </singing> [applause]

Right, but you see what I’m talking, it’s all around us, it’s the air we breathe: self-esteem. Now we have things called Pride festivals now. Just think about the name. *Pride* festivals. Pride is not something that you should be bothered by; pride is something that you should demonstrate. Don’t stand over against pride, I can be whatever I want to be, whenever I want to be it, no one can tell me any different. And yet Scripture, Scripture sees pride as a problem. I mean, it ruins...it ruins our relationships, doesn’t it? It shows up all over the place in our lives, even in small ways. So, my wife sometimes she puts this spoon, she sometimes takes the stickers off of apples and sticks them on the thing, I’ve told you about that before. One of the other things that drives me nuts is that she, [laughter] she takes this spoon - she’s a coffee drinker, I’m not a coffee drinker - she takes this spoon every morning, she mixes her coffee and she drops the spoon in a puddle of coffee, that’s from the spoon, on the table. And I’ll come out and there’s the spoon. Every day. This spoon is there. And I, there have been days where I’ve stood over there, I’ve stood over the top of that spoon, crossed my legs like this [crosses legs at the ankle], and just had to breathe deeply. <inhales loudly> And do you what’s going on in my mind at this point? Seriously, actually what’s going on in my mind, “Do you not know who I am? Do you not know the important places that I need to be today? And here it is that you’re requiring me to pick up your snotty old spoon, put it in the dishwasher, all three feet down there, throw it in that dishwasher, and then take a cloth and wipe the spoon up, and then put the cloth back. What is wrong with you? Do you understand how valuable my time is? Do you understand how important I am?” Have you ever thought about how much pride goes into the things that you get irritated about? Why is this person doing this to me? I am, this lane is mine! How dare you come in front of me? [waves forefinger] You use that finger, don’t you? Right? [laughter] I actually was at, I was at a parking lot, like a year ago. And I was walking out from a restaurant, a meeting, and I was walking out to my car. And I heard these two men yelling. What had happened is that this one guy, this young guy, had the door open to his car, and he was getting stuff in there. And the other guy had to wait, this older gentleman and his wife, they had to wait to pull in. And finally got sick of it. So, they just pulled right in. And the guy was like, “Woah!” And the door was open. So, the guy who had the door open, when the older gentlemen got out, had his cane with him, said, “What’s your problem, man? Can’t you see that I’m standing here? What’s wrong with you?” <lowers voice> “What’s wrong with you, young man?” He started shaking the thing, words that shouldn’t come out of these men’s mouths, are coming out of these men’s mouths, they’re yelling at each other. The wife gets out, she starts beaking with the other guy. Oh my goodness, why? Why? Because, how dare you! Infringe upon <lowers voice> my kingdom here </lowers voice>. Right? Listen, our relationships are a mess. And you say, “Why? Why are relationships a mess?” Because you and I think too highly of yourselves, more highly of ourselves than we ought. [Amen!]

Pride is a problem. I shouldn’t think more highly of myself than I ought. That’s what Paul’s commanding here. That’s the way your minds need to shift. But ... but, but, but, but, note, the solution isn’t to go to the opposite extreme for Paul, is it? He does not say, “Don’t think very highly of yourself,



in fact, you should think that you're awful and terrible." No. He says that you should think, did you notice the line, *with sober judgement*. You should think of yourself with sober judgement. Because, let's be honest, there is some truth in the self-esteem movement, yeah? There is, there are people who stand and look in the mirror, and are despised, they despise themselves. Oftentimes shows up in cutting. And it shows up in the way that they, in some eating disorders and a number of other things. They just sicken to their stomach. And those are issues that need to be dealt with. There's something going on. If you think that you're despicable and horrible, you don't see yourself as made in the image of God, there to reveal his glory. So, there's a half-truth in all that. Right? You don't want to throw that out. There is a value in human beings, and God has made us individually, like I said, to reflect his glory. So, it's not to turn away from yourself and say, "I'm terrible, and I'm horrible." It's actually to think soberly – think about that for a minute. So, when I hear sober thinking, I'm thinking balanced thinking. Here's why I'm saying balanced. I was watching an Instagram video of a guy who was drunk getting his – this is why Instagram exists - so you watch videos of a guy getting drunk, getting tacos from the drive-through at Taco Time or whatever, Taco Bell. So, he gets this on his bike and he's riding his bike with his tacos and he falls over. You know? And then he gets back and he rides a little ways longer, and he falls over. And that's a good image for what drunkenness is. It's unbalanced. What do the police do when they pull the person over? "Okay, I'm going to have you walk this line." What happens if you're drunk? <falling noise>. Because being drunk means being unbalanced. That's what Paul means here. He's saying that you need to be balanced in your thinking. Christians, think neither too highly nor too lowly of themselves. You're a sinner! Who has been chosen by God. Made in his image. He sings over you. He delights in you. But you're a sinner, wicked, deserving of judgement. And he gave his Son for you. You see how that works? Think too highly, nor too lowly. We're not as good as we think we are, nor are we useless. Now, I'm using the word useless there for a reason.

[Especially in Relation to Your Gifts]

Because Paul now is going to jump to the third part of this. I told you that the rationale here: you are graced, number one; number two, so think rightly about yourself in response to that grace - have balanced thinking neither too high nor too low; and third, then, especially in relation to your gifts. Especially in relation to your gifts. Look at verse 4, Romans 12:4

"For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others."

It's an illustration, it's a good one for Paul. Okay, picture your body. And he's saying, the church and its individual members are just like a body. So, some of us are fingers. Right? We like to point out things in others. Just kidding. So, fingers. Some are toes, some are knees, right? Some are thumbs. Ezra's the ear hair. [laughter] I mean, come on, right, because he looks funny, he's hard to get rid of. [laughter] Kidding.

You know one of the hardest things I ever had to deal with physically in my life actually, was, came, all of a sudden, I must have been thirty years old. You know there's a point in your life where you realize



that you're getting older, you don't think it should happen at thirty. But I was thirty years old. I remember getting out of a car, right, and I turned my foot one way. I was just getting out of the backseat of the car - right, I wasn't scaling Mt Everest - I was getting out of the car, and I turned my foot this way, and all of a sudden, my back went <twangy noise>! And I just, like, every part of me went stiff, and I just rolled straight back. My wife came around the side, my leg was sticking straight out, she said, "Are you okay?"

<weak, sickly voice> "I can't move my back." </weak, sickly voice>

So, had to drive me home. I crawled, literally crawled, into the house. Laid on the couch for the next three or four days. I remember saying to my wife at one point, "Who knew that a back was so important?" Right? 'Cos when you're in your twenties, you're thinking to yourself, phht, I don't need to do anything, this back is going to be strong forever. And I'm thirty years old and it goes out. Any of you who have back pain, you're like, it's debilitating. And that's the image that Paul's trying to play on here. He's trying to say, you do see how every part of the body, right, every player on the field, is necessary in order for the entirety of the team, or the entirety of the body, to function properly. Everybody needs to do their part. And if everybody is doing their part, and doing it with vigour, imagine what that church can do. Like if you take the gift that you've been given by God's grace, you don't think too highly of yourself, <lowers voice> "I'm the only gift here. That's only - I'm the only valuable one. Only thumbs matter." </lowers voice> If you don't think too highly of yourself, but you think of yourself with sober judgement, "I'm part of a greater team, and I'm responsible to press-in to whatever it is that the Lord has given me. Give my full strength to it." And everyone's doing that. Then imagine what the church can do. So, use...I guess this point here in the end, right. Don't think too highly yourself, you're one part of many. But God has specially gifted you to benefit your brothers and sisters in Christ. Use that gift. Then he goes into this list, right, verse 6, Romans 12:6,

"We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully."

You all have something. This is not an exhaustive list of the gifts. You can go other places in the Scriptures - 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4, you'll find other gifts listed. But the ones he lists here are valuable. Just run through what he means by these words. He says, Romans 12:6,

"... [Prophecy]. If your gift is prophesying, then [you should] prophesy in accordance with your faith ..."

So, New Testament prophesy is a little different than Old Testament prophesy. New Testament prophesy does have some foretelling aspects to it, you know, like, "This is going to happen in the future." You see this in the book of Acts, where you get this guy Agabus who shows up, and says to Paul, "Paul, if you go to Jerusalem, they're going to wrap your arms in a belt. They're going to bind you. So, I'm telling you the future here." And he was right. He was right. So sometimes that happens in the New Testament, although it's not as common. That kind of prophesy is not as common as you might think. More frequently, prophesy involved the proclaiming to the church information God had



spontaneously revealed for the church's edification. There's this image in 1 Corinthians 14 where the church is gathered like this, and they're having sharing time, and one person stands up and says, you know, I was just sitting there, and I sensed that the Lord wants us to know that his love for us is this grand. And I had an image of, you know, whatever images. And then somebody else gets this stirring from the Spirit, and they stand up and say, "Hey hold on, I feel the Spirit saying this." Right? What's going on here? Well it's not *foretelling*, so much as it's *forthtelling*. It's an encouragement for the church's edification, it's spontaneous, I didn't plan it. The Spirit has brought something spontaneously to mind. And this kind of revelation from God was not held on the same level as the apostles' doctrine. It wasn't. And I know that because you have passages like 1 Thessalonians 5:20 which says,

"Do not treat prophecies with contempt [meaning, don't shut off from them] but test them all; hold on to what is good, reject every kind of evil."

Some of the stuff that they're going to say is going to be really edifying and true and some of the stuff is... not as true as what Scripture would teach. I was at a conference, a number of months ago actually, and I was sitting toward, kind of toward the top. I was one of the speakers at the conference and I was sitting at the top, and I was kind of hiding. And this woman came out in front of the stage, "Hey, before we do our next section, I just, can I, is Jeff Bucknam here?" [ducks under lectern] You know, I'm... "No." So I raised my hand. She says, "We just met earlier today, and I was just in prayer, and the Lord, and I feel like I need to share that this is what the Lord has said." And she shared what it was. And a good chunk of it was very encouraging and edifying. She said later to me, "Hey, you know, take, it's like bones and fish. There's some pieces there that might not be honourable, but I'm just trying to convey to you what I think the Lord was saying in that moment." And I thought, "That's right. That's exactly right." Here's a woman who's not burying that gift, who's not also being arrogant, <loud voice> "Thus sayeth the Lord," </loud voice> but is understanding how this gift should function. That's what Paul is saying. That some of you gifted in prophecy, share the edification that the Spirit brings about.

Serving - you notice that there. These are kind of the behind the scenes, support, organizer people. The people without whom nothing would ever happen. Our HR Director and my executive assistant, her name's Val here - she runs the whole church. Just so you know. She props all of us up, Carrie - one of the other assistants - prop all of us up. If I ask Carrie Klassen to get up in front of us right now and, you know, "This is Carrie." She would not. She'd hide behind that screen up there and say, "No, you will not get me out there." Val, similarly. Some people are gifted in serving. And what's saying is don't be, don't think that you're not important because you're not out in front. God has gifted you in this way, to uplift and help others. So, take joy in that, press into that.

Teaching - it's what I'm doing. Communication of apostolic doctrine. Be careful with it, right? Press into it.

Encouraging - you see that one there. That word, encouraging, means *exhorter*. Or in our more modern parlance, a *hype man*. Don't you love hype guys? No? Fredy is a hype man. If you know Fredy, he's around here. One of my favourite hype men, who would not understand what that word



means at all - is Frank Martins. He used to be the, one of the...he was the Interim Lead Pastor here, and was the Care Pastor at Northview for a number of years. Whenever I see Frank, he is the nicest man I've ever met, right? I see him a few times a year, and he attends our East Abbotsford Campus, and I'll walk up to Frank, and he'll go <exuberantly> "Jeff!" You know like, you're back from the dead, you know, or whatever! You've met people like this, who just love to see you. I love seeing Frank. Sometimes I just want to drop by his house, "Jeff!" You know? One time, years ago, there was this guy preaching, he was a visiting preacher, and he came, and he preached a sermon, and Frank's job was to kind of like...kind of like, be his help along the way. And the guy preached on our Saturday night service. And it wasn't a very good sermon. So, the guy sat down, and Frank pulled up next to him. This is the story that's been told through the years here at Northview. Frank pulled up next to him, put his arm around him, and said, "Brother, do you have another word for us? Like, do you have another sermon? That one wasn't fantastic." And the guy was like, "Oh sure, great. That's fine. Yeah." Didn't notice at all. 'Cos that's what Frank is. Frank could be telling you the worst possible news, but you'd be like, "I love this news! And this man!" Right? Encouragers. Man, I love encouragers, you want to spend your time with them, these hype-people.

Giving - you notice what it says there. "If it's giving, then give generously." Some are gifted with sharing what they have. By the way, it's not only the rich. The rich have more to share, but there are lots of people gifted in giving who God has not given all that much. But he wants you to give what you've got. *Generously*, that word means *sincerely*. You're supposed to give. If you're gifted in giving, don't do it with ulterior motives. You know what I mean by ulterior motives, right? <lowers voice> "Well, Jeff, I'd love to give to the church, as long as the service times remain the same, if you know what I mean." </lowers voice> You know, or a little change happens to the church, and you have a meeting, <lowers voice> "I thought we were clear when I gave the significant donation to the..." </lowers voice> Right? If you're gifted in giving, just give. You're giving it to the Lord, not to me, not to Northview, not to your friend. <gruff voice> "I don't like what they're doing with it." </gruff voice> Doesn't matter! Your job is give. Give to the Lord. Generously.

Leading - there's an old word in New Zealand, called *mana*. I use it sometimes around, there's people who have *mana*. It's a great word, we should use it. You know what *mana* means, it's the person when they walk in the door that everyone just, sort of, like, "Oh, our leader...the leader is here." You know people who've kind of got that thing. They call that, in Māori they call that *mana*. This is what leaders are. These are the people in Paul's day that probably ended up leading the church. They're supposed to lead diligently. The word means eagerly or zealously. In other words, don't be reluctant to lead, <reluctantly> "Well I don't want to be leading here, because ..." </reluctantly> No! Jump in, man! You've been gifted with the ability to lead. Don't let somebody else do it. See if you can be there and helping.

Showing mercy - it's visiting the sick, providing for the poor, caring for the elderly. It says you're supposed to do it with cheerfulness, probably because it gets tiring, dealing with people who require mercy. But you've been gifted in this way.



Everybody's got a gift. You say, but how do I know the gift that I've got? Here's my secret answer. You ready? It's not to take a test. You can do that, it's great. Take a class, go ahead. But here's the easy quick way. Ready? What makes you mad? What makes you mad in the church? "You do, Jeff." Okay. <shakes head> When something is not done right, what's the thing that you go home and go <gibberish> My wife, if there's somebody being left out of any group, anywhere, she'll go home and <gibberish> "These people, they should be Christian and they call those..." My wife has a significant gift of showing mercy. I've come across leaders, people who walk out of meetings, and the meetings have been led by artists. And they come out of the meetings, and they're like, "I'm going to kill every last one of those people. Right. They talk and talk. Oh, I feel...Nothing got done." Usually I'm like, "Ah, you're a leader. They drive you nuts, don't they?" That's why I don't meet with artists. Or if I go to a church and the sermon is like...uh...I think to myself, "Oh, my goodness, these people, they got out of bed, or they showed up late in the evening, and they came, and they are sitting there, you know how many troubles they went through to get here? Give them the Word, man, and all you're doing is giving this slop to them." My wife has to say, "Settle, settle down." You know? What makes you angry? That's probably where you're gifted. The point is, whatever that gift is, use it boldly. That's how you respond to the grace of God. Use it boldly.

So, let me just finish with this one last little thing. My wife and I, we were riding on my brother-in-law's jet ski. They live in Bellingham; we were there a summer ago. My wife, we're not jet-skiers. We got on that thing, and I started going. And she was on the back, and, of course, I started going, and I was like, "Ooohh, this has got a lot of power to it." So, I started to push it faster and faster and she's screaming her head off, "Stop, Stop! I'm going to divorce you!" She didn't say that. Anyway, I slowed down in the water, so then we went putt, putt across the lake and then turned and came putt, putt back and at the end she said, "Wasn't that nice?" And I said, "OK. Listen I'll be back in just a minute." And as soon as she got off that thing, <vroom> I just went crazy around the lake, ok. So, here's what I'm trying to tell you – be more like me and less like my wife. [laughter] Listen, God has given you a very powerful thing, I don't know what it is, it might be listed here, it might be something else. And if you're going putt, putt around the lake with that thing, shame on you. You're that kid at first base with your... <arm raised to catch a ball> "Uhhh..." Stop it. Stop it. This church, every church is going to need you. We need you. The Kingdom needs you. It's your response to his grace. So, press in to it. Let me pray for you.

Father, I'm so thankful for this passage, Father, for the book of Romans, and how practical it is. And I pray in the days to come, Lord, you will help us, help us to see all the many ways Lord that we are called to respond to the grace that is in Christ. But help us never to lose sight of that order. It's the grace that motivates the obedience, not the other way around, Father. And I'm so thankful for that, for your action on our behalf. Fill us with your Spirit now, help us to make it a reality in our midst. In Jesus' name. Amen.