



3/25/26

Have you ever taken a spiritual gifts test? You can find them online. I can't trust myself to take them. I try to imagine why the question is asked and it's really hard for me not to answer according to what gift I think would be cool to have. One test I took years ago said I had the gift of "Creative Communication." Sounds cool. The only problem is, that's not listed anywhere in the bible. So... the gift I scored the highest in doesn't actually exist! Hahaha. Oh well... I'll just focus on serving the Lord and see where He leads. 🙏

*Blessings,
Jonna*

Romans 12:1-8

This passage is the epitome of what God calls us to freely give from a willing, cheerful, devoted heart. I've seen from Exodus and 2 Chronicles that God wants me to give of my resources and skills with a willing, devoted heart. I've seen from the story Jesus told of the Good Samaritan that God wants me to care for others with a willing, devoted heart as to the Lord. Here, in Romans 12, I see that my offering goes much deeper than giving of my possessions or my skills. It's giving my whole self... and then seeing what that looks like and what my motivation to serve will be.

But before I look at what it says, I need to look back to the end of Romans 11 because Paul is going to say in Romans 12:1, "I appeal to you, THEREFORE..." What's the therefore there for? Romans 11 ends with an incredible worship statement of God... of the depths of the riches of His wisdom and knowledge... of His unsearchable judgments and impossible to grasp ways... of His incredible mind that needs no counsel... of His extravagant gifts that can't be repaid... of Him being the source of all things... of Him being worthy of all glory. With ALL that in mind, what does God want from me?

Romans 12:1-2 ~ "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable (pleasing) and perfect."

God wants me to present myself to Him as the Israelites presented their gifts and offerings to Him for the building of the temple, with a willing heart. Only in my case, I am the temple. I offer MYSELF to Him because of His mercy! Truly, if He were not merciful, I would have no opportunity to present myself to Him. I would be without hope and stuck in my sin and condemnation.

So because of His mercy, I'm called to be a living sacrifice to Him. Jesus was a dying sacrifice for me. I live because He lives in me. He makes me holy and pleasing to God as I present myself to Him. This is my "spiritual worship."

Spiritual worship... the Greek is also translated "reasonable service." These two phrases seem so different... Spiritual worship and reasonable service. But they're not different at all. To genuinely serve the Lord is to truly worship Him. I can't worship Him without serving Him. If my words of worship are not followed by my service to Him, I am like what Jesus said about the Pharisees... "You honor Me with your lips, but your hearts are far from Me." It makes sense that I would offer myself to the Lord because of His compassionate mercy.

How do I reasonably serve the Lord in genuine spiritual worship? First, I choose my loyalty. It will be to Him and not to the world. I choose not to be conformed to the thinking and desires of what the world says is important. It's always a temptation. The world says I can make it all about me. But the world is "corrupt through deceitful desires" (Ephesians 4:22). To conform to the world is to self-sabotage.

But BE transformed. It does not say TRANSFORM YOURSELF. It says "BE." How can I "be transformed"? 2 Corinthians 3:18 tells me that's the job of the Holy Spirit. How does He transform me? He renews my mind through the testing of my faith. As I face each trial in my life with humility before the Lord, He transforms me more and more so that I'm able to discern what He wants and what is pleasing to Him and what is perfect.

When I'm letting the world conform me, any testing will make me question God's goodness. I will want what pleases ME, not Him. If it pleases both of us, great. But if it's between Him and me, I choose me. I won't have discernment to understand the damage I'm running to as I'm shaped by the mindset of the world.

Lord, I have proven this out over and over again in my life. I don't want it anymore!!! I want to BE transformed by the Holy Spirit. This is one of those cases where I see how science supports Your word. Science says our brains are not static, meaning they can't be changed. Research has proven the neuroplasticity of our brains... that we can have new neuro pathways as our minds are renewed. Yep, the Holy Spirit does that. My job is to present myself to Him as a patient goes to the doctor for surgery. I don't do surgery on myself. I put myself in the hands of the surgeon. The Holy Spirit is my brain surgeon and my heart surgeon... and as my mind is renewed, He transforms my heart so that I discern and desire what God calls good, pleasing, and perfect.

Vs. 3 ~ "For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned."

Why does Paul jump to a call for humility over pride? He knows that the natural tendency of man is to try to make a name for himself (and herself). This is interesting... In 2 Corinthians 12, Paul had asked God to remove a thorn in the flesh from his side, a messenger of Satan to harass him. But God allowed it... to keep him from being conceited... so that he wouldn't think too highly of himself! God said He would not remove the thorn and He said, "My GRACE will satisfy you," not the removal of the thorn.

Whoa!!! So here... Paul says, "By the GRACE given to me, I'm encouraging YOU not to fall into the trap of arrogance." What I learn from Paul's explanation in 2 Corinthians 12 is that God is far more concerned about getting rid of my arrogance than my suffering. Humble suffering will always drive me TO the Lord. Arrogance attached to anything... suffering or wellbeing... always drives me AWAY from God.

So... let me not think more highly of myself than I ought to think but let me think with sober judgment... humility. According to what? According to the faith God has given me. NOT according to how awesome I think I am... according to my trust in how awesome God is. In context, this is about being motivated to use the gifts God has given me through the faith He's given me.

According to Hebrews 11:1, 6... That means I will use my God given gifts in confidence of who GOD is, not who I am... with the conviction that God will give me the privilege of being used to honor His kingdom and be part of Him building His church... that I will always draw near to Him and seek Him for HIS reward, not the reward of man.

It is so easy to make my spiritual gifts about ME... making a name for myself... gaining the respect of men. That is a wasted use of my gifts. It is NOT done as a living sacrifice to the Lord. It is done in worship of SELF, not GOD. O Lord, please expose my arrogance so that You can free me from it. Change the neuropathways of my mind so that I no longer want to be like the world! Transform my heart so that I always choose to be loyal to You.

Vs. 4-5 ~ "For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another."

I am not a hero who singlehandedly takes down the enemy and builds the church. I am not about making a legacy for myself. I am a member of the body of Christ. He is the Head. I am an individual member with a purpose He has designed for me, but I am not alone.

When I think of myself too highly, I don't consider what others have to offer. I don't pursue unity with them. Shame is the opposite side of the same coin. Shame says, "I'm too low, but I

SHOULD be better than others, and because I'm not... I can't be used by God and no one cares if I serve them." Both shame and conceit drive us away from the Lord and from each other.

1 Peter 5:5 says, "Clothe yourselves, ALL of you, with humility TOWARD ONE ANOTHER." I remember when I was memorizing this verse, I kept forgetting the words, "toward one another." But humility toward God is only real when I am humble toward others. O Lord, please help me to see that we are ONE body IN CHRIST... that You have a purpose for each one of us... and so we are free to love and encourage each other.

Vs. 6-8 ~ "Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; 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."

Each of God's children, being members of His body, have been given GIFTS. We don't earn these gifts. They're given according to God's grace. It's not my job to earn a gift. Then it wouldn't be a gift. It would be payment. I also can't demand what gift God gives me. If I'm putting all my energy into the gifts I think God should give me rather than pursuing the gifts He HAS given me, I miss out on the joy and celebration of willingly serving in the way He designed for me to serve. How do I know what gift He's given me? (Not one believer is without at least one spiritual gift.) I don't figure it out by taking a test or deciding what I think it is. I get there by being a living sacrifice to God, serving Him wherever He leads. He'll get me to the right place.

I spent a lot of years arguing with God over where I thought He should let me serve. But it was all about making a name for myself. I wouldn't have admitted to that at the time. I don't think I even understood how deep my conceit went. I still need Him to remove my conceit as I seek to serve Him willingly, freely, wholeheartedly. My flesh is ALWAYS looking for an opportunity to make it about me. Praise God for His MERCY!!!

All the gifts God gives His kids are according to faith and His grace...

If God gives the gift of prophecy, use it according to faith... This is not about saying, "I have a word from the Lord." It's about knowing how to apply God's word to people's circumstances... It has to be done in faith... confidence, conviction, drawing near to God, seeking God... or it will be done in arrogance. Not a good place to be.

If the gift is serving, then serve. ALL of us are called to serve in one way or another. This is a special gift that sees a need and knows how to fill it.

Some are called to teach... but this is one of those gifts that some people desire because it puts them in front of others. This is one of the gifts we have to be so careful not to assume we have. In fact, James said in James 3:1, "Not many of you should be teachers, my beloved brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness."

The exhorter... encourager... should encourage according to faith in Christ. Otherwise, the encouragement could be more about people pleasing and not about honoring God.

The one who has the gift of giving... do it generously... as an offering to the Lord.

The one who leads, lead with zeal, diligence... Don't give up. You're doing it for the Lord and His glory. When someone who leads falls from the Lord, they take A LOT of people down with them. Stay diligent in faith!

The one who does acts of service, do it cheerfully. God loves a cheerful giver.

All of these gifts are based in God's grace and compassion. Let me give first to the Lord... not just the gift... but my whole self. If ALL I do is for the Lord, I will consider it a joy to use my God given gifts to serve others and not think my gifts make me better than anyone. O Lord, please make this so in me.

I see the arrogance of my heart and I'm repulsed by it. I praise You that You are transforming and renewing my mind, because there was a time not too long ago that I believed I had the right to want honor and a name for myself. Father, I so look forward to the day where I will ONLY consider it a joy to serve You and the members of Your body, of which I am a part because of Your GRACE. Whatever gifts You've given me, I want to offer them to You to serve Your people willingly, humbly, gratefully, wholeheartedly, and freely. True freedom comes in being free from SELF and SIN. Let me not use my freedom as an opportunity for the flesh or a coverup for sin, but let me be free to serve. All for YOUR glory.