

# September 19, 2021 - Kent Stiles

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 19 September 2021

Preacher: Kent Stiles

[ 0 : 00 ] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church, knowing Jesus, making Jesus known. Good morning.

It seems to have just a little bit more of a special feel this morning. I'm not sure what it is. I was watching, it was kind of like the Cardinals game last night. It just kind of felt like a playoff game.

And maybe it's Pinecrest Eve. Maybe it just energizes people, but it just feels like a lot of good vibes here in the room. So, well, good morning, if you will.

This morning, if you have your Bibles with you, go ahead and turn with me to Romans chapter 12. And we're going to continue to work through this great passage together. And last week, as David shared, Romans 12, verses 1 and 2.

In that passage, Paul made a grand declaration about Christian living. And he said it in a somewhat provocative way, I would say, the first two verses, that he wants us to live our lives as believers for God.

[ 1 : 05 ] He wants us to give ourselves for God. And he says so in a striking way. He says that he wants us to put ourselves up on an altar. Not on a pedestal, but rather an altar.

And all the people in the day and the time of Paul, they would have been familiar with what sacrifice and what Paul was saying to them. And that was to climb up on that altar and to give yourself for God.

To present yourselves as a living sacrifice to God. And so last week, we looked at the individual and their call to duty to present themselves.

Well, here, when we get to Romans 12, verse 3, he's going to talk not about how we relate to God as individuals, but rather how we relate to others.

And specifically, how we relate to others in the family of God. And he wants us to think about how grace works out in the life in the family of God.

[ 2 : 03 ] And that's what we're going to be looking at this morning. So we're going to be looking at Romans chapter 12, verses 3 through 8. So let's open up in a word of prayer. Heavenly Father, we thank you for the opportunity to come together.

Lord, we thank you for your grace. We thank you for your mercy. We thank you for your salvation. Lord, we thank you for your word that we may be able to look at it and be able to glean what you would have for us this morning.

We pray that we would each be attentive. And Lord, as we look at this passage in Romans, I would encourage that each one of us would ask ourselves, where do we fit in? And how do we fit in, Lord? What are you calling us to do so that we may honor you, Lord, and ultimately bring glory to you?

We ask this in your son's name. Amen. You know, this idea of the family of God, this is not some type of Protestant mystic thing that we have passed on through the years.

No, the Bible teaches of the fatherhood of God, of the brethren, of the sisters, our family likeness, and all of these, that we are family.

- [ 3 : 09 ] And yet when the family is not in order, let me ask you this. When there is dysfunction within the church, does it touch everything that the church tries to touch?
- Do we see that? Can you really do evangelism when you lose credibility as a body, when there's no love? Can you do missions?
- Can we do missions when God's hand is off of you because of your inability to love? Well, that's what Romans chapter 12, verses 1 and the following is about.
- You see, Romans 1 through 11, there are no real commands. It's just the mercies of God. In chapter 12 through 18, or 12 through 16, I'm sorry, it begins what we're going to see as a sevenfold rippling effect that the mercies of God ultimately bring.
- Last week, as I mentioned earlier, we saw our relationship to God, to deliver up our bodies as a sacrifice to him.
- [ 4 : 11 ] And that's the first place of where our response should be. To the one who gave us his son to die for us, that we are to give our lives to him.
- Now, we're going to look into our relationship to the unbelieving world at the end of chapter 12 and of 13, chapter 15 and chapter 16.
- So we're going to get into that. But first, here this morning, we start with the church. In verse 3 down through roughly 15, it deals with the church. And so before you go to your enemies at the end of chapter 12, before you go to the government in chapter 13, before you go to how you interact with your unbelieving neighbor, 13B, before Paul says, when he prays about going to what is current day Yugoslavia or asks that the Lord might open a door to Spain, before Paul goes there, we see him start with the church.
- So before you do your mission, the church, the family has to be in order. And let me ask you this question. How do you think through the years, how do you think the church has done in the realm of love and unity and fraternity in regards to the body of Christ?
- Sometimes good, sometimes not so good. You know, whenever we're not together, nothing else works. So Romans 12, 3 to 8, critical before we make our way out in that mission.
- [ 5 : 43 ] So let's read briefly here. Romans chapter 12, verses 3 to 8. It says this. It says, It says, I'm not really good at delivering jokes, but I'm going to try really hard here.
- Okay? So many of you may have heard this story, but there was a man who was stranded on an island, and he was there for some lengthy period of time, 10 plus years.
- And they searched for him, and they searched for him, and they finally found him. And when they found him, the man who was going to rescue him went on the island, and he noticed on the island that there were three huts. And so he asked the man, he said, you've been here for 10 years.
- What is this first hut here for? He said, well, when I got here, I didn't know how long I was going to be here. So I had to build myself a home, some shelter. And he thought, well, that makes sense. You know, that's good. What's this middle one for?
- And he said, it's going to sound silly to you, but I grew up in a church. I was used to going to church, so I built myself a church so I could go to church. And he said, well, that makes sense.
- [ 7 : 29 ] He said, what's this third one for? He says, well, I started not getting along with the people of this middle one, so I built another church. So divisiveness and a split in a church of one.
- You know, sadly enough, we can identify with that, that if we aren't functional, we can't do outreach. What does the Lord say?
- What does he say? By what shall you know that you are my disciples? What shall people know that they will see that you are disciples? By their love, if you have love. If you don't have that, then you've lost the right to communicate the message that is the gospel.

If you can't show that your guide has a remedy to the incipient problem that all of humanity has, and you have an ability to give love and dignity to its fellow man, if you can't do that, then all we are is just another aspect of sociology, that we are nothing divine.

And so we're going to look at how are we supposed to act as the body of Christ. Let me ask you this question, and it's kind of a loaded question, maybe one that you've asked yourself before. But what makes a great church?

[ 8 : 42 ] When I ask you that question, what makes a great church? We hear that expression, a great church, but no one probably knows exactly what that means. How do you know that a church has truly become great?

Well, perhaps it may refer to its size. And I think that's what most people think, right? They look at a church, and a great church is a large church with thousands of people attending every Sunday.

And there's only one problem with that, is that we know that not every church that is large is a great church, and not every church that is great is necessarily very large.

So is it numbers? You know, perhaps greatness involves having a famous pastor. David, how great are we? It's true, big churches usually have a well-known pastor who writes books, who has a radio ministry, who flies across the country, who gives seminars, who's on TV.

Oftentimes those pastors, they're well-known. Does that mean that it's a great church? Is that the litmus test? You know, maybe it could refer to having large facilities, a huge sanctuary, an enormous parking lot, or a steeple that you can see from miles away.

[ 9 : 58 ] Maybe that's what makes a church great. Or greatness might refer to the number of programs which a church has in a given week. Some large churches may have 300-plus events in one seven-day period.

That's certainly impressive, even if it's not great. You know, sometimes people associate a great church with having a good reputation. And that's not to be sneezed at, since a good ministry ought to have a positive influence in the community.

But does that make it great? You know, finally, some people we see nowadays, some people think that great churches are market-driven. And by that, I mean that great churches stay in close contact with the wants and the needs of the surrounding community, and they fluctuate as needed, as those needs change.

What makes a great church? Well, let me ask you this question. If I change the wording of that question from, or substitute a word. So suppose instead of asking you what makes a great church, what if I asked you what makes a healthy church?

How would your thoughts change on that? What makes a healthy family? You know, that's an entirely different question, isn't it, in many people's eyes? You know, after all, a church may be great in the eyes of the world.

[ 11 : 14 ] I think this happens often. But truly, they're not healthy at all. And many truly healthy churches may not be great in the eyes of the world.

So greatness touches the matters of the outside, while health touches the unseen realities of the heart, of this body, of this family.

Well, this morning, as I said earlier, we're going to look at Romans chapter 12, verses 3 down through verse 8. And there are a multitude of things that are referenced here in regard to our relationships with one another.

Our functioning as a healthy body. But specifically, for the sake of time, I'm going to look at two of them this morning. And incidentally, when we're looking at this, let me give you a preface to this.

We are going to be looking this morning at this set of verses in the context of the local assembly. Not the church universal, not the church historical, not the church regional, but rather the local assembly.

[ 12 : 19 ] The church at Bethel. You know, I think our generation, my generation, those before me, or those after me, especially the younger ones, this is one of the weakest areas of doctrine, that being the function of the local church.

And so whenever you get experienced people in the church, whenever you get older people in the church, you know, those that are, I don't know, 42 and older. Not the youthful ones, not the ones that are up to 41 like myself, but the older ones.

But, you know, if you notice that sometimes they get supplanted into a church, and when they, the more mature, faithful believers, they come in, and right away, many times they'll say, where can I serve? Where can I be plugged in? How can you use me?

And obviously that comes from being a mature believer. Well, with younger people, and this is not universal, so I'm not saying this is true of everybody, but they can be totally uncommitted to the local church.

That usually they will pick a church that has a certain flavor that meets their own demands for that time, and when that church can no longer deliver on those demands, they will pick up and they will leave.

[ 13 : 25 ] And so their loyalty only goes as far as the scratch that you can itch. And a lot of times when somebody bugs them, or somebody doesn't wave at them, or somebody says something that bothers them, or they feel dissatisfied, what happens?

They anchor down? No. You can see their bumper sticker out the side window, right? They're out of there. They're on to the next gig, always looking for the best deal.

A lot of times you can go get a better show down the street, and sometimes you have disappointment that somebody hurts your feelings. And a lot of times, sadly enough, there may be sin inside of you, and instead of dealing with that sin within the body of Christ, the easier thing is just to pick up and to leave and to go where nobody knows you.

Would you agree that happens? Have we seen that happen? Does it happen? It happens. And it's wrong. It's not what the Lord calls for the body of Christ to look like.

You know, with technology, the way it is, there's a lot of great things about technology. But we are already seeing more disconnection and more nomadic people than we have ever seen, and the importance of the local church is becoming less and less in the place of our society.

[ 14 : 38 ] And that's not the way that God intended it to be. And so this morning, again, I want to look at what God says the local church can be like and what the local church should be like.

How we should look and how we should function as a family. And so specifically, we're going to look at two things this morning. We're going to look at the area of respect, and we're going to look at the area of responsibility.

So the number one area is in verse 3, and I want you to think about the word respect. That we have respect, we have to respect each other. Paul put it like this. Now the thought is here is that you should think highly of yourself, but not too highly.

And I'll explain that. A little translation here might read something like this. Do not super think of yourself more highly than you ought to, but rather think of yourself with sober thinking. The idea is that Christians ought to have a realistic appreciation of themselves, not puffed up with conceit or dragging themselves down into the mud one way or another.

And you see the key here is humility. Humility is knowing our place or knowing who you are in God. And this pride comes from super thinking about yourself, from blowing your own horn.

[ 16 : 02 ] And so Paul continues, he says again, I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think so to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.

So thinking too highly means that you don't realize that everyone in the body of God, everyone in the body of Christ is gifted. Everyone has a purpose, and everyone is important. You know, it's in the world, in the pagan world, that you have the haves and the have-nots.

And the haves dominate the little guys. It's one of the problems that happened with the church in the dark ages, is that you had this split. You had those very small minority that were those who were in charge, those who were the leaders, those who effectively are the ones that made the decisions.

Then you had ultimately the laity. So you had this split. You had those who were, who they said, you know what, they ignored the priesthood of the believer. They said, you know what, you don't really have to do anything other than to give your money.

And these are the people who really are in charge. Is that how God intended the church to function? No, clearly not. But we see that. You see, in the body of Christ, everybody is important, and everybody has a gifting by God to do a very special thing.

[ 17 : 16 ] And we're going to look at that here shortly. There's an example, I think, of this in the Old Testament. David, excuse me, fought in a battle against the Amalekites.

And if we read that story about the Amalekites, there were some guys in David's camp that were too weak and too worn out to go into battle. And it said that they waited by the river.

They were to watch the baggage. And so the warriors went, and they went and defeated the Amalekites. And they took all the pillage of war. When they got back, the text says that there were some among them that said, send away the men who stayed behind, who didn't fight in the war.

That essentially these guys were not on the same level, and they don't deserve the pillage of war, and they need to go away. And the Bible says that David turned to them, and he said, My brothers, God is the one who delivered us from the Amalekites, not you.

It was God. And as is the village of him who went to battle, so was the spoil of him who watched the baggage. You had a job.

[ 18 : 21 ] They had a job. And under God, ultimately, he gave us victory. Nobody is more important than anybody else. And that's what Paul is saying. That through the grace that is given to me, the grace that is given to him, because even that apostle could never have been made an apostle without God.

Through the grace given to me, I say, every man among you, don't get conceited. God has allotted to each one of us a measure of faith. And he states in verse 4 that it's like a human body.

For just as we have many parts in one body, and all the body's parts do not have the same function, we're different, right? We don't do the same thing. But in verse 5, even though we're different, so we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually parts of one another.

You know, body parts are different, but body parts have to work together. And that's the way it is in the body of Christ. Listen, if we don't have people at Bethel who, when somebody new comes here, I imagine those of you that are newer, when you came here, if there wasn't someone to greet you, someone to shake your hand, someone to say, well, you're glad to see you, someone who inquires about you, then what happens?

We become a pretty cold church, don't we? If we don't have people here at Bethel, it's pretty nice in here, isn't it? If we don't have people here at Bethel who are cutting the grass weekly, who are scrubbing the floors, who are fixing AC units, who are replacing washing machines at break, who are renovating the fellowship hall, that rake the leaves.

[ 20 : 06 ] If we don't have those things, we become a dilapidated church. If we don't have people at Bethel that are coordinating meals for those who are hurting, who are visiting those who are blind, who are transporting those who can't drive, then we become a discouraging church.

You know, every other Tuesday, and often as needed, there's a group of elders who meet here at Bethel to serve as the leaders of the body, and I'm sure that many weeks, I won't put them on the spot, but it probably sounds pretty good to be at home, watching TV, sitting on the porch, hanging out with your spouse, going to see your kids' or grandkids' games, but they come here because they're diligent.

They sacrifice their time for the betterment of the body, and without them, we become a church with no guidance. On Sunday mornings, and we're going to see this next week at, we see it today, and we'll see it next week at the retreat, we come together and we worship the Lord, and when you and I come together and we hear these vocals from on stage, they sound pretty good, but that doesn't come without some sacrifice.

They can sound pretty good, but what makes them sound better is someone who's running the sound, and what makes them sound even better is when we can join in because someone's running the slides.

We have the haves here singing to the who. The have not. I'm not called to be up here, right? But if we don't have that, then we're lacking in our worship.

[ 21 : 33 ] You have Sunday school teachers. They prepare curriculum. They sacrifice time. They're often unseen to ensure that the next generation is taught the word, and so without them, you have malnourished young believers or unbelievers who don't hear the word.

If you don't have someone to share announcements like Jeffrey did this morning, you don't know what's going on. Finally, if you don't have someone to make the coffee, Mary Ellen, thank you. If you don't have someone to make the coffee, if Mary Ellen's not here to make the coffee, we no longer have a church.

Okay? So you can't be a church and function unless everyone recognizes who they are, who finds what their job is, who finds what their gift is, and everybody functions.

And so everybody is treated with dignity, and we encourage one another. I love to watch sports. And there's something unique to team sports as opposed to individual sports.

I like individual sports. But in individual sports, if you fail, who gets the blame? The individual. If you succeed, who gets the glory? The individual. So it's very individualized.

[ 22 : 37 ] Well, Paul, there's something unique about a team sport, and Paul equates the church to a body, and when the body there is multiple parts, just like there are with team sports, and there's multiple components.

And I don't care how good, for example, a running back is. If the offensive line doesn't open up holes for the running back, they're tackled in the backfield. I don't care how good Michael Jordan is.

If he doesn't have a guy like Scottie Pippen to get him the ball, then he can't score. If Karl Malone doesn't have John Stockton to pass him the ball down the paint, he doesn't score. He doesn't get glory.

And one of the best things that we see in team sports, don't we love it when somebody scores, and the guy who scores takes his finger, and he points at the guy who gives him the assist, and he says, hey, that's because of you. And the guy who gives the assist says, no, that's because of you.

And they're looking back at each other, and they're saying, no, it's because of us that we're doing this. It's because of each one of their roles that they're succeeding. And so in recognition, they say, I can't do my job unless you do your job, and we can't win as a team unless each one of us plays collectively together.

- [ 23 : 44 ] And so one person isn't more important than another person. What is critical is how they function as a unit, and that's how it is in the church. And so number one, Paul says, don't think more highly of yourself than you ought to think.

Have sound judgment that we are part of a family, and everyone also has to function. Then number two, and six and following, to respect, we add responsibility.

Responsibility. We have to be responsible for what God has given us. You and I, we don't have the right to sit. That's not Christianity. How many of you were on athletic teams, and you saw either at one point a coach say to you or to someone else who wasn't hustling, who wasn't moving, who wasn't doing their job, and they said to you, hey, Kent, quit standing around.

If you want to stand around, go sit on the bench and buy a ticket. Go sit in the seats and watch. In basketball, what do you do? You run down the floor, and you crash the boards.

If there's a fast break, you turn around, and you run, and you get that guy. In football, you run your tail off to cover that receiver. In hockey, if a guy breaks through, you sprint to catch up to him.

- [ 24 : 57 ] If you're just going to stand there, the coach is going to say, go buy a ticket. Go buy a ticket. If you're just going to sit around and watch, go buy a ticket. And that's the way it is in the body of Christ. Everyone has to serve for the body to be functioning properly.

Let me give you an illustration that I saw that I thought was quite applicable. I'll ask you another question. Today's a message of questions. Who is the authority on electricity?

Is it the electrician, or is it an eel? Who's the authority on electricity? You know, an electrician studies electricity, but they never, if they do their job right, experience it.

Right? Electricians know that the first thing you want to do with electricity is you don't experience it. Eels, on the other hand, they experience electricity.

And you and I, we are not called just to be electricians, to study about electricity, but rather we are to be eels. And God is to use and serving, and that's the way that Christ designed it.

- [ 26 : 04 ] And that's what gives glory to God. It's just like if you think about the Trinity, that there's unity, and there's diversity, and they work together, and that is to the glory of God.

And so we're to be respectful within the body of Christ, and we are to be responsible within the body of Christ. So let's take briefly these last three verses, and I'm not going to spend a lot of time talking about these specific gifts, but in verse 6 through 8, it says, You know, Paul says we all have different gifts.

The Greek word for gifts is charismata, which we gather the word, the English word charismatic. And that's a loaded word these days, right? When I say that word charismatic, you probably think of something different.

Many of times we share away from that word, but it is a good biblical word. It simply means grace gift, or favor gift, or something given to you as a believer by the Lord.

And all of God's gifts are grace-given gifts. None of them come from within of us. Isn't this interesting?

- [ 27 : 30 ] None of you were born physically with your spiritual gift. If you're a great athlete, you were born with athletic genes. Those were given down from your parents.

But none of you, whatever gift you have today from the Lord, you were not born with it. You were given it specifically by God. And there's three basic truths about spiritual gifts.

Number one, every believer has at least one spiritual gift. Secondly, no believer, unless you think this, so maybe this will go back to verse number three, no believer has every spiritual gift.

So if you think that about yourself today, you know, may ask your spouse. And third, your spiritual gift enables you to serve the body of Christ effectively.

You know, I asked earlier, what are the makings of a healthy church or a healthy family? And the first was that we would respect one another. And here's the second mark of a healthy church. It's a church where every believer is using his or her spiritual gifts for the betterment of the whole congregation.

[ 28 : 36 ] Paul says that Christians serve one another because the spiritual gifts given by God are meant not to serve yourselves. They're not for you, but rather to serve the body and to serve the whole.

My gifts aren't for me, but rather to serve you, to serve collectively. Well, Paul lists seven gifts here in Romans 12. We see in other passages in 1 Corinthians chapter 12 or Ephesians 4, he gives us other lists.

And when you combine them together, they result to a total of approximately 20 spiritual gifts. And I think there may be hundreds of different spiritual gifts, which we have a small sampling of here in the New Testament.

But like I said, let's briefly go through, I'm just going to hit these quickly, these seven that he mentions in Romans chapter 12 here. So first of all, here in Romans 12, he mentions prophecy.

The gift is the ability to speak authoritative truth from God. And so in the first century, it probably referred to receiving direct messages from the Holy Spirit. Today, it refers to those people who could take the word of God and make it shine.

[ 29 : 36 ] That's the root meaning of the word. So we have the gift of prophecy here. Serving is in a general term, it means to wait on tables. So people with this gift, they prefer to be behind the scenes.

They prefer not to be acknowledged, not to be seen. They don't seek the limelight. And they don't want to be rewarded for their work. They quietly go about their business, finding ways to help others.

So that's a gift, a serving. Teaching, it's an important spiritual gift. It's widely distributed in the body of Christ. And teachers are to have the ability to take the word of God and to explain it clearly.

And to apply it to the lives of the hearers. You may see this gift used in many venues on Sunday morning, in Sunday school, midweek studies, one-on-one discussions.

It's not limited to the pulpit. Incidentally, it says, when we're given a gift, are we to hold that gift until we're mature believers and then start using it? You have it from day one.

[ 30 : 34 ] So it may mean that you simply are teaching your neighbor. It may mean that you're teaching your children. And as you grow in your faith, that gift is going to be used according to your faith. That's a pretty cool thing.

Next, encouragers. Those are the Christians who instinctively gravitate toward those who are struggling to stay in the race. And they see a friend who's faltering and they reach out to give them or offer them a helping hand.

And that gift has enabled many people to go on and keep doing what would otherwise not be able to be done or that they would have quit. And so I'd say, thank God for encouragers that are within our own body here.



How many times have you gotten a call at the right time from someone saying, how you doing? You know, you really do a great job. I got a card. I'll call it the, you know, I got a card. Amy Vineyard last year sent me a card in the mail for something.

I think Nicole and I did an event and I thought, that's a really cool thing that someone would reach out, take the time to send a card, encourage and say, thanks for what you've done. You know, that makes you feel good as a body that your sister or your brother would call out and do that.

[ 31 : 34 ] Did you know that giving can be a spiritual gift? All Christians are commanded to give generously, but some believers have been specifically gifted by God in this area. And these Christians, that doesn't necessarily mean that they're wealthy, but they find special joy in sharing the resources that they have with others.

Very often, these folks, they do the work anonymously, giving sometimes large sums of money or of possessions, neither wanting or needing public thanks. And Paul says that they are to give generously or they're to give actually single-mindedly, referring to the fact that they should give as unto the Lord, not looking for a reward from man.

And some people are gifted with that. We've got two more. There's the gift of leadership. I mentioned this earlier in regard to the elders that are here, meeting up here every couple weeks.

That means to stand in front of a group. So this gift enables a person to take charge of a group or a meeting and lead that group in a positive, productive direction. So people who have this gift, they ought to work eagerly, gladly, with energy and full commitment.

And the last one we see here in chapter 12, Paul mentions showing mercy. And this gift here, it enables the believer to reach out to others who are hurting with the love of Christ.

[ 32 : 48 ] You know, let me ask you again that question. What makes a healthy church? I think the answer probably isn't very hard to find.

A healthy church is made by healthy believers. After all, the church is more than a building or an organization. The church is the people and the people are the church.

So I'd ask you, what is your gift? When you're around other believers and God presses your buttons, how do you respond? You need to find that out.

As believers, as part of a family, we don't have the choice to sit on the sidelines. I've enjoyed watching my daughter's volleyball team this year. She plays volleyball and this year has become a lot more fun as a spectator.

I hope she doesn't take this the wrong way. Julia, don't take this the wrong way. There were times the last few years where I would go to a game and let's just say it wasn't the most fun to watch.

[ 33 : 54 ] It was a real reward if the ball got over the net. It's like when I was coaching, I'd see kids playing in the dirt in the outfield and I'm like, what are we doing here?

That's kind of how it felt sometimes and I'm thinking, Nicole, are we really taking our time out to do this? This is pretty bad. Well, this year, as they've grown, as they've gotten more ability and they've practiced, they've gotten on a, they're on a talented team and they're starting to see the components of hard work click and I, as a spectator, I like to think I know about everything but I certainly don't and I'm learning a lot more about volleyball and I have to ask my daughter all the time, what are they doing there?

My wife is coaching with them this year so now I get to ask her too, like, wait a minute, why do they do this? Boy, she looks terrible. She's out of place. Well, no, she's not out of place. She's supposed to do this and I learn to shut my mouth. So, I used to be very vocal at my daughter's games, be it basketball or volleyball and now I, now I try to, try to zip it a little bit but I still have the gift of encouragement but I try not to have the gift of criticism while I'm there but I'm learning a lot more about volleyball and one thing I'm learning is the amount of teamwork that goes into it, the amount of communication that goes into it.

If you've ever been to one of my daughter's volleyball games, every time I go to one of her games, I think that she's going to lose her voice by the end of the game because I'm sitting 50 feet away and she hurts my ears when she yells, I got it or I got your weak side, you know, so it's fun to watch though but let me tell you this, if the coach had identified you on this team, if they identified you as a good setter, you know, you were the one who was setting people up and she said, you're good at this and you're gifted at this and you said, you know what, not going to set, not going to do it.

What happens? Everyone suffers. If you're a libero, the defensive specialist and you return a serve and you sit on the ground and you say, I got my one for this point, I'm done, what happens?

[ 35 : 48 ] Everybody suffers, not just you. If you're an outside hitter and you say, you know what, I'm not big into getting off the ground here, I'm going to stay down here and just watch, what happens? Everybody suffers.

That's what happens. So let me ask you the question this morning, I'm going to finish with this. When you think about the Lord, when you think about yourself prior to being reconciled to him and what he did for you and the standing that you now have before him as one who is redeemed, and the musicians can come up here while we finish up.

How does that make you feel when you think about that? That you have a right standing with God. That's pretty special, isn't it? That's a pretty amazing feeling. And we see that process in Romans.

Now follow up with this. How does it make you feel that the same God who loved you enough to send his son to die on the cross for your sins, loved you enough according to his grace to equip you specifically with a supernatural gift or gifts through his Holy Spirit?

Think about that. There are talents and gifts, as I look out here, there are talents and gifts that Ed has that I do not have. There are talents, and not skills, but there are gifts, supernatural abilities, not human abilities, that Teresa over here has that I do not have.

[ 37 : 19 ] There are supernatural abilities and talents that my 11-year-old son Caleb has that none of the elders, nor Kevin, David, Tom, or John have because the Lord has seen fit to specifically equip him with that spiritual gift.

That's a pretty cool thought, isn't it? That the Lord would do that for you and for me and that he would entrust us. And I say that not to disparage the person who doesn't have that gift, but rather to encourage and to shine a light on the fact that each and every one of you this morning as a believer that is a new creation in Jesus Christ has been equipped with a special, a special supernatural ability that is a God-given gift that we are called to use to serve one another in the body here at Bethel, to serve your brothers and your sisters.

You know, when you're at home and you look at the house and you see when it functions best, does it function best when one person does everything? Sometimes the wife might say, yeah, it does.

I mean, when I do everything, it functions best. That's not the way it was intended. That's not the way it was intended here either and that's what Paul's telling us. Healthy churches, healthy families are made up of healthy Christians who have a healthy respect and a healthy responsibility.

So the question I'll leave you with this morning is what are you going to do with the gifts that God has given you? Are you going to use them for his glory or are you going to let them go to waste? I'm sure many of us know people who had amazing athletic ability and they wasted their talent.

[ 38 : 56 ] They had amazing intellectual ability and they wasted their talent. Well, imagine if you had this supernatural gift that God himself gave to you specially, specifically to you and you were to waste it.

And so my challenge would be that we don't neglect the body of Christ and the serving of the church by purchasing a ticket and sitting on the side, but that we realize that God has individually, uniquely, specifically equipped you with the best of your ability that you offer him the returns on that gift so that when he returns and you stand before him that we can say, well done.

Don't you want to hear that? Well done, good and faithful servant. Heavenly Father, we thank you this morning for your word. And Lord, sometimes this passage is challenging, yet it's so rewarding, Lord.

It's so rewarding to think that you would look down upon someone like myself, a sinner, someone, Lord, who was apart from you, Lord, someone destined for maternity separation that you would love me enough to send your son to die for me, not only to die for me, Lord, not only to reconcile me to yourself, Lord, but also, Lord, you saw fit to use me in a way that you've equipped me with gifts that only you can give.

And Lord, my prayer is that each one of us this morning, each one here that's a believer, that they would recognize what those gifts are and they would use them in the body of the church, Lord. That they would see that we are a body collectively made up of many parts and that you have a special gift for each one and you call us to use it, Lord, for your glory and for the body here at Bethel, Lord.

[ 40 : 28 ] We pray this, Lord. We thank you for this and we ask, Lord, that we would go this morning, Lord, and we would just put these into practice. In your son's name, amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Yeah. Amen. Amen. Thank you.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.