

BODY IMAGE  
ROMANS 12:3-8

**BIG IDEA: GOD MADE US TO SERVE—JUST DO IT! (with a smile)**

INTRODUCTION:

*The reigning cliché of the day is that in order to love others one must first learn to love oneself. This formulation - love thyself, then thy neighbor - is a license for unremitting self-indulgence, because the quest for self-love is endless. By the time you have finally learned to love yourself, you'll find yourself playing golf at Leisure World.<sup>1</sup>*

I. THE BASELINE IS A SERVANT MINDSET. **VERSES 3-5**

A. Take a Look Inside--Sober self-assessment. (**Verse 3**, *For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.*)

- The antidote to pride=comparison to Christ. Cf. **2 Corinthians 10:12**, *We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise.*
- The correct mindset for self-assessment:
  - Sober judgment. **1 Corinthians 4:2-4**, *Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. <sup>3</sup> I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. <sup>4</sup> My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me.*
  - Sober judgment means that I measure myself with God's yardstick.
  - John Ortberg studied psychology in college and that led to a summer internship in a Mental Health Center. *One woman there used to tell me regularly that she wanted to marry me because she could not stop thinking about my body. She was heavily medicated, had lived in the facility for twenty years, and would say the same thing to every other member of the staff. On her less lucid days she would say the same thing to plants and inanimate objects. It was an outrageous compliment that she "could not stop thinking about my body," but it did nothing to enhance my sense of value as a person.*

*For good reason. In between other people's opinions of us and our pleasure in them is our assessment of the validity of their approval.<sup>2</sup> **If one calls you a donkey, ignore him. If two call you a donkey, check for hoof prints. If three call you a donkey, get a saddle.***

- Faith judgment. **SPURGEON**: *I have striven, with all my might, to attain the position of complete independence of all men. I have found, at times, if I have been much praised, and if my heart has given way a little, and I have taken notice of it, and felt pleased, that the next time I was censured and abused I felt the censure and abuse very keenly, for the very fact that I accepted the commendation, rendered me more sensitive to the censure. So that I have tried, especially of late, to take no more notice of man's praise than of his blame, but to rest simply upon this truth—I know that I have a pure motive in what I attempt to do, I am conscious that I endeavor to serve God with a single eye to His glory, and therefore, it is not for me to take either praise or censure from man, but to stand independently upon the rock of right doing.*

<sup>1</sup> Charles Krauthammer in *Time*, June 28, 1993.

<sup>2</sup> John Ortberg, *The Life You've Always Wanted*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, , 1997), 157-158.

- Faith judgment means that believe that God is my audience and that He uses me and that He will reward me.
  - NOTE: Just as it is sinful to think too highly of oneself, it is sinful to think too lowly of oneself.
    - Phillips Brooks passes on some wisdom to us from 1872: *The true way to be humble is not to stoop until you are smaller than yourself, but to stand at your real height against some higher nature that will show you what the real smallness of your greatness is.*
- B. Take a Look in the Mirror--The analogy of my body (**Verse 4**, *Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function...* )
- My body teaches me about unity of identity and purpose.
  - My body teaches me about diversity of function.
- C. Take a Look Around--My fit the church (**Verse 5**, *so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.*)
- Functionally, this describes the local church.
  - Corporately, we feel the dynamics of teamwork and team spirit.
  - Individually, we are each joint-ownership-property. **1 Corinthians 6:19-20**, *You are not your own; <sup>20</sup> you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.*

II. THE QUALIFICATION COMES FROM GOD'S INVESTMENT **VERSE 6a**, *We have different gifts, according to the grace given us.*

A. The Whole Trinity Is Involved

- Holy Spirit: Puts the gifts into us. I don't know how he does it and I'm not sure when He does it. But it's clear that he does it. **1 Corinthians 12:4-6** *There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit.*
- Jesus Christ: Puts us into ministry assignments. He puts some of us with kids and some with adults. He puts some of us in Snohomish and some of us in Manila. He puts some of us in Alderwood Community Church and others of us in Young Life. **1 Corinthians 12:5**, *There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.*
- God the Father: Puts power into our ministry. **1 Corinthians 12:6**, *There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men*
  - Moses' rod. **Exodus 4:12**, *2 Then the LORD said to him, "What is that in your hand?" "A staff," he replied. 3 The LORD said, "Throw it on the ground." Moses threw it on the ground and it became a snake, and he ran from it. 4 Then the LORD said to him, "Reach out your hand and take it by the tail." So Moses reached out and took hold of the snake and it turned back into a staff in his hand. 5 "This," said the LORD, "is so that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers-- the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob-- has appeared to you."*
  - What have you got in your hand? A gift of service? Mercy, Giving, Leading, teaching? Let God use it and make it come alive to help people know God!
  - But a note of warning: Remember that you need God! My strengths can be my greatest weaknesses. I forget to pray about the things that I am naturally good at.
  - I knew a highly respected and very gifted Chicago pastor who worked himself into exhaustion and discouragement. He finally made an appointment with a counselor. She listened to his complaints and then compared hi to an old farm water pump.
    - “Let's say that everybody who comes by grabs the handle and pumps.”
    - “They sure do.”
    - So Ann said to me, “Have you read those passages in the Bible on servanthood?”
    - “Yes. Those passages are the ones that got me in this trouble.”
    - “Do you believe them?” she asked.
    - “Yeah,” I said, “I believe them, but it doesn't feel good.”

*And she said, "The real problem is your pipe isn't deep enough. You're pumping surface water, so by 10:30 in the morning they've pumped you dry. Deep down there are underground streams. If you can get your pipe down there, there's so much water that no matter how much anybody pumps out of you, they'll have a hard time lowering that one inch.... Have you ever heard that passage in John 7, 'Out of your innermost being shall flow rivers of living water'? That's what I'm talking about.*

*She winked a little and added, "I guess what I'm really saying to you, Bill, is that you need a personal relationship with Jesus Christ."<sup>3</sup>*

B. But the Holy Spirit Is the Distributor. **I Corinthians 12:11**, *He gives them to each one, just as he determines*

This means...

1. No complaining. I envy people with the gift of mercy and the gift of giving. Don't get me wrong, we all need to be giving and merciful and I am, but I envy the folks that God has gifted specially in those areas. But God made me to teach and lead and that's where I know I am supposed to throw my greatest efforts.
2. No pride. I've worked hard on developing my leadership and teaching. But all my efforts wouldn't have meant much if the Holy Spirit hadn't planted those abilities in me. That I have those gifts is not to my credit. It was God's initiative. If it's God's idea and God's gift, what basis is there for human pride?
3. No coasting.
  - Remember the Parable of the Talents? The only person the master got mad at was the one who did not invest His master's resources and make a gain. When the Holy Spirit gifts us, he expects a gain on his investment in us. (**Matthew 25:26**, *'You wicked, lazy servant! ....27 ... you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.'*)
4. No quitting.
  - Christian businessman, Fred Smith, writes... *Many years ago I spoke at Baylor University and met a young woman with unusual character and ability. Toward the end of my stay, I told her, "I believe you could do almost anything you want to do."* *She became a missionary. Thirty years later, she called me. "I'm back in the States," she said, "and I want you to know that when the going really got rough in Japan, I would say to myself, I know there's one fat businessman back in the States who believes in me. That sustained me many times - just that one person believing."<sup>4</sup>*
  - Somebody a lot bigger than Fred Smith believes in you, my friend. The Holy Spirit doesn't pass out giftedness willy-nilly and then cross his fingers and hope it was a good idea. It was a good idea. Please don't quit. Pursue the Holy Spirit's vision for your life. Make it your vision for your life. It probably won't be easy. But by all means, don't quit. Too much is at stake.

III. THE ACTUALIZING IS UP TO US **VERSE 6b-8**, *If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. <sup>7</sup> If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; <sup>8</sup> if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.*

- A. I better define what we're talking about: *A spiritual gift is a special ability given to you by God for you to use strategically in serving in and through your church.*

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<sup>3</sup> An interview with Bill Leslie, "What It Costs to reach the Community," *Leadership Journal*, Summer 1988, 16.

<sup>4</sup> Fred Smith, "Giving People Permission to Succeed," *Leadership Journal*, Summer 1988, 53.

- B. How does one know? I have a hunch that your **instincts** will probably get you pointed in the right direction. You hang around here long enough or you talk to one of the leaders about where we need help, and you'll hear about lots of opportunities to serve. Some of them will leave you cold but others will catch your interest. Let's say you hear an announcement that we have 10 unemployed families. Where does your mind go with that information?
- *I'm going to write a check for \$200 for benevolence and write a note to please us this to help our unemployed people.* You probably have the gift of giving.
  - *I ought to find out their names and start taking them out to coffee and tell them I am praying for them.* You might have the gift of encouragement or the gift of mercy.
  - *I could offer to change their oil and do basic car repairs for them.* You probably have the gift of service.
  - *I could do a seminar on resume' writing and job hunting skills.* You probably have the gift of teaching.
  - *I could pull together a multi-disciplinary resource team to help unemployed families: a marriage counselor, a specialist in career repositioning, a financial counselor, etc.* You probably have the gift of leadership.

*A priest, a doctor and an engineer were waiting one morning for a particularly slow group of golfers.*  
*Engineer: What's with these guys? We must have been waiting for 15 minutes!*  
*Doctor: I don't know, but I've never seen such ineptitude!*  
*Priest: Hey, here comes the greens keeper. Let's have a word with him.*  
*Pastor: Hi, George. Say, George, what's with that group ahead of us? They're rather slow, aren't they?*  
*George: Oh yes. That's a group of blind firefighters. They lost their sight while saving our clubhouse last year. So we let them play here anytime free of charge!*  
*(silence)*  
*Priest: That's so sad. I think I will say a special prayer for them tonight.*  
*Doctor: Good idea. And I'm going to contact my ophthalmologist buddy and see if there's anything he can do for them.*  
*Engineer: Why can't these guys play at night?*

- Because of the way God wired us, we each respond to the same situation differently.
  - But the point is, we need to respond.
  - As we start serving, we will be able to dial in on what we do best...and that will usually be what gives us the most joy also!
  - I went through this in my own spiritual journey. In five years of Bible school I changed my major 4 times and when I graduated I still wasn't sure so I took a one-year internship just to find out what I was good at. But I kept trying things and I finally discovered what I was good at.
  - The lists: **I Corinthians 12:8-10** (Words of wisdom, Words of knowledge, Faith, Healings, Miracles, Prophecy, Discerning spirits, Tongues, Interpretation of tongues); **I Corinthians 12:28** (Apostles, Prophets, Teachers, Workers of miracles, Helps, Administration, Kinds of tongues); **Romans 12:6-8** (Prophecy, Service, Teaching, Exhortation, Giving, Leadership, Mercy); **Ephesians 4:11** (Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastor-teachers); **I Peter 4:11** - *The two broad categories of all the gifts...* (Speaking, Service)
- C. Benefits of serving God?
- It is the pathway to greatness. **Matthew 23:11**, *The greatest among you will be your servant.* **Max DePree** writes, *I arrived at the local tennis club just after a group of high school students had vacated the locker room. Like chickens, they had not bothered to pick up after themselves. Without thinking too much about it, I gathered up all their towels and put them in a hamper. A friend of mine quietly watched me do this and then asked me a question that I've pondered many times over the years.*

*“Do you pick up towels because you’re the president of the company, or are you the president because you pick up towels?”*<sup>5</sup>

- It is the pathway to Christlikeness. **Luke 22:27**, *I am among you as one who serves.*
- It is the pathway to durable personal significance. **II Timothy 4:7**, *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day--and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.*

CONCLUSION:

- A. A man ran his car into a ditch. *He needed help, found a farmer, and asked if the farmer would sue a horse or a mule to help pull the car out of the ditch. The farmer said that he only had one mule, Dusty, and that the mule was blind. “But,” said the farmer, “we can try.”*
- Dusty, the old blind mule, was taken to the ditch and hooked up to the car. Then the farmer yelled out, “Pull, you mules! Go Dusty, Sammy, and Billy!” Sure enough the old, blind mule pulled the car out of the ditch.*
- The man who owned the car thanked the farmer but had a question: “Why did you refer to Sammy and Billy when there was only one mule?”*
- “Oh,” said the farmer, “Dusty couldn’t have done it if he thought he had to do it by himself.”*
- B. Please don’t just attend this church. There is a position for every single person to play. Get off the bench. Get into the game.
- C. **Thor Hagen:** *I may only be a toe on the body of Christ, but I’m wiggling hard.*
- D. That war historian, **Stephen Ambrose**, recently wrote a different kind of book called, *Nothing Like It In the World*. It’s about the building of America’s first transcontinental railroad. Let me read the next to last paragraph of the book, *The dreamers...the politicians...the financiers...the surveyors...the generals...the engineers...the construction bosses...the railroad men; the foremen; the Chinese; the Irish; and all the others who picked up a shovel or a sledgehammer or a rail; and the American people who insisted that it had to be done and who paid for it, built the transcontinental railroad.*<sup>6</sup>
- E. If we keep this up, we are all going to look back one day and savor the memories; memories of lives changed, of people coming to know Jesus, of all of us falling deeper in love with Jesus Christ. It will be sort of like the closing words of **Ronald Reagan’s** farewell address after his 8 years in office: *My friends; We did it. We weren’t just marking time, we made a difference. We made the [shining] city stronger, we made the city freer, and we left her in good hands.*
- All in all, not bad. Not bad at all.*<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Max De Pree, *Leadership Jazz* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 218-219.

<sup>6</sup> Stephen E. Ambrose, *Nothing Like It in the World* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), 382.

<sup>7</sup> Peggy Noonan, *When Character Was King* (New York: Viking, 2001), 315.