

"Exercise for Your Soul"

Romans 12:6-8

I. Introduction

A. Americans are obsessed with exercise and fitness

1. If you search *fitness* on Google, you'll get more than one million results
2. We like to watch people work out online, and read about working out, but we don't like to exercise
3. It's important to exercise each muscle for the good of the body as a whole
4. As Christians, we need to exercise the gifts God has given us

B. There is a place for everyone, and each person's contribution is significant

1. The key for a healthy spiritual body is the same as the physical body—balance
2. It's important that each part exercises their gifts, so the body can be fit for God's purpose

C. Some people become more obsessed with the gifts than with the giver Himself

1. Problems arise when believers begin to follow signs and wonders
 - a. We should be following Jesus, but some believers are on a quest for miracles
 - b. The search for God's will is not a mystic quest or search for a sign
2. If your heart, soul, and mind are completely devoted to God, the things God wants you to do will be the things that you want to do

II. Explaining the Different Gifts

A. Prophesying

1. The Old Testament defines prophecy as something that bubbles forth or lifts up; the New Testament definition is to speak for one another
2. In I Corinthians 14:3, Paul defined it as "edification and exhortation and comfort"
3. What comes to mind when you think of prophecy?
 - a. Today, prophecy often comes into play when someone asks your advice or counsel and the Holy Spirit leads you to tell them something specifically
 - b. Prophecy is God using a human vessel to share a message directly
4. I Corinthians 14:32
5. The gifts of the Spirit are God speaking through your life
6. People who have been gifted with certain gifts can become hesitant to use them because they've seen them misused
 - a. A lot of people who use those gifts don't actually have them; it's an act to make them look more spiritual and draw unnecessary attention to themselves
 - b. We must be careful not to do anything in order to get attention from people
 - i. The purpose of the gifts is to edify, exhort, and comfort—to draw attention to God, share His glory, and speak the message of God into people's lives
 - ii. If a gift is not used for the right purpose, it's doing more damage than good

B. Believing

1. "In proportion to our faith" (v. 6)

- a. God has given us each a measure of faith—some more and some less; we shouldn't do or say anything that we don't have the faith to do or say
 - b. This flies in the face of name-it-and-claim-it theology, which says that you can go beyond your faith—that if you say something out loud, it has to happen
 - i. There are far too many people today who put their faith in the words of "prophets"
 - ii. Ezekiel 13:3
2. Has God given you a gift that you're not using because you've seen others misuse it?
- a. Are you resistant to using the gifts that God's given you?
 - b. We have to be careful, because not using our gifts is quenching the Spirit (see 1 Thessalonians 5:19-21)
- C. Serving
- 1. The NIV translates *ministry* in verse 7 as *servicing*: "If it is serving, then serve"
 - 2. The gifts of service often take place behind the scenes, but everyone notices when those gifts aren't used
- D. Teaching
- 1. "He who teaches, in teaching" (v. 7)
 - a. The gift of teaching is vital to the church
 - b. Hosea 4:6
 - 2. The gift of teaching is the ability to make the Bible understandable for others
 - a. The word *teaching* refers to systematic training
 - b. The gift of teaching doesn't just happen on a stage; it can be used in a kid's ministry classroom, in the youth ministry, and in your home
 - c. Isaiah 28:9-10
 - 3. Preaching is different from teaching
 - a. Teaching refers to systematic training; preaching refers to urgent proclamation
 - b. It's possible to have both gifts, and it's possible to have only one (see 1 Timothy 2:7)
 - 4. If your gift is to teach, you should be a student first and foremost
 - a. You cannot be a leader unless you're willing to learn; you can't be a teacher unless you're willing to be a student
 - b. You have to know what Jesus said if you want the Holy Spirit to help you remember it (see John 14:26)
 - c. Study and prepare; dig into the Word of God and study to show yourself approved (see 2 Timothy 2:15)
- E. Encouraging
- 1. The gift of exhortation makes you desire to grow
 - 2. This is why being part of a brick-and-mortar church is important
 - a. You can experience the gift of teaching online, but you can't experience the gift of exhortation unless you're in a room with people who know and love you—people who will exhort and encourage you to keep fighting
 - b. To exhort means to correct, motivate, encourage, or stimulate
 - c. This is what the body of Christ is (see Acts 14:22)

d. Hebrews 10:24

F. Giving

1. "He who gives, with liberality" (v. 8)
2. The Scriptures teach that each believer should regularly give of their resources to the work of the kingdom, but it's also true that some believers have received the gift of generosity
3. How do you know if you've been given the gift of giving?
 - a. If God has given you the resources, it's possible that He's also given you the gift of generosity
 - b. God blesses us so that we can be a blessing—so that we can give, and continue to give, in order to make an impact in people's lives
 - c. Acts 20:35
 - d. Malachi 3:11
4. Those who have the gift of generosity can never out-give God; He always pours back into them, oftentimes in a greater capacity than they gave to start with
 - a. These people are so generous with what God has given them that He continues to give them more so they can give more
 - b. 2 Corinthians 9:6
 - c. 1 Timothy 6:17

G. Caring

1. "He who shows mercy, with cheerfulness" (v. 8)
 - a. Also known as *caring*
 - b. This refers to caring for the people the rest of society has cast out, those who aren't cared for by the world
2. How do you know if you have the gift of mercy?
 - a. If you find yourself caring for those who are without or are forgotten, and when you do so it brings you joy, you likely have the gift of mercy
 - b. If you're in this ministry, don't do it out of duty, but with genuine cheerfulness; if you're ministering to someone who's miserable, don't do it in a miserable way

III. Exercising Your Distinct Gifts

A. Discovering Your Gifts

1. How do you discover what your gifts are?
 - a. Taking a spiritual gifts assessment can help you get started in identifying things that might be an innate part of your personality
 - b. People often trust these tests to lock in on a specific gift they didn't know they had
 - c. What it can do is box them in, and they limit themselves to those results; they're not open to other possibilities and opportunities in which God wants to use them
2. What are the best ways to discover your gifts?
 - a. Ask God to reveal the gifts He's given you
 - b. Get involved; start serving in a variety of ministries
3. If you want God to direct you, start serving

- a. As you start serving, you'll discover some things you love to do and others you hate; your desires will help direct you, if you're being true to what God has said
- b. This doesn't mean that you're going to find your area of gifting easy
- 4. What do you complain about at church?
 - a. People tend to complain about things in their area of giftedness
 - b. The solution is to quit complaining and start serving
 - i. Stop looking at the things you don't like
 - ii. Start serving in your area of giftedness so the church can improve in that area
 - iii. Don't just point out the problems; be the solution

B. Developing Your Gifts

- 1. Once you've discovered your gifts, it's important to continue to the next step—developing your gifts
 - a. This is what exercise for the soul is all about—exercising the gifts God has given you
 - b. Even though the Holy Spirit empowers us with these gifts, we need to develop them
 - c. 1 Timothy 4:14
- 2. Once you've discovered your gifts, the most important thing you can do is get busy
 - a. The way you learn to ride a bike is getting on the bike and doing it
 - b. The only way to learn how to use your gift is to practice doing it
 - c. You might mess up, but you need to get back up and keep practicing, because the more you do it, the more comfortable you'll get

IV. Conclusion

- A. Almost all of the spiritual gifts have corresponding commandments for all believers
 - 1. You can't opt out of doing something because you're not gifted in that area
 - 2. All believers are called to exhort one another, teach one another, and share Christ with the lost; we all must serve, we all should be merciful to the suffering, and we're all told to give with what God has entrusted to us
- B. If we're supposed to do all these things, what's the purpose of your individual gifting?
 - 1. It helps you know where to focus your time
 - 2. It shows you where to focus your effort so you can have the greatest impact for the kingdom of God
 - a. The apostles in the early church recognized that their gifts were in praying and the teaching of the Word
 - b. In order to focus their energy in those areas, they directed the elders to fill other areas of need (see Acts 6:1-4)
- C. We should all be looking for needs in the body and be quick to fill those needs
 - 1. You don't have to have the gift of helps to pick up a vacuum or clean some tables—but if you have the gift of teaching, you shouldn't make cleaning up your main ministry
 - a. Know your gifts and focus most of your time and energy on them
 - b. Trust the rest of the body to do the same

- c. Be willing to fill other needs, too
- 2. When you work out, it's normal to be sore, but any good trainer will tell you to push through the pain; the more you push through the pain, the greater the results
 - a. It's important to push through spiritual pain and continue using your gifts, because God will pour into you when you do
 - b. Operate in the gifting that He's given you, and He will pour back into you with an abundance of blessing and mercy

Figures referenced: Billy Graham

Cross references: Isaiah 28:9-10; Ezekiel 13:3; Hosea 4:6; Malachi 3:11; John 14:26; Acts 6:1-4; 14:22; 20:35; 1 Corinthians 14:3, 32; 2 Corinthians 9:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:19-21; 1 Timothy 2:7; 4:14; 6:17; 2 Timothy 2:15; Hebrews 10:24

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