**Romans 12:3-8**

I. Paul’s picture of Christian community (v. 4-5)

A. The human body

1. The human body is a picture of unity and diversity.

2. The unity of the body doesn’t negate the diversity of its parts, and the diversity of its parts doesn’t threaten its unity, but rather is essential to it functioning as a unified whole

B. The church community as a body

1. Unity: “we who are many form one body”

The key phrase = “In Christ”

a. God creates our unity by saving us and filling us with his Spirit and uniting us to Christ.

b. Since I am united to Christ, and you are united to Christ, we are united to each other

2. Diversity: “we are many,” “we have different gifts”

 Our individual differences are valued, and they are actually essential for our unity

3. The first century church in Rome

a. It was a beautiful picture of unity and diversity, as it contained Jews and Gentiles living together in harmony

b. The diversity in a church is a testimony to the power of the gospel

II. Paul’s call to humility (v. 3)

A. Humility is the first specific example Paul turns to after v. 1-2

1. Word play in Greek: don’t “hyper think” about yourself, but “soundly think” about yourself. Humility is not thinking lowly of yourself; it is just living in reality

2. We all need to go through a “Copernican Revolution,” so that self is no longer at the center but God is at the center.

B. Humility is essential in the body of Christ

The only way such diverse people will get along is if they leave their pride and need for attention and humble themselves and serve others as a way of worshiping God

III. Paul’s call to use our gifts to serve one another (v. 6-8)

A. Paul’s three lists of spiritual gifts (Romans 12, Ephesians 4, and 1 Corinthians 12)

 1. Notice the differences in these lists of gifts

Clearly Paul is not intending to give an exact or exhaustive list of gifts. Rather, these lists are simply representative of the types of gifts Paul is thinking of

 2. Notice the similarities in these gifts

 a. In every passage, the source of the gifts is God

 1) Word play in the Greek in v. 6

 God’s grace (“charis”) is the source of our gifts (“charismata”)

 2) We are not the source of our gifts; God is (therefore, humility/gratitude)

 b. In every passage, the purpose of the gifts is to build each other up in the faith

 1) Wordplay in Greek

 God’s grace comes to me through your giftedness

“Our “gifts” are expressions of, or extensions of, God’s “grace.” Gifts transmit God’s grace through human means to other people for their strengthening in faith, hope, and love.” –John Piper

2) Notice how Paul is modeling this in v. 3: “by the grace given me”

B. Therefore, Paul’s call is this: use your gifts to serve each other!

1. Whatever gifts you have, use them. Devote yourself to using them to build others up in the faith

2. Use them, not out of duty or obligation, but as a response to the grace of God in your life with joy and gratitude

IV. Three cultural forces that work against Christian fellowship

A. Individualism

1. Individualism says, “I don’t need the church. Just give me the Bible and a quiet time and I can do this better on my own.”

2. Paul reminds us: we need one another

a. God wants to use other people in the body to bless and encourage us

b. We can only discover our true individuality within the context of community

1) We discover who we are, not by getting on our own and searching inside ourselves, but by engaging in community and discovering what we uniquely bring to the table

2) Body metaphor: an elbow discovers its uniqueness only as it remains attached to the shoulder and hand

B. Consumerism

1. Consumerism says, “the church exists for me.”

2. Paul reminds us: the church doesn’t just exist for me. I exist for the church. Church is not just an opportunity to receive from others; it’s an opportunity to give of myself to others

C. Comparison

1. This is that competitive streak that is constantly looking around and seeing how we measure up

 a. It leaves us insecure or jealous around people who seem more gifted than us

 b. It leaves us prideful around those who seem less gifted than us

2. Paul’s picture is so freeing:

a. God knew exactly what he was doing when he gave you your specific gifts; he can see the big picture and gifted you exactly as he wanted you to be gifted

b. When you get to heaven, God isn’t going to say, “why weren’t you more like so and so?” He will say: “Were you simply faithful with the gifts I gave you?”

V. Why has God brought you to Grace? What gift does he want to give us by giving us you?

 A. Consider your unique gifts

 B. Consider the specific people God has placed in your life whom you can encourage

**Discussion Questions**

1. In light of v. 4-5, we discussed the unity and diversity of the body of Christ, and it was suggested that we ought to pursue greater diversity in our body as a testimony to the power of the gospel. Explain in your own words what was meant by that, and do you agree with that idea?

2. In light of v. 3, consider the following statement: “Humility is not thinking lowly of yourself; it is just living in reality.” Do you agree?

3. In light of the wordplay between God’s grace (“charis”) and our gifts (“charismata”) in v. 6, consider this quote from John Piper: “Our ‘gifts’ are expressions of, or extensions of, God’s ‘grace.’ Gifts transmit God’s grace through human means to other people for their strengthening in faith, hope, and love.” How does that encourage you are add to your perspective?

4. If someone approached you and said, “I don’t know what my spiritual gifts are. How do I figure that out?” How would you respond to them?

5. Are you being encouraged to use your gifts to serve and encourage people in any specific ways as a result of Sunday’s passage?