

Greetings and welcome to session 6 of this series on “Abounding in the Good Works of God.” In session one we talked about how uniquely special every member is in the body of Christ and that God has already prepared for each of us to do good works as is mentioned in Ephesians 2:10. Then, in session 5 we addressed God's desire for all Christians around the world to work together as recorded in Ephesians 4:16. We will now merge these two truths together and drill deeper into your particular role in the body of Christ.

Romans 12:1

I urge you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service.

God did his part by preparing us to do good works. Now he's urging us to make a commitment to do something with this preparation. Are you ready to make that commitment today?

Romans 12:2

And do not be conformed to the pattern of this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you can test and approve what the will of God is—the thing that is good and pleasing and perfect.

In the past, what I was commonly taught about this verse is that we need to renew our mind to the promises that God has given us in the scriptures. Although this is certainly true, I believe it only scratches the surface of what God is trying to communicate to us here.

The word “mind” is a translation from the Greek word *nous* and it refers to our thoughts and feelings. Using our mind, we are being asked to test and approve what the will of God is. This is a very *personal* request. The will of God for your life is much different than the will of God for my life or for anyone else. This renewing of the mind is something you are going to do in order to discover what God's will is for your life. No one else can do this for you.

The words “test and approve” are a translation from the Greek word *dokimazo*. It means to test and examine with scrutiny. This indicates that there is a process of learning involved in order to identify God's will. We

are all in a constant state of discovery to find out what God wants us to be doing.

Romans 12:3

For by the grace given to me, I say to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think sensibly, in accordance with that measure of trust God has allotted to each one.

The words “not to think of himself more highly” is a reminder that every person's role in the body of Christ is different but that each person's function is just as important as ours.

Regarding where it says, “that measure of trust,” we know from Ephesians 2:10 and so many other verses in the Bible that God will always equip us to do the good works that he has called us to do. We may not have the faith or the ability to do what someone else in the body of Christ does, but we will always be able to carry out what God asks us to do. Our part is to walk out in faith. When we first receive our directions from God, we may not always understand the reasons why he's asking us to do something. Or, where the means will come from to make it happen. This is where trust comes in. We need to go ahead and take action even though we don't have the answers to those questions.

As an example, I was convinced last year that our Lord Jesus Christ wanted me to travel to Kenya to teach God's Word. But I didn't know why he had chosen me to go to Kenya over any other country. As a matter of fact, I was wondering why not just have me go to another place in my own country? I didn't have any connections in Kenya. I knew nothing about their culture. I didn't speak their language. I didn't know how such a trip could turn out successful. But I trusted God. I made the decision to travel to Kenya because I knew that's where the Lord was telling me to go. As part of that decision, I took action to pursue that goal even though I didn't know how it could get accomplished. Does that make sense?

What happened during the next several months included many signs, miracles and wonders where God confirmed his desire for me to go to Kenya. In fact, I received so many confirmations prior to my arrival there that I remember being very excited just before my plane landed in Nairobi, Kenya. I was filled with enthusiasm because the many confirmations that led up to this point totally convinced me that this trip was God's will and

therefore it was going to be a huge success. I had walked in obedience to what our Lord had asked me to do and now I was going to experience the fruit of this trip. Note that the results manifested themselves only after I chose to walk out in faith on the vision our Lord had given me.

Here is the basic formula for success. It's very simple.

1. God reveals to you through Jesus Christ what it is that he desires you to do.
2. You take action on it.
3. God guides your steps and brings it to pass.

Romans 12:4-5

4 For just as we have many parts in one body, and all the parts do not have the same function,

5 in the same way, we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually parts of one another.

In the last lesson I shared a lot about teamwork. In a team, everyone has a specific role to play. For instance, a soccer team has 11 players on the field and each one has unique responsibilities and assignments. Some are focused on scoring the goals. Others are given defensive assignments. Some players set up the plays that result in the goals being scored. Although the players who score the goals are the ones the media gives most if not all of the attention to, the role of the other players on the team play a huge role in allowing the team to succeed. Without the defense and setup activities, the team would have no chance to win the game.

Romans 12:6-8

6 But since we have gifts that differ according to the grace that was given to us, let us use them accordingly. If it is prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of our trust;

7 if it is serving, let us give ourselves to our serving; if it is teaching, to teaching;

8 if it is encouragement, to encouragement; the one who gives, do it with liberality; the one who leads and cares for people, do it with diligence; the one who shows mercy, do it with cheerfulness.

Note that it says we have gifts that differ. This tells us that we all have gifts! No one is left out. Every person in the body of Christ has been given gifts.

These gifts were not given for us to use for our own selfish benefit. The gifts God has blessed us with are for the benefit of the body of Christ. It is the test and approve stage that was mentioned in verse 2 where we identified what those gifts are. Understanding what they are, we are now being asked in this verse to step up to the plate and use them for the benefit of others.

I love the word cheerfulness in verse 8. It comes from the Greek word *hilarotes* from which we get our English word hilarious. Performing our ministry should bring joy and happiness into our life. I know when I was in Kenya and Uganda, utilizing the gifts that God has blessed me with to minister to the wonderful people there, it brought so much joy to my heart. I really don't know how else to describe it!

2 Corinthians 9:7

Let each one give as he has previously decided in his heart, not grudgingly, or of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver.

To give grudgingly is to give out of sorrow. In contrast, we see this word *hilarotes* again. God loves it when we give cheerfully. At one point in my life I was part of an International Folk-Dance group. We were a team of eight dancers that performed at various locations in my community. Our dances represented the cultures of countries such as Russia, Bulgaria, Ireland, Romania and Israel. One thing I learned from these performances was how important it is to be cheerful on stage. When our audiences see how much fun we are having, it makes for a much greater impact.

Ephesians 4:16

from whom the whole body, being fitted together and held together by every supporting ligament, with each individual part doing its proper function, produces the growth of the body with the goal of building itself up in love.

We talked about this verse in the last session. Notice the words “every supporting ligament.” Then it says, “each individual part doing its proper function.” What causes great growth in the body is when each individual brings the gifts that God has blessed them with to the joint effort of the entire body.

When I was in Kenya, there was a young man named Peter Andrea. He traveled all the way from Tanzania to participate in the crusades with me in

Kenya. Peter has a wonderful God-given gift for dancing, singing and entertaining. He utilized these gifts during our crusades with hilarious enthusiasm. I witnessed large crowds quickly form to see the funny show Peter was displaying in front of them.

Once the crowds were there, it was my turn to pick up the microphone and tell them about God's love, who Jesus Christ is, what his purpose was in coming to Earth and why they needed him for eternal life. After I was done with my message, I would ask whoever had received Jesus Christ as their lord to please raise their hand. I would look out at the crowd and I would see so many hands held high. It brought so much joy to my heart. By the way, you can view photos of this on the blog of my website.

Do you see from this illustration how Peter and I worked together as a team? He would draw the people close with the gifts that God had blessed him with. Then it was my turn to teach them what God wanted them to hear. Neither of our gifts was any more important than the other. They all contributed towards the success that God wanted to see happen.

1 Corinthians 12:14-18

14 For the body is not one part, but many.

15 If the foot says, "Because I am not the hand, I am not part of the body," that does not mean it is not part of the body.

16 And if the ear says, "Because I am not the eye, I am not part of the body," that does not mean it is not part of the body.

17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the smelling be?

18 But now God has set the parts, each one of them, in the body, just where he wanted them.

I only mentioned Peter and I when I talked about the success of our crusades. That really isn't fair. There was Bishop Isaac Siundu who organized the event. There were guys like Simon Waswa who built the stage we used. There were those who hooked up and ran the sound equipment. We had several dance teams. I had a translator. Many people who came were likely invited to the event by local church members. The list goes on. Lots of people working together is what caused the tremendous results that we saw. As these verses in 1 Corinthians 12 tell us, each individual part contributed towards the overall success of the crusades.

1 Corinthians 12:21-22

21 And the eye is not able to say to the hand, "I have no need of you," or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."

22 On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are much more necessary,

No person's function in the body of Christ is insignificant or unimportant. I had to learn that the hard way. I was a young and enthusiastic Christian when I entered a Christian leadership training program. I considered myself to be smart, intelligent and well-rounded. I had a very serious problem that God had to deal with. I thought I was better than other people.

God straightened things out for me. We were all given work assignments as part of our leadership training. With the talents I had, I was convinced that I'd be given an assignment that was prestigious and exciting. To my shock, I was given the job of cleaning bathrooms! It's a long story that I will likely cover in detail at a later session. But what this assignment did was to get me to realize that every person's role in the body of Christ is very important, including the people who clean bathrooms.

In the business world, the person who is at the top of the company executive chain makes the most amount of money. The person who sweeps and mops the floors and empties the wastebaskets makes the least amount. That is not true in the spiritual world. God has an equal amount of eternal rewards he will be handing out to people in the body of Christ who remain faithful, regardless of what their work responsibilities are that he has given them to do.

So how do you discover what your function in the body of Christ is? First, I would suggest that you ask the following two questions.

1. What am I good at? What comes naturally to me that is more of a struggle for other people?
2. What do I enjoy doing?

To help answer those questions, I would suggest trying different things. My youngest daughter always enjoyed physical activities. When she was young, I signed her up for dance lessons. Over a span of about ten years after that

she participated in soccer, karate, swimming, acting on stage, gymnastics and basketball. Although she did well in all of these activities, the passion to continue these sports was not there. Then she started playing lacrosse and running on the cross-country team. She made the varsity lacrosse team as a 9th grader in high school. She also made the varsity cross-country team that year. Today, when I watch her play those sports, I see a fire in her eyes. There's a passion to succeed. And she is experiencing a lot of success in both.

At the district cross country meet this year, she got second place in the 5K race. Afterwards, a fellow parent told me that he noticed that she had a big smile on her face as she completed the final distance towards the finish line. Most of the other runners carried a frown on their face at the end of the race, probably because of fatigue. With my daughter, it was sheer joy. She has the passion and that passion, when you have it, will lead to success.

My encouragement to you is that you go through the exploratory phase. Find out what you are good at and what you are passionate about by trying different things. Then, once you make a discovery, humbly submit yourself to God and be ready to use your talent to serve the body of Christ. Remember that your talents and abilities are meaningless unless you put them to use for the glory of God.

In the next session we will take a close look into the personal life of Jesus Christ and the challenges he faced in order to carry out the will of his Father God. His faithfulness and commitment were put to the ultimate test when he was asked to allow himself to be arrested, severely punished and crucified. Until then, remember that God loves you and so do I.

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