

26 Maxims of the Christian Faith
Romans 12:6-21
(Lesson #21)



12:6 Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; 7 if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; 8 the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

Vs 6-8 - First, the **gifts differ** (believer to believer) according to the **grace that is given to each of us**.

When we talk about spiritual gifts, we are talking about **grace gifts**.

God has assigned these **gifts**, they **originate and flow from Him**. They are not based on our natural ability or talents, although our natural talents and abilities can help subsidize the unique gift that we have been given.

I do not think God's gives us one gift, instead He provides us with a **unique blend** of gifts where one gift is the primary gift.

This means that one person who has the gift of teaching will not exercise that gift exactly the same as another, for each has a "unique blend" of gifts, where teaching is the primary or the lead gift.

These are not only a spiritual gift, but they are also how we **operate spiritually**. But it is not just that, they are how we **see the world spiritually**, how we **approach spiritual problems**.

Your spiritual gift, is a unique grace gift, given to you, for ministry. It is special and unique, no one has one exactly like yours. When you operate in yours, you glorify God, for it is his gift, given to you, to minister to His body.

Understand that you and I see things, **spiritual things**, through the lens of the gift (**unique gift**) that God has given us.

Paul now provides a list of seven spiritual gifts; lets' walk through them:

So that I do not bury the lede, I do not believe these are the only spiritual gifts, we will talk more about that in a second. But these are the **representative gifts** that Paul brings up here.

1) Prophecy, in proportion to our faith

First, the prophet should prophesy in proportion to their faith. Stated differently, **they should not go beyond the insight God has given and should modestly stay within those bounds**.

When we think of prophecy, we tend to think of foretelling the future.

That is of course prophecy, but prophecy has much broader definition. It is to proclaim God's word with great **clarity** and **boldness**, especially as it relates to declaring who God is to unbelievers:

"24 But if all prophecy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, 25 the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you." (1Co 14:24-25 ESV)

But there is an important function to the church as well. Paul tells us in I Cor 14:3-4 that:

"On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation." (1Co 14:3 ESV)

Prophecy - The gift of prophecy is proclaiming the Word of God with clarity and boldness. The prophet builds up the body through clear declarations that lead to the conviction of sin. Prophecy manifests itself in preaching and teaching (Rom 12:6, ICor 12:10, ICor 12:28; Eph 4:11).

2) *Service, in our serving*

If you have the spiritual gift of service, do so satisfied with the gifts that God has provided you with. The Greek word means to serve or to minister to, it means to act as a go-between.

Typically, ministry is this work of preparation and bringing everything together.

It has with it the idea of humbly serving God and fellow man.

“For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mr 10:45 ESV)

Service – The gift of service is that gift that is used to recognize and organize practical issues around meeting the physical needs in the body, often to facilitate preaching and teaching. It is this idea of joyfully giving assistance in serving the needs of others. Christians with this gift do not mind working, and often work very hard, behind the scenes (Rom 12:7).

3) *Teaches, in his teaching*

Like serving, if teaching, if you have the spiritual gift of teaching, do so, satisfied with the gifts that God has provided you with.

Teaching is a gift that is similar to, but different than prophecy. A teacher has as his chief aim the transference of knowledge so that those who he/she is teaching, understand the content.

The content of teaching, as far as Paul is concerned is scriptural and biblical. It is biblical principles, biblical understanding, the gospel, what is necessary for Christian maturity, etc.

Teaching - Teaching is instructing others in the truths, principles, and doctrines of God’s Word for the purposes of building up, unifying, and maturing the body (Rom 12:7, ICor 12:28; Eph. 4:11).

4) *Exhorts, in his exhortation*

Exhorts is the Greek word **παρακαλέω** (**parakaleo**). It means to **come to one’s side to come to one’s aid**, to **exhort**, to **entreat**, to **comfort**, to **come to the aid of another**.

Exhortation – Believers who have this gift are those who encourage, motivate, and even inspire others. Believers with this gift often make good counselors, teachers, and preachers. Exhortation often exhibits itself in preaching, teaching, and ministry (Rom. 12:8).

5) *Contributes, in generosity*

The gift of giving or imparting. This is a spiritual gift, and the ones who have been given this gift should exercise it with generosity!

The Greek word really means to have an open heart, to not be looking for anything in return.

Giving – Believers with the gift of giving are able to give freely and joyfully to the work and mission of the body. Being cheerful and liberal in giving is a characteristic of individuals who have this gift (Rom 12:8). All believers are to be giving, but all believers do not have the spiritual gift of generosity.

6) *Lead, with zeal*

The one who has been given the spiritual gift of leading should do so with zeal. Lead with **earnestness**, lead with **diligence**, lead with **enthusiasm**!

Leadership – Leaders are critical to the body of Christ for they help set vision and goals of each local body or organization. Leaders are able to direct an organization and its members to accomplish the goals and purposes of the organization. Leaders motivate people to work together in unity toward common goals (Rom. 12:8). Humanly speaking, it is nice when the teaching pastor also has as strong dose of leadership, but many churches have thrived when that was not the case. The leadership came through other pastors or committees in the church.

7) *Acts of mercy, with cheerfulness*

Showing mercy. Showing compassion, showing empathy that should be done with joy, with cheerfulness.

Mercy – Happy cheerful acts of compassion, even in the spite of difficult situations characterizes believers with the gift of mercy. People with this gift are extremely important to the body for they help sympathize and empathize with hurting members. (Rom. 12:8).

You and I see the world through our spiritual gift and we respond based on our spiritual gift. **We are all indeed different members, with different functions, yet all part of the same body!**

Now at this point, maybe you are thinking I am not sure any of those are my main, my big spiritual gift. Could be, I do not believe this list is complete.

Let's step out of Romans, but not out of our lesson. Flip to the last page of the handout.

In fact, as best I can tell Paul provides us **around 20 different spiritual gifts that he lists here in the New Testament (please do not hold me to the number)**, but you have that list in front of you. Now consider that we each have a unique **blend** of these gifts, then consider that I have observed that as we mature the blend of your gifts actually matures. Then consider mixed into this, is your God given abilities and talents and well as talents that you have honed in your maturation.

Lastly, consider there are possibly other gifts that Paul does not list and I hope you start to sense just how amazingly unique you are in the Kingdom.

No one is just like you (spiritual giftedness) and through the work of the Spirit your gifts are morphing into the ultimate **best spiritual version of you**. You are uniquely gifted for Kingdom work!

9 Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. 10 Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. 11 Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. 12 Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. 13 Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. 14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.

Paul is now going to begin a string of **compressed statements, imperatives, maxims, or kingdom principles** outlining how believers should behave.

The start of this list is abrupt, there is no **conjunction** or **participle** that transfers the thoughts, but, in the Greek an abrupt:

ἀγάπη (agape), ἀνυπόκριτος (anupokritos)

This starts a string, a list of things that on the face appear to be commands, but most are not in the imperative mood. Although most scholars believe, if indeed these are maxims of the Christian faith, then they should be understood as imperatives.

Paul strings together in verse 9-16, depending on how you count them, 20 of these maxims of principles, so let's walk through them.

One more point, I recognize that we could dedicate an entire lesson to many of these items. So, I do not miss just how profound this listing really is!

Vs 9

1) Let your love be genuine without hypocrisy.

Paul told Timothy: *“the end of the commandment, was love out of a pure heart, and of a sincere conscience, and of an unfeigned faith.” (I Tim 1:5)*

2) Hate what is evil.

“The fear of the LORD is hatred of evil...” (Pr 8:13a)

To hate evil, may at times get us in trouble. Many people so identify with their pet sins that when we criticize their sin, they see that behavior as hating them.

3) Be joined, or even be glued, hold fast to that which is good.

“So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.” (Ga 6:10 ESV)

Vs 10

4) Love one another with familial love. Love each other the way you love members of your family.

Love in the New Testament is primarily an action. Now we also see affection mentioned here, and we will talk about that in a moment, but the command to love one another is more than affection, it is to choose to act in love.

Joh 15:13 *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*

“But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,” (Mt 5:44 ESV)

So let's be honest, affection makes love much more enjoyable, so you and I as brothers in Christ should not only love one another, but we should work to grow that affection.

Paul said this:

“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.” (Php 4:8 ESV)

Think on things are excellent, think on the character traits and habits that you are grateful for in your brothers and sisters in Christ.

Be kindly affection towards one another: One of the goals of our small groups is that we get to know one another and truly love, with brotherly affection each other.

“By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (Joh 13:35 ESV)

5) Be in competition to outdo honoring one another.

There are times when we need to yield our way, yield our rights, to the other person.

“Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.” (Php 2:4 ESV)

Christ was focused on looking out for others, in honor preferring others before themselves.

Consider this:

Mt 25:40b Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

Vs 11

6) Do not be lazy in your zeal for what is good.

One of the worst character traits in the Proverbs is the slack or slothful person:

“Whoever is slack in his work is a brother to him who destroys.” (Pr 18:9 ESV)

7) Be fervent (red hot or boiling) in your spirit.

We could translate this as being on fire for the Lord, bring on fire spiritually!

8) Serve the Lord Jesus, as a slave, willing submitting and following the Lord!

“for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.” (1Co 6:20 ESV)

You and I are servants of the most high God!

Remember, we principally serve God by serving people....

We tend to over spiritualize this point, but I would remind us... *“Inasmuch...”*

Vs 12

9) Rejoice in hope!

Rejoicing in hope and being patient in tribulation are related, they are connected!

Hope provides us endurance. If there is no hope, people simply give up.

Even when the outlook looks bleak, rejoice in your ultimate hope, which is in Christ and in the final resurrection and the reception of your glorified body.

10) Be patient (endure, bear under the load bravely and calmly) when you find yourself enduring tribulation.

Just a note, He does not say, be patient if tribulation comes. It is a maxim, be patient in tribulation.

- 11) Be constant (be steadfast, persevere, continue on) in prayer.** Regardless of what happens, good or bad, fun or hard, continue steadfast in prayer!

Prayer is also connected to all this.

“pray without ceasing,” (1Th 5:17)

Vs 13

- 12) Contribute to the needs of the saints.** The word translated “contribute” means to be a partaker, to become a partner, to become an associate in the needs of fellow believers.

Saints is not a word for super-believers, but for all believers.

Paul’s letters are written to the saints (1Cor 14:33, Eph 1:1, Php1:1, Col 1:2, Heb 13:24, etc).

Now Paul is not calling for a constant hand out, but, when needed, a hand up. To partner with the needs of the saints. Financial or otherwise!

“So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.” (Ga 6:10 ESV)

- 13) Pursue hospitality.** Run after, chase down and love strangers.

It means you let strangers into your life. Now of course we do this with one another, but we should continue to seek to expand and love those around us.

Heb 13:2 Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

Vs 14

- 14) Bless those who persecute you, bless them and do not curse them.**

This is sermon on the Mount stuff.

“But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,” (Mt 5:44 ESV)

God has called us into his upside-down kingdom, where we love and care for those around us, we behave and act and emulate God in the flesh.

Vs 15

- 15) Regardless of your own personal situation, rejoice with those who are rejoicing.**

Let’s be honest, this is tough stuff, when I am hurting, when I am crying out to God because of something that is going on in my life, it can be hard to rejoice with and for others.

1Co 12:26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

- 16) Regardless of your own personal situation, weep with those who weep.**

Show empathy, enter into the hardships of others.

1Co 12:26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

"Whoever sings songs to a heavy heart is like one who takes off a garment on a cold day, and like vinegar on soda." (Pr 25:20 ESV)

This is what it looks like and this is what it means to be a citizen of the Kingdom!

Vs 16

17) Live in harmony with one another. Get along together, do not be sandpaper, but salve.

Live in harmony, as much as is possible, with those around you.

The idea is to have one mind, be one-minded. Phil 2 – *Let this mind be in you...*

18) Do not be haughty... Do not be a snob, do not be prideful with your mind set on high things!

"Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." (Pr 16:18 ESV)

19) Instead of being high-minded, associate with, hang out with, develop relationships and friendships with the lowly.

Those who for whatever reason find themselves on a lower social or economic rung than you.

20) NEVER... NO NEVER be wise in your own sight. Paul has dwelt with pride, it seems now what he is dealing with is a know it all, someone who refuses to learn, someone who is "set in their ways"

"Do you see a man who is wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him." (Pr 26:12 ESV)

Twenty, practical, for the most part relational things that we should and/or should not do.

We have gone from the deepest theology in the entire Bible, to some fast-paced points of application for those who are being *transformed by the renewing of their minds.*

17 Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. 18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. 19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." 20 To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

Paul is not quite done. Paul has more to say in his high-speed list of points of applications based on all that Christ has done for us!

Here we will find another list of 6 more points on how we should live now that Christ has saved us. Again, please do not get hung up on the number.

Vs 17

21) Do not repay evil for evil. Put simply when people treat us with evil, we are not to pay them back with evil.

By the way that is how the world does it, that is not how you and I are to do it!

22) Give thought, to how you behave in public, how you act. I want you to know I thought about this verse quite a bit over the last two weeks.

Give thought, to act above reproach, even when responding to evil.

Vs 18

23) As far as possible, live peaceably with all.

Again, this means people we do not agree with, people who may not like us. Seek to live peaceably with all!

Vs 19

24) Never avenge yourself, vengeance does not belong to us.

Then Paul quotes part of Deut 32:35, or Ps 94:1, or Na 1:2:

“Vengeance is mine, and recompense, for the time when their foot shall slip; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and their doom comes swiftly.” (De 32:35 ESV)

I suspect Paul had in mind, Deut 32:35a, but he could have been pulling from a few different places. **The point, for you and I, we do not avenge ourselves!**

Vs 20

25) Rather than vengeance, show kindness, do good, and then Paul quotes the Old Testament and to what we should do and the outcome:

“21 If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat, and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink, 22 for you will heap burning coals on his head, and the LORD will reward you.” (Pr 25:21-22 ESV)

So love you enemy, that is the obvious point. But what does the second part of this Proverb mean?

There are two reasonable two possibilities:

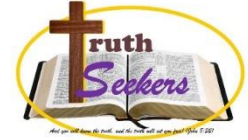
A) The burning shame someone who hates you feels when you love them.

B) In doing good to those who are doing evil to you and you keep doing this, the coals of God’s judgment are building up over that person.

Vs 21

26) Paul’s last point, for the moment. Do not be overpowered by evil. It will try, greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world.

Do not be overcome, overpowered, conquered by evil.... **Instead conquer evil with good!**



Spiritual Gifts as Described by Paul

	Romans 12:6–8	1 Corinthians 12:7–10	1 Corinthians 12:28	Ephesians 4:11
Gift #	<i>Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them...</i>	<i>To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good...</i>	<i>God has appointed in the church...</i>	<i>And he gave...</i>
1			Apostles	Apostles
2	Prophecy	Prophecy	Prophets	Prophets
3				Evangelists
4				Shepherds
5	Teaching		Teachers	and Teachers
6	Service or Ministry			
7	Exhorting			
8	Giving, Contributing,			
9	Leading			
10	Showing Mercy			
11		Utterance of Wisdom		
12		Utterance of Knowledge		
13		Faith		
14		Gifts of Healing	Gifts of Healing	
15		Working of Miracles	Miracles	
16		Distinguishing Between Spirits, Discernment		
17		Various Kinds of Tongues	Various Kinds of Tongues	
18		Interpretation of Tongues		
19			Helping	
20			Administering	