

# Life Group Questions

April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024

**Think Differently About Yourself** – Pastor Ray Harms-Wiebe – [Romans 12:3-8](#)

## Note from Pastor Jonathan

Hey Life Groups,

This sermon passage involves gifting. I hope all the believers in your group will see that they're gifted and put their gifts to use!

I reference our Discovering Your Place of Ministry (<https://willingdon.org/discovery/your-ministry>) course and *You Are Gifted* by Ken Hemphill.

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## OVERVIEW



**1. How many people make Sunday worship happen?**



**2. Why does Paul write to “everyone” in the church and what happens if only some listen?**



**3. In what ways do followers of Jesus think too highly of themselves?**



**4. How should we think of ourselves?**



**5. What gifts do you see in your group?**



**6. How can we make sure we use our gifts properly?**



**7. How can you use your gifts in your group? Your family? Our church? Your community?**

## OPENING QUESTIONS



### 1. How many people make Sunday worship happen?

We usually think the most important people on Sunday morning are the people on stage, but there's so much that must happen before they get up there.

Let's trace a newcomer's visit. It starts when they're invited by a friend/co-worker/neighbor/classmate, a social media post catches their eye, or they drive by our well-maintained campus. Someone had to do that. On Sunday, they're directed by our Parking Team, get a loud "Good morning!" by two people next to a speaker in a garbage can, and greeted at the door. They get introduced to our church by our Welcome Centre, directed to washrooms by Here to Help, have questions answered by our Resource Centre, receive prayer at our Prayer Centre, have a cup of coffee brewed by our café staff and volunteers, put their children in our Kids or Youth ministry downstairs, get translation headsets at the booth, see what events are going on at the kiosks, and find a seat with the help of ushers.

Nelson Searcy, author of *Fusion* (a book on assimilating visitors), writes that first-time guests won't judge a church by its theology, because they don't know that stuff. They'll judge the church by the atmosphere and people's friendliness. They've decided whether they'll come again way before they hear the band or the sermon. All of us must work together to shout, "God loves you! Come meet Him!"

Even before the newcomer arrives, our facilities team makes sure our building looks good and isn't falling apart. They toss the trash, clean the floors, and set things up. Our Worship Arts Ministry team does soundchecks, gets the slides ready, and man the cameras. They coordinate all the different elements of the day like the choir/band, host, announcements, videos, preacher, and communion. We also have a team that goes to every single seat to resupply the welcome cards.

Translators look over the sermon script and prepare for the translation before getting into the booth. When these teams do well, nobody notices their hard work.

While we're in the sanctuary, our kitchen team is working hard to cook up delicious meals so that after the service visitors can connect more over some food and get connected at the Connect tables.

I've only scratched the surface because we have mid-week gatherings, International Language Ministries, ESL classes, Moms Connect, Life Groups, counseling, Freedom Session, and more! Seriously, I can go on and on. All this is off the top of my head. I bet there's so much more I don't know yet.

It's incredible to see God bringing, equipping, and coordinating so many people to create an environment where we can be welcomed, worship God, and grow as a family.

### Romans 12:3–8

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, <sup>5</sup> so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. <sup>6</sup> Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; <sup>7</sup> if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; <sup>8</sup> 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.



## 2. Why does Paul write to “everyone” in the church and what happens if only some listen?

It’s easy for people to think the Bible doesn’t apply to them. Sometimes they don’t like a specific teaching, so they’ll make an excuse. “Yes, but it doesn’t fit my situation.” Or they think it only applies to other people, such as spiritually younger believers (“That stuff’s only for children.”) or super Christians (“That stuff’s only for pastors/elders.”). Or they think that Jesus already gave them a ticket to heaven, so they’re good to go.

If only a portion of the church follows the Bible’s teaching, most of the church is disobeying God! Imagine if only some of the employees at your company contributed towards the manufacturing of widgets. What if most of your hockey team just sat on the ice a few players tried to score? That’d be so dysfunctional and unproductive!



## 3. In what ways do followers of Jesus think too highly of themselves?

Here are some examples I thought of. Do you have any tendencies?

- **Lording Over.** Leaders can think church is about them, controlling the agenda and craving respect. I know a church that got a restraining order against their pastor because leaders were too focused on seizing power. Many well-known Christian leaders had scandals that began with pride, thinking they were too important/holy/big to be held accountable. They don’t realize that Jesus came to love and serve (Matthew 20:28).
- **VIP.** We’ve all been in a group with people who think everything should revolve around them. The music should be their style, the group discussion should revolve around them, or hangouts/meals should always be what they want. If there’s anything they don’t like about the church/group, you bet they’ll let people know without trying to understand the situation first. They don’t realize other people matter, too.
- **Smarties.** Smarties always think they know best. Nobody’s perfect, so there will be times when concerns should be brought up. But Smarties make it their job to critique everything. Instead of using sermons, lessons, and discussions to learn and grow, they’re looking for every opportunity to point out what went wrong to show their superiority. They don’t realize they’re imperfect, too.
- **Judges Dredd.** There’s a sci-fi character set in the future (A.D. 2000) when crime is so bad that police serve as judge, jury, and executioner. Judge Dredd’s famous line is, “I am the law!” Church Judges see people not dressed appropriately, not doing enough for to serve, not knowing enough Bible, or not living right. They don’t try to understand the person’s situation, lovingly help, remember God’s grace, or pray for a change of heart. They try them in the court of their minds and condemn them because they think they can properly execute God’s law. They don’t realize they’re sinners in need of God’s grace, too.

## LET'S DIG DEEPER



### 4. How should we think of ourselves?

There's a bit of wordplay here in Greek. The verb for think is **φρονέω** (fron-eh-o). More highly than we ought to think is **ὑπερφρονέω** (hoop-er-fron-eh-o). It's literally hyper-think, over and above what we should be thinking. Instead, we should think with sober judgment, **σωφρονέω** (so-fron-eh-o), meaning "to be prudent, with focus on self-control, be reasonable, sensible, serious, keep one's head" (BDAG). Think reasonably based on facts.

What fact does he want them to consider here? God gave a measure of faith to each Christian. That should humble us in a few ways.

- **Faith by Grace.** Our relationship with God is from God. Jesus gave His life to save us (Romans 5:8). The Holy Spirit enables us to live for God (Romans 8:6-11). Everything is from God, so we can't be proud of ourselves.
- **Not by Merit.** God put us in Willingdon to serve specific functions. God doesn't say, "Oh, this guy is super spiritual so I'll make him a pastor/elder." Every pastor at Willingdon Church will tell you that we're here by God's grace. We can each give a list of reasons why we don't deserve to be here. In Greek, "gifts" is the same word as grace (χάρισμα, khar-is-mah, where we get charisma). Nobody can think they have a specific role because they earned it, because it's by God's grace.
- **All Have a Function.** Every believer has a function in the church. Paul is emphatic about it. He's saying "to everyone among you" (v. 3). "Each" person has a measure of faith (v. 3). We are all one body (v. 4). There are no useless Christians!

*You Are Gifted* – You were never intended to be a spectator in the family of God. You were uniquely created and gifted by God for a special role that will enable you to advance His kingdom on earth and thus live with eternal impact. That thought should challenge and encourage you. You were created and redeemed with purpose (Ephesians 2:10).

- **All Important.** Since each part of our body serves an important function, each person in the church serves an important function, too. Nothing like injuring your "unimportant" parts to realize how important they are. Ever try walking after badly stubbing your little toe? Paul elaborates more in 1 Corinthian 12:12-26.



### 5. What gifts do you see in your group?

One of the best ways to encourage is acknowledging how God has used them to serve you.

Paul lists seven gifts here and others in other letters. That means these lists aren't exhaustive, otherwise collecting spiritual gift lists would be like catching Pokemon. Instead of buying Red, Green, and Brilliant Diamond, they'd have to collect Paul's letters to the Ephesians, Corinthians, and Colossians as well as Peter's letter. These are examples to help you see what God can do.

I've included the list of gifts from Discovering Your Place of Ministry (<https://willingdon.org/discovery/your-ministry>). Again, it's not everything. "Spiritual gifts are the abilities that enable us to serve God while in this physical body. Just as the Spirit transforms and energizes our physical bodies, He transforms and energizes all our abilities in such a manner that we can legitimately refer to them as spiritual gifts." (*You Are Gifted*). Broadly speaking, any skill or ability that can build up the church can be a gift.

<b>SPIRITUAL GIFT</b>	<b>DEFINITION</b>
ADMINISTRATION 1 Cor. 12:28	The divine ability to understand what makes an organization function, and to design and carry out an efficient plan of action that will lead to the accomplishment of the goals of the ministry.
DISCERNMENT 1 Cor. 12:10	The divine ability to determine and know with assurance the difference between attitudes, behaviours and teaching that are sourced in truth or in error.
ENCOURAGEMENT Rom. 12:8	The divine ability to come alongside of people who are discouraged or wavering in their faith to minister encouragement, strength, comfort, and motivation. It is the ability to inspire others to complete their tasks and be all that God intends them to be.
EVANGELISM Eph. 4:11	The divine ability to clearly communicate the gospel message to unbelievers in such a way that they respond and become followers of Jesus Christ.
FAITH 1 Cor. 12:9	The divine ability to discern with confidence the will and purposes of God and to move forward with trust in God and reliance on His promises and provisions.
GIVING Rom. 12:8	The divine ability to generously, joyfully, freely and often sacrificially contribute material and financial resources to the world of God.
HEALING 1 Cor. 12:9	The divine ability to serve as the avenue God uses to cure illness and restore physical and psychological health through prayer, touch or spoken words, without the aid of natural or scientific means.
HELPS (SERVING) 1 Cor. 12:28 Rom 12:7	The divine ability to identify and meet the practical needs of others, enabling them greater freedom and efficiency in their place of service.
HOSPITALITY 1 Pet. 4:9-10	The divine ability to provide food, shelter, security and friendship to strangers.
INTERCESSION Col. 4:12-13	The divine ability to wrestle in prayer and do spiritual battle for extended periods of time on behalf of the needs of others or over particular concerns or issues.
INTERPRETATION 1 Cor. 12:10	The divine ability to understand and translate an unlearned language and make known the message of the person who is speaking in tongues.
KNOWLEDGE 1 Cor. 12:8	The divine ability to receive, share or clarify knowledge that has been specially revealed or gathered through biblical study.
LEADERSHIP Rom 12:8	The divine ability to provide vision and the management necessary to build harmonious teams that will fulfill the vision.
MERCY Rom. 12:8	The divine ability to feel empathy and express practical compassion to help those who are suffering hardship or need.
MIRACLES 1 Cor. 12:10	The divine ability to authenticate the Word of God though supernatural acts which appear to have altered the usual course of nature.
PROPHECY 1 Cor. 12:10, 28 Eph. 4:11	The divine ability to reveal truth and speak on behalf of God in such a way that the listeners are moved to conviction and an appropriate response.
SHEPHERDING Eph. 4:11	The divine ability to care for, feed and protect the long-term spiritual needs of individuals or groups, helping them progress toward godliness and spiritual maturity in life and ministry.
TEACHING 1 Cor. 12:28 Rom 12:7	The divine ability to understand and clearly explain the Word of God in such a way as to help the listener make application to their daily lives.
WISDOM 1 Cor. 12:9	The divine ability to offer the spiritual counsel and insight needed in a specific situation.

## 6. How can we make sure we use our gifts properly?

- **Renew mind and test.** In last week's passage (Romans 12:1-2), Paul says to not allow ourselves to be conformed to the world but be transformed by renewing our minds. We need to continually watch out for the world influencing us. For example, the world is usually about physical comfort and success. While interceding (praying for people) is good, we can end up praying for physical, temporary things while ignoring the more important issues, like whether they know Jesus or not. Or we can confuse our own opinions/ideas for God's wisdom/knowledge/teaching. We need to continually be in God's Word so we know what God wants and we need to regularly make sure our actions are in line.
- **Rely on God.** Since gifts often feel natural and easy, we can do it on our own. For example, we may be very good at teaching people, but without God's power, there's no transformation. I've sadly seen way too many teachers passing on information without any life change. Maybe God's called you to give generously, but you rely on your own ability to make money to give without trusting that God can provide.  
We must remember our gifts aren't based on our natural abilities but God's empowerment.
- **Acknowledge God.** It's easy to be proud of the gifts we have, but we must remember that God is the source. And these gifts are literally God's grace! One of the best ways to stay humble is to thank God. Host an event so newcomers feel like family? Thank God for giving you a home and resources to host. Successfully lead or serve a big ministry event? Thank God for letting you be a part of it. People telling you what a great leader you are? Tell them to thank God, because He gets the credit.
- **Use them.** Put them to use! Find opportunities to serve in your group. Give what God's put in your hands, show mercy to the hurting members of your group, share the Gospel with your friend, or open your home to host a neighbor. If you don't know what to do, ask your group to help you brainstorm!
- **Develop the gift.** We need to develop our gifts. Pastor Ray and Pastor Vinh are gifted preachers but ask them about their first sermons and they'll probably give you a chuckle and say, "Oh, man." Many of our Life Groups look up to some of our incredibly gifted leaders, but they'll also tell you they had to learn over time to get to where they are. You'll need to develop your gifts by practicing them, finding mentors, praying for God's guidance, learning from resources, or joining a ministry.
- **Tell others.** It may seem like bragging because it should be. Well, not bragging about ourselves but about God. It can be a wonderful time to hear about God's work so others can praise God and possibly join in.

## 7. How can you use your gifts in your group? Your family? Our church? Your community?

If you're already putting your gifts to work, that's great. If not, brainstorm. Ask for ideas. Team up with other members.