



Your Unique Ministry: Spiritual Gifts Part 3

March 9, 2025

Romans 12:1-8

(Video 45:01)

Well, you want to turn in your Bibles again to Romans chapter 12. You hear so often, and it's a great thing to hear, "I'm really anxious to get involved in church. I really am anxious to be involved in the body of church, in the church life." That is a good, good thing. That's a wonderful thing. I hope that that is on the heart of every new member who comes into formal fellowship with Reformed Living Bible Church, and I hope it's on the heart of everyone who even just considers themselves a regular attender here as well. One interesting account that I heard about many years ago actually, there was an individual who lived, by the way, is Saskatchewan, I'm looking at the Canadian contingent, is Saskatchewan in Alberta? Is Saskatchewan a province itself? Okay, well, there's a gentleman that lived up, and this was about 30 years ago, lived up in Saskatchewan, and he was a collector, obviously a very wealthy individual, in a rural area of that province, and was a collector of rare violins, and this is like 30 years ago, and last count, he had over 25 or 30 of the most expensive, most valuable, from Stradivarius to everything else, collection of violins hanging in his home. And the problem with that, of course, as I thought about it, is, well, I guess that's great, you can do whatever you want but isn't it sad that most likely not one of those violins is ever going to get picked up and played by a virtuoso or a tremendous violin player. So, the beauty and the glory, the giftedness, if you will, that is placed in those violins by the hands that crafted it will never be experienced, will never be used to edify anyone. And the thought struck me, sad to say, that is so much a perfect example, again, sad to say, with the church, the church universal and local manifestations of the church universal, local congregations. Sad to say there are many churches, and we're not 100% exempt from this in a way, that are like that. We're sort of a collection of fabulously gifted, if you will, violins who just sit there and never get played, if



you allow me to continue the analogy, and therefore their giftedness is never experienced by the body in and of itself.

And I start thinking about this church, I think about this church and pray about this church a lot. It's the only church I'm connected with. And I start thinking, you know, we always say we're about a 200-person church. We're not. We're about a 140-to-150-person church, and that includes the children and the infants, okay? But it is amazing to me when you consider the low numbers, the incredible amount of talent that walks through these doors on any given Sunday. I'm looking at you, Mike Foley. We got a Mike Foley who was an NCAA champion hammer thrower in his division at Duke, no? Yeah, well, okay, I'm embarrassing you, but really good, okay? We had the Fusaro's boy, Henry, who they live in Idaho now. Henry was a Pac-10 scholar athlete of the year, and USA Diving champion springboard syncro diver, and ~~was like number two in the world and~~ on his way to the Olympics until he had a foot injury (Henry's accolades corrected by transcriber/mother for accuracy). You remember Brad and Nikki Hollingsworth, and they now live in the Caribbean in Aruba, but Brad Hollingsworth was an NCAA champion sprinter at the University of Tennessee. And I mean, that's just in athletics. I played a little softball in high school, but no. But you start thinking about, okay, Don Nelson sits back there, and he's a humble guy. There's a guy who all the Kona grills around the country, they only want Don Nelson doing their sound. Most of the public schools and most of the parochial schools in the Valley and restaurants and other venues have Valhalla sound. Our sound video guy is that guy. It seems like Sunday in and Sunday out, I'm underscoring Brian Lockhart and his talent. There isn't a church in the world that wouldn't want that guy. Here's a \$25,000 grand piano given to us as a church by some folks that was specifically, just so if you don't know, specially crafted in Japan for the Arizona climate. And a dear couple who now live up north and worship in another church up near Prescott, the



Ryerson's, gave that to our little church as a gift. John Roots is sitting right here. I said hi to him before. John Roots works for a huge corporation that owns an office building in downtown Phoenix of which he is the complete facilities manager of. That's the guy who's working with us to take care of the facilities of our little church. Denise Ripentrop is sitting back there, composer of cantatas and hymns and CDs and music and so forth. Walt Brown, who health-wise can't worship physically with us anymore, wrote books on creation and science and is sought after for years by people who wanted to go to his seminars and his classes and read his books. Jim Fusaro, and it's sort of good that Jim and Lia aren't here today because I wouldn't want to embarrass him, but one day I'm in the kitchen. We have a little TV in our kitchen and ~~Maria Bartiromo~~ Kelly Evans, who's on Fox Finances or Fox Business or something like that (CNBC Finance), and the sound was off and I'm doing whatever I'm doing, and I look over. Jim Fusaro is being interviewed by ~~Maria Bartiromo~~ Kelly Evans because of his leadership of a corporation at the time and what was going on. I think of Naomi Hone and the Hones, and obviously I'm going to start offending people because I can't go through the congregation and name everybody, but it goes on and on. We are unbelievably blessed with those gifts. What's the point? As fantastic as all of that is, it can hold a candle to what God invested in every believer in Christ in this building that when you came to know the Lord. The spiritual giftedness package that you were given is of infinite value and will have ramifications that will go on long before a corporation, long before the maintenance work on a building, long before anything and everything of an earthly nature as great and as important as those are. It's just incredible, incredible to think about.

A man named Steve Franklin remarked once: *Whereas American mothers*, by the way, how many of you, we're really going to see a divide in the generations now, how many of you ever remember seeing yours or maybe one of your relatives' baby shoes bronzed and sitting on a,



raise your hand if you've ever seen that phenomenon. Okay, now I'm looking for somebody who's under 50. I found one, Abigail has seen it. That's because you probably got some older relatives. All right, in any event, that was a common thing. Why would mothers do that? Well, Franklin says this, *American mothers preserve in bronze their children's first shoes celebrating freedom and independence*. Naomi, I thought of you because you have a Japanese background. Japanese mothers carefully preserve, and I don't know if this is true. This is just what he said. You'd have to verify it for me. *Japanese mothers*, he said, *carefully preserve a small part of the child's umbilical cord celebrating dependence and loyalty*. Have you ever heard of that? All right, she says I haven't heard of it. I'll have to ask my dad. Okay, in any event, assuming it's true, and even if it's not true, I like the concept. Dependence and loyalty, what's the point?

Dependence and loyalty are great words, and that is exactly why what we're studying now on spiritual giftedness is so critical. We are dependent on one another within the body of Christ. We're designed to be that way, and we are designed to be loyal, if you will, loyal to the cause of Christ, and loyal to one another as well. But it's not so easy in our particular society, which is all about rugged individualism and me, myself, and I, and I did it my way and on and on and on. William Kilpatrick of Boston College, this is 40 some years ago, he wrote a book called *The Psychology Seduction, The Failure of Modern Psychology*, and he says this, he says: *The extreme forms of mental illness are always extreme cases of self-absorption. The distinctive quality, the thing that literally sets paranoid people apart is hyper self-consciousness*. We become so consumed in ourselves, the Holy Trinity becomes me, myself, and I. It's all about me, me, me, and this is long before psychology dealt with it.

Christian theologians dealt with it. Augustine, of all things, in the late 300s, early 400s, an early church father, St. Augustine, St. Augustine, however you prefer to pronounce it, you can pronounce it both ways, he said this: *Two cities have been formed by two loves, the earthly by*



the love of self, even to the contempt of God, and the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of self. The former, in a word, glorifies itself. The latter glorifies the Lord.

A little bit later, about 400 years later, John Calvin said this, quote, *for so blindly do we all rush in the direction of self-love that everyone thinks he has a good reason for exalting himself and despising all others by comparison.* He offers a cure, by the way. Here's his cure: *There's no other remedy than to pluck up by the roots those most noxious pests, self-love, and love of victory. This the doctrine of scripture does, for it teaches us to remember that the endowments which God has bestowed upon us are not our own, but His free gifts, and that those who plume (he means pride yourself), who plume themselves upon them betray their ingratitude.* That's why the writer of the book of Hebrews, in Hebrews 10 says, let us not forsake the assembling together of the brethren. As a matter of fact, when we do assemble together, let us think and pray of ways in which we can stimulate one another. He literally, that word there, stimulate, paroxysm, it means to cause others to literally vomit out love and good deeds. We're to do that to one another.

And that takes us right to Romans chapter 12:1 - 2, forsaking the love of self and focusing on the love of God, which ultimately leads us into a humble heart attitude and focusing our spiritual giftedness on the love of others, to start building those bridges of grace strong enough to support the weight of God's truth. Romans 12:1-2, what's he say? ***I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.*** And we've talked about that means your mind, your will, your physical body, your spirit, all devoted to God. ***And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*** And when you do that, when you give Him your all, you leave nothing back for yourself. So



therefore, you're holding nothing back for yourself. Remember my quote last week? ***You can't hurt a dead man.*** You're dead to self. You're alive, holy to God. It develops in you the proper heart attitude that you and I need to do that on a daily basis. To honor and worship and live our life and to live out and prove what is the holy and acceptable will of God in your life. Which is to take the gift package, which He has invested in you, and myself, at salvation, whatever that particular package might be, and to use it to the glory of God. And it starts out with the right attitude, humility, which is produced when you give your all to God. Verse 3, ***For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself...*** Okay, don't be over exaggerating your giftedness. Don't think 'you're the man'. Ah, but also don't think more highly ***...than he ought to think;...*** That means you should think rightly about yourself. It doesn't mean don't think of yourself and don't think you're gifted either. But what you should think in having what? ***...sound (sober) judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.***

And again there, that word faith is not we all got the same faith when we came to Christ. It's not salvation/justification faith. Remember, I said broaden your horizons. The meaning of faith in that context is your capacity to discern, your capacity to utilize the grace of God, to know what His will is for your life, to know how to use your spiritual giftedness to the max, to see insights from the word of God in doing so. That's the faith he's talking about.

I remember when I was a little kid, I don't know if they still have these because I don't know how to boil water let alone cook, but they might have, I'm sure they have them in some form. But when I was a little kid there was these little tin spoons and they all fit inside each other and they were measuring spoons. And you could close it up and it would sit like it was one spoon, but they would slide apart and they had different sizes for measuring it, wrote on it. What they were my, I can remember being like a three or four years old and sitting at the



kitchen table when my mom was cooking and she'd take some white flour and pour it on the, on the table and with some wax paper and just let me play different measuring spoons. And I was thinking about this, that is exactly what that phrase is talking about. Each individual when they came to know Christ, you got all the Holy Spirit, but, and you were given a blend of spiritual giftedness that we're going to talk about. And there's a measure of faith. There's the aspect of it that God has ordained and placed into the body of Christ, for you and for me. And we need to utilize it. I, again, you don't want to over exaggerate. You don't want to under exaggerate. You just want to appreciate the fact that you have that giftedness.

Now, I finally got to where I wanted to get. We left off last week and I know it was important and I don't, The Schon's usually sit over here. Maybe you guys are watching online, but I got a text from them afterwards about "We're excited about next week" because I got to that point where I was going to say, okay, you keep telling us the word of God keeps telling us, we've got a spiritual gift. How do I discern my spiritual gift? How do I know my spiritual gift?

I remember when I first came to know the Lord in the seventies, that was a big deal about finding out your spiritual gift. Well, it should always be a big deal. Well, let me give you some steps to do just that. And here they are. And there's nine of them actually. So here we go.

1. very first step. You already know it. **Obey Romans 12:1 & 2.** Present your body a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God and have your entire mind transformed. That would be your whole body. I should say your whole life transformed by the renewing of your mind; time in God's word. That's why I'm so thankful. And I want to underscore again in the insert of your bulletin this week, somewhere it's here. If you haven't been reading through the Bible each day, you feel like I didn't start on time. You can jump in at any time. We got right where we're at right here, right here



on your insert. Jump in now and start doing the readings now. Okay? So, in any event, you're renewing your mind. You're spending time in the word of God. You presented your body a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. What's the second thing?

2. Just what I said. You need to **know that you have a gift**. You need to know you've got it. You need to know that you're one of those incredibly made and crafted, rare spiritual violins. Well, how do I really know that? So happy you asked. Turn over to 1 Corinthians 12 again, 1 Corinthians chapter 12. Leave a finger in Romans 12. Go to 1 Corinthians chapter 12. **Know you have a gift**. Where are you getting that at? Well, let's just look at verse 4 again. **Now there are varieties of gifts...** There's different kinds and different flavors of the same kind, if you will, of spiritual gifts. We're going to talk about that. **...but the same Spirit**, it's all from God. Verse 5, **And there are varieties of ministries**. What's it mean? Your shade of spiritual giftedness will be used in different kinds of ministry. My gift of teaching, if that's what you want to call it, is a different shade of ministry than maybe somebody else's gift of teaching. Meaning what? Someone may do it in a pulpit ministry. Someone may do it in a Bible study. Someone may do it on one-on-one discipleship mentoring and so forth. And look, it says, **and there are varieties of effects**. The guy who does it over the pulpit, like I do it over the pulpit, will have one effect. I'll have another. There's different ways. That's why people say, you know, we're going to another church. It never bothers me. As long as you are in a church where the word of God is being poured into your soul, it's understood that there's different effects to different men's pulpit ministries. And God has ordained it that way. And some people, as we've talked about in the past, are used very effectively with some souls and not as effective with others.



It's okay. And the results are okay. Oh, wow. You gave a gospel invitation and I was really nervous. I didn't think anybody was going to raise their hand or come forward or whatever it is. Don't ever be nervous about that. It's not got any—the effectiveness of a particular ministry, all depends upon God. And He's pleased whenever His word and His gospel is shared regardless. Okay, so ***there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there's varieties of ministries***, the way those gifts are used, ***and the same Lord. And there's varieties of effects***, the way those gifts are used and the results they have, ***but the same God who works all things in all persons***, both the one with the gift and the one who's receiving the ministry from that gift, okay? ***But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit...*** That's a spiritual gift. Every believer in Christ is given a manifestation of the Spirit, and it must be used. You're supposed to use it. How do you know? Because of the last phrase, ***...for the common good***. My gift is to be used for the benefit of the body of Christ. Every believer in Christ has a gift package that must be used for the edification of the body of Christ. Okay, so now you know. You got one. How do you know you got one? God's word just told you, you got one. Now, Romans 12:1 and 2, obey it. Number two, know you got a gift. What's the third thing you're supposed to do?

3. James 1:5. **Pray for wisdom.** Pray in how you're to know your gift, develop your gift, use your gift. Pray for wisdom.
4. Number four, this is really key. Remember we hit it last week, but I'm tying it together now. **Do not seek any particular gift.** Don't seek a particular gift. Why? Because you can't. It's given to you by God as He orchestrates, and He ordains at the point of



salvation. And so, you're not to even be looking for a particular gift per se, He distributes them as he wishes. Well, how do you know that? Well, verse 7, **but to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.** But look at verse 11, **But one in the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually, just as He wills.** Now, remember that word "individually" there. That was so key last week. I hope you didn't miss it. *idios* (G 2398). Remember I said we get the English word 'idiot' from it. Well, what's an idiot? Someone who's so off, they're bizarre. They're different. They're unique as it gets. They're idiots. Well, they're out of their mind, if you will. This word underscores that. He gives to each one *idios*, totally unique. What that means is this. Nobody has a gift of teaching (That's what I'm referring to it as) exactly like mine. Nobody on the planet. Nobody has your gift of prayer, has your gift of mercy, has your gift of administration, has your gift of helps, has your gift of teaching if you have that gift. Nobody has it like you do. Nobody else on the planet's got John MacArthur's gift. Nobody else on the planet has Charles Spurgeon's gift. Nobody on the planet has Alistair Begg's gift. Pick somebody. Nobody has it. But get this, we talk about those because they're public and we're aware of them and they're demonstrated more, but it applies to all spiritual gifts, whether it's your gift of mercy, your gift of giving, your gift of service, your gift of administration, your gift of faith, whatever it might be. Everybody's gift. Nobody has the gift to the degree in the manner, the effectiveness, etc. that God has ordained for you to have. Why? Because He gives them *idios*. Totally, totally unique per person. You talk about having a sense of purpose in your life. Good grief. This is huge. Look at verse 18, **But now God has placed the members, each one of them in the body just as He desired.** He's distributed the gifts, and He's placed you in the body with that gift as He has



desired. You can't go around seeking some other gift. You got the one He gave you and you need to love it. And you'll never be fulfilled and satisfied in the Christian life until you are utilizing your spiritual gift. Verse, one more, I'll give you while we're in this chapter to look down at verse 28. **And God has appointed**, God has appointed, **in the church, first...** Why first? Why are these listed first? Because it was the foundation on which the church was built. The apostles, the prophets, teachers, then miracles and gifts of healing and helps and administration and so forth. Because that was the way He was launching the church, if you will. That's the only reason why first is there. But the thing I wanted you to see is that God has appointed it. Don't be seeking a particular gift. Now, those of you who are good Bible students immediately want to jump up and say, wait a minute. Look at the rest of that chapter 12, John. Look what it says down in verse 31: **but earnestly desire the greater gifts**. You just told us that you're never to be seeking a spiritual gift. And the word of God apparently says **earnestly desire the greater gifts**. Wrong. That is not what it says. It's not a command. It's in the indicative mood. It's a statement of fact. And a better way of reading it is, but you are earnestly desiring the greater gifts "wrongly", is what's implied. The entire chapter is telling you not to seek a gift. The entire chapter is telling you that God has appointed these gifts and given you these gifts, that you can't be seeking them in that sense. Now, you can seek wisdom as to how to better utilize your gift. You can seek wisdom as to understanding what your giftedness might be, but you're not to be seeking it.



Okay. Submit to Romans 12:1 and 2. Know you have a gift to begin with. Pray for wisdom. Do not seek any particular gift. Trust in God that He's going to reveal it to you. How does He do that?

5. Next step, **examine your heart's desire**. What do you love to do? And by the way, not necessarily in "just church circles". What do you sense God's good pleasure in what you do? We all should give to people in need to the extent we're able, but some people, their entire waking hours, it seems to be their greatest, greatest joy is to be able to give that person that cash or to write that check or meet that need. We all should be givers, but some have the particular gift of giving, if you will.

In my particular situation, before I became a believer, I love the practice of law. I still am in the full-time practice of law. Why do I sense God's good pleasure in doing that? Because I realized many years ago, God placed in me a gift of preaching teaching. What do I do in that law practice? Well, a client comes to me with a problem, and I'm teaching myself the facts of his situation as he explains them to me, he or she explains them to me. Then what I do, I go and research the law and I teach myself what the law says about this problem. Then I try to apply that law to that set of facts, so I'm teaching myself how the law applies to the facts. Then what I do, I go in front of a judge or a jury, and I teach the judge or teach the jury, here's the facts, here's the evidence, here's the law, here's how it applies, and sometimes even preach, if you will, argue to a conclusion. Your honor, you need to rule this way, and here's why. Ladies and gentlemen, here's why, based on this evidence, your verdict must be... Well, that's exactly what you do when you preach, teach the word of God. You take



the facts of our fallen, depraved existence in life, you learn what the word of God, the law, says, you apply God's law to the facts, and you stand in front of a congregation or you stand in front of your own depraved heart, and you argue, this is the decision we need to make, this is what I need to stop doing, this is what I need to start doing, here's why I need to live my life, whatever, that's exactly what, and that's why I'm fulfilled in doing that. It's the same way (I pick on myself, because myself is the only one I can safely pick on without offending somebody, but you get the point). Whatever your giftedness is, look inside your heart. I'm not sure what my giftedness, it's okay. Ask God to give you wisdom, and look at your life, look at the circumstances, and see what gives you joy, what do you sense God's good pleasure in. Some people just have this, we're all supposed to be servants, we're all supposed to serve others, we're all supposed to help out, but some people, I'm telling you, getting over to that apartment and helping that widow move her furniture into another apartment is like the burning passion of their life. We're all supposed to witness for Christ, but some people, I picked on Elvis last week, some people, it's evangelism a go-go, it's evangelism 24-7, it's every opportunity, why shouldn't we all do that? Yes, but some of it, it's clearly, they get a joy, they get a spiritual high, if you will, they sense God's good pleasure in doing that like nothing else, so you're to examine your heart on that. Let me give you the next one.

6. **Seek confirmation from others within the body of Christ.** Do other people, again, I'm going to just use myself as an example, I can remember my father-in-law. We're sitting in a Monday night Bible study in the basement of George and Rosie Ryan's house on the north side of Indianapolis, Indiana. I've been a Christian all of 90 days.



I don't know Job from job, and I'm sitting there, and my father-in-law-to-be, wasn't even my father-in-law at the time, my father-in-law-to-be goes, and by the way, two weeks from now, John Politan here is going to teach us on the book of Psalms. He is? I was stunned, and afterwards you go, oh, don't worry about it, John, I'll give you some books and this and that, because whatever reason, he put me in that position and helped me and worked through it, and I started out doing that, and then a lot of different little things by one progression after another, and I sensed God's good pleasure in doing it, and I saw people come back and say, hey, this is a real good lesson. I was really blessed by that, and I saw God's confirmation. It's the same way in your life. You seek that confirmation. Remember the story I told about John Walvoord, the president of Dallas Seminary? Well, Pastor Walvoord or President Walvoord, I got the gift of preaching teaching. I got the gift of preaching, and remember what he said, ultimately, he said, young man, you may have the gift of preaching teaching, you remember the story, but nobody in this entire seminary has the gift of listening to you. When you get that type of feedback, listen to it. No, that's not your gift, or yes, I think that that may very well be what the Lord has planted, and it might be your spiritual gift. Okay, so seek that confirmation. Let me give you another one.

7. **Look for blessings from God when you exercise that gift.** Does God seem to bless it? Not just with your sense of good pleasure, not just confirmation from you, but I'll stick with preaching teaching the word of God. Our lives changed. Do people genuinely come to Christ? Are people edified in their spiritual walk? Do you see God using and confirming that gift in you? Are people edified by your gift of service? Are



they incredibly uplifted by your gift of prayer? Do they respond to you with your gift of mercy and say, no one, no one touches my soul like you do? No one, a lot of people pray for me, but nobody prays for me like you do, Sue. Do you get that type of feedback? Do you see God blessing people's life in that way? That's the way God works. Let me give you another one.

8. When you sense that when God starts giving you that sense of what your giftedness might be, **go for it with your whole heart**. Go for it hook, line, and sinker. It's actually an aspect of Romans 12:1& 2. Give it your all. Look for every opportunity you can to exercise that gift, and if it's causing you to sense more and more of God's good pleasure, and if you're seeing confirmation more and more back from people, and if you're seeing God bless those results in fruit for Almighty God's glory, not your glory, for God's glory as a result of it, that is really a good thing.

9. And then lastly, **cultivate it**. Cultivate it. You can have the gift of preaching teaching all you want, but you know what? God drops a world-class seminary, Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, Portland, Oregon, out of nowhere in 1988, says, we're going to use the campus of Scottsdale Bible Church, and there are Sunday school classes that aren't used through the week for the most part, and we're going to transport our seminary to Scottsdale, Arizona. Are you kidding me? You don't have to quit your law practice. You don't have to quit doing anything you're doing, and you can take seminary classes at night and see if you can help cultivate and develop your



giftedness. Now that's, again, I'm picking on examples from my own life, but you can make the application I trust to yours.

And then now, and this is a real key point. Did I give you nine of them? Okay, good. All right. But once you go through all of that, once you do it all, this is, if you dialed out, dial back in. Once you do all of that, take this one down, you still won't know, really, your spiritual gift. You won't know it in the sense of being able to label it. Yeah, I sense it's the gift of preaching teaching for me. I thought at one time it was exhortation and exhortation. I thought it was encouragement, and I thought it was something else. Now, when I preach, sometimes I just teach. Sometimes I just preach. Sometimes I preach and teach. Sometimes I just encourage. Sometimes we just get together, and it's sort of a glorified Bible study. We just sort of unfold God's wisdom together. I love what John MacArthur said in his book on Romans on this very passage. He makes a comment, and he says, when I do all the steps I just outlined and other things, the bottom line is, when I put it all together, what I get is John MacArthur, because there's no one else like him, and there's no one else like you. When you go through all those steps and you put it all together, you know what you'll end up with? Bob Winkler. You'll end up with Susan Winkler. You'll end up with Mark. You'll end up with the Barry's. You'll end up with what God has put in you, and it's more—and here's what I'm driving at. Don't look at it like, well, gift of teaching. Well, there's 48 people I know that have the gift of teaching. Well, you can't lump it like that. They may have the gift of teaching, but they have a variety. They have a shade. They have a different effectiveness, a different ministry, a different approach. It may be preaching teaching, but it's different, and it's that way with every gift, and I look



at it like an artist's palette. If you stand behind, say, a world-class artist and their palette, they're going to have all these different colors, but what do they do? They take a little of the red and they mix it with a little of the blue to get just a little shade of charcoal that they're looking for, and they'll take a little yellow and they'll mix it with a little green to get just the offshade of darkness that they're—and they'll put a dab here and they'll put a dab there, and that is exactly the way spiritual giftedness works. You may have a little gift of mercy, and you may have a little bit of this, and you may have a little bit of helps, and you may have a little bit of the faith. You may have a whole lot of preaching teaching, and it's all put together in your particular blend, if you will, and there's—and it just comes out like I made that crack last week about Elvis's desire to take our Bible study public to be more evangelistic with it, and we decided not to do it, and you'll recall I made the comment, Elvis wasn't wrong. He was just Elvis, and it's the same way with everybody's giftedness. You're just you.

People have come to me, not often, but on a few occasions, and said, you know, I'd really like to learn to do what you do. Would you mentor me to help me do what you do? And they're talking about teaching the Word of God. Now look, there's some things that are basic, proper hermeneutics, how to take the historical and grammatical approach and take it in the consigns of the whole book, the language studies, the Greek and the Hebrew and the this, try to get the big idea, make the applications, on and on and on. There's all sorts of hermeneutical rules in crafting a sermon or a Bible study or teaching that I could tell you, but you know what? I can give you a book on biblical preaching by Haddon Robinson, the one I had in seminary, and it lays it all out for you. You don't need me. And so, the greatest thing that I can



do is say that I want you to learn to do what only you can do. You need to learn to be you. You need to learn the giftedness that God has given you, because there's only one Doug Ridley. Only one person in the history of the world has got Doug's particular giftedness, and it's the same way it is for everybody, and it's just so critical that we see it.

And man, I thought I was going to be so much farther along in this than I am now, but there's a tremendous diversity in unity, is there not? And oh, and this is a key point on this, key point on this, which probably ought to take me back to the text in Romans 12 because that's where all my key points better come. Romans 12:4, ***For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, the same praxis, the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.*** We are a diverse group. Nobody has the giftedness that Ray Barry has, nobody, and yet he's not in isolation. He's a part of the body of Christ, and if any part of the body, this is why I say it's so critical for every one of us, is that you need to use your spiritual giftedness to the max, to the glory of God, because if you do not, the body of Christ suffers as a result.

I was trying to think of a way of illustrating it because Paul uses that glorious example of the physical body and everybody's not an eye, everybody's not a tongue, everybody's not an arm, you know, but we're all one, and I started thinking about how this affects this life, and it dawned on me. I was planting a purple plant about three or four weeks ago in a triangular pot out in front of our home, and I remember it specifically, I just didn't realize what had happened at the time until about an hour



later, but I put this purple plant in this pot and my finger felt like it got bit, and lo and behold, it did. A spider or something bit me really good. This little finger swelled up about 50% its size, and it hurt like crazy. I went two nights where I couldn't even sleep at night because of this thing throbbing and hurting and so forth. Well, it's been three, over three or four weeks now. The swelling has gone down, the pain has dissipated, so it still is hurting. This is just my little finger, okay? Now, did I still function? Did I still get on? Yes, but I will tell you something. I reached for a book on the shelf and went, oh, when I hit the edge of the shelf. Friday, I'm grocery shopping, and I went to put a bottle in a grocery cart, and I banged the side of that cart with this finger, and I let out a visible ow like this. Now, did I function? Yeah, but did I function perfectly? No, I'm shaving with three fingers. I'm trying to tie a tie with it, and it's just stupid just because a little finger. Now, that is exactly—we laugh at that, but spiritually speaking, that's what's happening in the body of Christ. To the extent we're not all using our gifts, somewhere, someone, and our certainly body politic overall is not functioning as effectively as it ordinarily would.

You know, it's like, you can have—think about it. You're in top physical shape. You're 25 years old. You are like running Ironman competitions. You're ready to run the Phoenix Marathon, and you get about 30 yards down the street, and you got a pebble in your shoe. I don't care what you say. The next 26-plus miles, if you don't stop and get that pebble out, are going to be really debilitating, and it's exactly the way it is in the body of Christ.



As Brian comes up to lead us in this closing hymn, I started out talking about rare violins in Saskatchewan, and I want to close with a very, very gifted violin player. I don't know how many of you are familiar with the name Itzak Perlman. Itzak Perlman is 79 years old, still alive, but Itzak Perlman was a—is—well, he isn't anymore because of some health issues—a concert violinist. Other than Yasha Heifetz, who's now dead, Itzak Perlman is generally considered the greatest violin player that ever, ever lived. And I know that some of you, when I talk about spiritual giftedness, I can look at the younger eyes, and it's one thing. But I know that some of you sit here and you say, I'm in my mid to late 50s. I'm in my 60s. I'm in my 70s. Or, I've had a moral failure. I've had other kinds of failure, and I have blown this so bad. And this, using your giftedness in the body of Christ, it sounds—but you know, I'm sort of on the back 40 here, either spiritually or physically in life. I'm down to the final strokes in this. Obviously, not for me. And that's when I thought of Itzak Perlman. Itzak Perlman, about 15 years ago now, was giving a concert in Carnegie Hall. Here's the world's greatest living violin player ever. He was a victim of polio, and he's paralyzed from the waist down. And so they're all set up, and Itzak Perlman comes laboriously from the side of the stage, slowly dragging himself, if you will, on a makeshift crutches and walker, gets to a seat, pushes it aside, finally sits down, nods to the maestro in the well to start, and the orchestra starts playing this concerto, the concert that he's going to play. He gets a few bars into it, and one of the strings on his violin snaps. They said it sounded like a gunshot, pow, like this. It stunned the orchestra. The orchestra stopped playing, and everybody was staring at it. Now, there isn't a person in the place who would not have understood had the guy took himself off stage, put another string on the violin, and come back. Perlman, as he said later, didn't do that. He



thought, we're already starting late. They've waited so patiently, so long for this. So he took a deep breath. He looked at the conductor, and he nodded for him to start the concert again. And Perlman, on three strings instead of four. Now, he could reach some of the notes on other strings. They were close by, but some of the notes he couldn't. In his head, he recalibrated, if you will, his part in the concert as he went and redid it in his head. When it was all over and all said and done, everybody for a moment, of course, was stunned, and then they realized what they had just witnessed, and they jumped up in rapturous applause. They had seen something they knew they would probably never see again. It was simply amazingly fantastic. Perlman quieted the crowd down, and what he said afterwards was so significant. He said this: *Sometimes we need to see what beautiful music we can make with what we have left.* That guy's not a believer in Christ, as far as I know. You're a believer in Christ. I don't care if you're in your 50s, your 60s, your 70s, or older. I don't care if you've had one or more moral failures. I don't care if you feel like you have blown it in so many other venues and areas of life. You and I, through God's grace, need to see what beautiful music he can make on the violin that's your life through the giftedness He has given you to His glory with what you and I have left.

Let's pray. Father, thank You for this time in Your Word. Thank you for these truths from your Scripture and the patience of this dear congregation. Lord, You be blessed to use the preaching teaching of Your Word in whatever way You know will bring You the most glory. And encourage, I pray, my soul and the soul of everyone here to strive by Your grace to use the spiritual giftedness with which You have poured into each one of us to minister and to edify the body of Christ for Your glorious purposes.



We ask it all, and we thank You for it all, in the matchless name of Jesus our Christ.

Amen and amen.