

Small Groups: Engage in Calling

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[0 : 00] So if you have your Bibles this morning, let us turn to Romans chapter 12. That's where we're going to be this morning in Romans chapter 12.

And you may or may not know that there were over a million component parts of the Apollo 11 spacecraft. Can you imagine over a million component parts?

And what I've read about is that they said there was a 99.9% reliability. So if you do the math, a million component parts in a spacecraft to get manned out in space, that means, theoretically, a hundred pieces could fail.

That makes you feel good, right? But what I think we see is that all of those pieces, those million components, have to work together in order for the mission to be accomplished.

And they're all interdependent and they work together. But what about if one of those hundred parts that might fail would be the one part that connects everything together, and if that one part fails, the mission fails?

[1 : 21] A noted anthropologist said this, Never doubt that a small group of committed people can change the world.

You know what? I think she was right. And I think Jesus' ministry showed that, but I don't think she's the one that came up with that. I think God came up with that. A small group of people can change the world, can change the direction of the world.

And what I want us to do this morning, as we finish out this series on small groups and how we're using our spiritual gifts together to work together to accomplish supporting one another in the body of Christ so that the body of Christ can go out and accomplish the Great Commission.

And imagine if all the component parts in this room, all the gifts, all of the abilities, all of our passions, all of our spiritual gifts were completely unleashed to impact the world for the glory of Jesus Christ.

Every single one of us here, if you know Christ as your Savior, you are necessary, just like those million components in the Apollo 11 spacecraft. If that one component stopped working, it could mean that the mission could fail.

[2 : 40] And think about it. If you or I are not using our spiritual gift within the body of Christ, it could mean mission failure.

Now, I realize that NASA built in redundancy. That means there were two computers. That means there were two of almost everything. But sometimes, in a group our size, we may not have two of everything.

And so maybe you have the gift of hospitality. Maybe you have the gift of encouragement. Maybe you have the gift of administration. And you might be the only one. And what happens if you're not using that spiritual gift?

The rest of the body suffers. So let's go to Romans chapter 12 and verses 3 through 8. And the Apostle Paul is talking to the local church in Rome.

And here he starts in verse number 3. He says, For I say,

[4 : 33] This is just one portion of the spiritual gift. So let's imagine, based on Romans chapter 12, Let's imagine a faith family that is designed by grace.

Let's imagine God's grace having designed who we are, where we are, right here today. Everyone who is a part of the faith family of Faith Bible Church.

A family designed by God, by His grace, put together the way God wanted it put together. And we talked last week about the foundation of the entire foundation of Romans 12.

The first part is, I urge you, he says, by the mercies of God. So everything we do has its foundation in God's mercy.

So everything we do within the body and everything we do in the surrounding community, everything we do is based on God's mercy.

[5 : 41] And Paul reiterates that in how he talks about grace, how he talks about faith in the verses we just read. And he starts talking about the grace that God's given him in verse number 3, where we started this morning.

He talks about the faith that God gives us. He talks about the spiritual gifts. Then he gets down into verse number 6, and he says how we all have different gifts, according to, in the measure of the grace that God has given to us.

So what I think we see is this whole picture saturated with grace. The whole body of Christ saturated with grace. Our entire life, all of our interconnectedness, all of our fellowship is really based on the grace of God.

Let's look at verse number 6. He says, having then gifts differing according to the what? According to the grace. According to the grace that is given to us.

By God. Then let us use them. If prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith. I want us to think this morning about grace and how it permeates the body of Christ, how it permeates the church.

[6 : 56] First of all, I want us to see that we are, number one in your notes, enlisted by grace. Enlisted by grace.

Not a single one of us deserves to be here. Think about that. Not a single individual in this room today deserves to be part of the family of God.

Because we are sinners. Because we are totally separated by sin. And it's not by merit or works that we gain God's favor. It's all by grace.

We're called by grace. It's the whole book of Romans is about grace. Christ brought us into his body. He has enlisted us by his grace.

Secondly, and this is the cool thing, is we are equipped by grace. You're saying, well, I don't know what I can do. Well, God's given everything you need. God's given you and me everything that we need to be successful, to be effective in the body of Christ and in sharing the Great Commission, sharing the gospel throughout all the world.

[8 : 04] Not only has he brought us into his body, but I think Romans 12 is teaching us that he gives us gifts when we trust Christ as our Savior.

Every single Christ follower in this room, without exception, has been given at least one spiritual gift. A giftedness to use within the body of Christ.

And it's supernatural. He's put those gifts inside of you. It's not just your natural abilities. You know, some people think about gifts. They think about your musical ability.

Think about your giftedness with language, your giftedness. Those are natural abilities that we may have, that we maybe have been born with. But there are gifts that God gives to us the moment we trust Christ as our Savior.

And the New Testament lists those. You can do a search for spiritual gifts, and you can see those. But they're equipped for us to care for one another in the body of Christ, and also for us to accomplish the Great Commission.

[9 : 10] He gives the gift of evangelism. And he gives those gifts for those purposes. Not only are we enlisted by the grace of God, not only does God equip us by his grace, but God also empowers us by his grace.

The same power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead empowers you and me to use those gifts. So when we use the gifts the Holy Spirit has given us, and when you use it to show mercy, or when you use it to exhort someone else, or when you use it to assist in the body of Christ, God's power comes along with that gift.

And that is what he has placed within us. He's given us everything we need to put those gifts in action. This is the main point, if you want to turn with me to 1 Peter, chapter 4.

This is what Peter tells us. He says, If anyone ministers, let him or her do it with the ability with what?

Which God supplies. Not us. It's not that natural ability. It's not because some people are naturally more gifted than others. It's because what we do in the body of Christ, we do it.

[10 : 29] It's because God equips us. God empowers us. It's the ability which God supplies, that in all things, why can we not use our spiritual gifts in our own strength and expect an eternal result?

Because then we get the glory. Oh, look at how good they are. Oh, look at how awesome he is. Or look at how dynamic she is. Oh, they are such a good...

No. He puts those gifts within us, and we use them empowered by the Holy Spirit. So when people experience it, they say, Oh, how awesome is God.

May God be glorified, because that gift was given to me. That gift was used for me. That God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever.

Amen. You realize the only reason we can do anything of eternal value is through the power or by the power that God provides us in those gifts that he's given us.

[11 : 37] And I believe that God has called us together by his plan, by his grace, to accomplish exactly what he wants to be accomplished in this community of faith and throughout the rest of the world.

He has called all of us together. And we look, we see verse 18 of 1 Corinthians chapter 12. But now, God has set the members, each one of them, in the body, just as he pleased.

I want you to let that sink in for a moment. God has set the members in the body, each one of them, just as he pleased.

What if God knew what he was doing when he put us, everyone in this room together? He knew what he was doing, didn't he? He gave you the gift that, he gave you a gift that I need.

He gave me a gift that you need, that when I use it, when you use your gift, we're serving one another and we're supporting one another. This is the design of God's grace in the body of Christ.

[12 : 53] He's put us together with the variety of gifts that he's given us so that each one of us could be using that spiritual gift to carry on his mission, to carry out his mission to reach the world with the gospel because he's left us here to carry out the Great Commission.

So when we use those spiritual gifts in the body, we're supporting one another, we're encouraging each other, and we're equipping one another so that we can go out and carry out the Great Commission. So we're all important, every one of us.

Next, I want you to imagine, not only imagine a faith family that is designed by grace. God put us together exactly the way he wants us.

So if you're here today, you're here for a purpose and a reason. You know, sometimes, you know, people church shop. Well, you know what?

They're not providing me what I need. And so I'm going to go to a church that meets my needs.

Now, I'm not trying to get... I'm not making an issue out of this.

[13 : 54] All I'm saying is, what if we thought of the local church and the body of Christ as, what can I give to this local body?

Do you think it would change our perspective? I think it would. And I think there are some churches that are not meeting needs of people because there are people within the body who are not using their spiritual gifts to meet the needs of others.

So therefore, they're right. Their needs are not being met because some are not... So of those million components or those 50 components, do we have 99.9% reliability or are we operating on 50% reliability where half of the component parts are useless or are...

I hate to use that term, useless. They're not performing their function. And so that's the way we need to think of the body of Christ. Every single part of the body of Christ doing their work that God has called us to do.

So he's put us together with a variety of gifts so he could be using us. Now imagine a faith family that is diversified by gifts.

[15 : 02] Now we're going a step deeper. This is where there is unity and diversity to gather. One body, many parts.

One body, that's the unity. The diversity is there are different kind of parts and there are different purposes for each of those parts. There are the differences that make us diverse in the body of Christ and every gift is given for a reason.

Do you realize God does not make mistakes? You say, well, I want it to be a gifted speaker but I can barely string three words together when I'm in front of a crowd.

Well, guess what? God knew what he was doing. Maybe he didn't want you to be a gifted orator because maybe he wanted you to use that gift of mercy or maybe he wanted you to use that gift of hospitality or maybe he wanted you to use that gift of administration where you can take all these component parts and you can figure out how to get them to work together because there are some

of us who just go all kind of different directions and we need someone to make it all work together. So God doesn't make mistakes. He has brought us all together, formed us into a body for a purpose and a reason. Now imagine this, a faith family diversified by gifts where, and we're going to see this through Scripture this morning, imagine a faith family where everyone counts.

[16:30] And you're thinking, you know what? I'm not useless. I have a purpose at faith. I have a reason for being here. I have a job that I can be doing. And I think we need to be doing.

I need to be doing a better job of getting you, getting all of us plugged in where we need to be, where we can be functioning. So it's just like in an engine.

There are parts that were designed to be placed in certain places. So a part put in a wrong place won't work. Just like some of you who don't like to read directions when you're putting together something from Ikea or something from Lowe's or something, and it's kind of like a bazillion parts, and you don't read the directions and you're putting parts kind of like where they don't belong and you're wondering why it doesn't work right.

You know, most of these guys that do that. You know, most women, I think, read the directions. Amen. I don't care. Hear an amen. But God puts the parts together like he wants to.

So that's the whole point here. Just like our bodies, all our parts count. They're all important. Just to bring this point home, which part of your body are you okay doing without?

[17:43] I mean, which hand would you say I'm okay doing without? Which foot? Which eye?

You say, you know what? I'm okay. I don't need both eyes. No. The point is, all of our members are interdependent, and I don't want to do without any of my members, as do you.

But within the body of Christ, I think we see the same picture. God says, I put you together as a local body with all the component parts, just like I please, and you need to be working.

We need to be working together. They're all in an interdependent relationship with one another, and they all correspond to the head. Colossians 1.18, Christ is the head of the church.

Without the brain, the parts don't work together properly. So if the brain is working properly, the parts work together properly. Christ is the head of the church. We all correspond to the head.

[18:48] The head, which is Jesus, tells us what we should be doing, gives us the gift and the ability and the job that we're supposed to be carrying out, and as long as we're doing what he's given to us to do, the body works together properly.

That's the whole picture of the church. Now, when Paul was writing the book of Romans, he was in Corinth. I think you would probably agree with me that the church in Corinth was a problem church. They had issues. And so Paul was writing to the Romans when he was in Corinth. The people there were really struggling. The Corinthian church was fighting over this and fighting over that, and there was a lot of division in the church, and there was some undermining going on.

There were some who were clamoring over these gifts and those gifts, and some people were eating when they came together for the Lord's Supper, and there were some who were abusing that time together.

And so Paul was writing with that, and he said, listen to what he says in 1 Corinthians 12, 21 through 25. He says, And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you.

[20:07] Remember, this is Paul talking to the Corinthian church where he was while he was writing the book of Romans. He says, And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you, nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

No, much rather, those members in the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we stow greater honor.

And on our unpresentable parts have greater modesty. But our presentable parts have no need, but God composed the body. Same thing that we're, idea that we're putting forth is that God put the body together.

He put our human body together the way he wants it so that it could work most effectively, and he's put the body of Christ together, the local church together. Same way. Having given greater honor to that which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, or no division, but that the members should have the same care for one another.

A faith family that is diverse through different gifts, but where everyone counts. Every single one of you count in the body of Christ, and counts here at Faith Bible Church.

[21:22] So he says, imagine a faith family where everyone counts, and where no one is superior. No one is superior, especially in Corinth.

They had taken some who had the more showy gifts. People were saying, oh, well, look at them. They were proud of the gifts that they had because they were spectacular gifts.

They were public gifts, and they got all the attention, so they exalted those spiritual gifts, and they exalted those people that had those spiritual gifts.

And so if you had those spiritual gifts, you were somehow considered superior in the body. And Paul says, who are we to say that because you were the hand, we don't need the feet?

Or Paul said, it's ridiculous. We all have need of one another. So what he was telling the Corinthian church is, not a single one of you is superior. You, by the virtue of your spiritual gift, or even your natural ability or giftedness, is not superior to the person who struggles socially or who struggles with everything.

[22 : 36] As long as we are using the gift that God has given us in the power that he's given us, and we offer it freely to the body of Christ, you're not inferior. Just as the feet that might be smelly and not be quite as comely as another part of our body, God says, he gives more honor to it.

And because it is not as showy. So every single one of us, whether we feel, or whether people feel that we're really great, or people feel like, you know what, we're not much.

No one's inferior. The body of Christ that is designed by grace is a place where no one is superior. Also, no one is inferior.

That was happening in Corinth. There were some who had those showy gifts, and there was a hierarchy within the church. And Paul says, that ought not to be.

There's also no need to, and this is great for some of us who are very sensitive and feel inferior. Because it's designed by grace, there's no need to compare.

[23 : 53] So, you know, we don't engage in gift comparison. Well, mine's better than yours. Mine reaches more people than yours, or mine does this, or mine's more blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

We don't have to compare. Why? Because God said He designed the body just as, remember, just as He pleases. He's given you, He's given me the gifts just as He pleases.

So we don't have to say, well, you know what, I don't have this gift, and I don't have that gift, so I'm not as, I'm not as, or I'm not as important in the body of Christ. That's, that's absurd, Paul says.

We all have need of one another, interdependent. It's like those million parts of Apollo 11. They needed all those million parts in order for it, for the mission to be successful.

So no need to compare. Because all comparing, or what comparing does is, it either results in pride, or it results in our feeling and fury, and then we stop using those gifts.

[24 : 50] So stop comparing. He's talking about humility all over Romans chapter 12. No need to compare, and also no need to copy. Well, you know what, I don't have, I don't have that gift, but I want to use that gift.

And so we copy what someone else is doing. And we say, you know what, I don't have the gift of hospitality, but, well, you know what, I just need to open my home to, to everybody. Well, if God didn't give you that gift of, of hospitality, you still need to open your home when necessary, but you don't necessarily need to be using the gift in the same way that the other person is.

So don't feel like, well, you know what, I can't cook, so therefore, I can't really be a great host. Maybe you can serve in some other fashion, some other way. So no need to copy.

No need to say, I'm not useful in the kingdom because I don't have that gift. And I can only be useful to the church if I had that gift. Well, I don't have that gift, so therefore, I am useless.

You know, I don't have the gift the pastor has, or I don't have the gift that the person down the row has, and so therefore, you know, I can't do this. You know, hear this from the authority of God's word.

[26 : 01] Every Christ follower in the body of Christ counts. The Apostle Paul said it under the direction of the Holy Spirit when he penned the word of God. God has given you the gifts.

God has given every one of us the gifts that he wants us to have to be used in the body of Christ. Interdependent, working together. So imagine a faith family where it is not dependent on a few people counting.

Imagine a faith family where everyone is counting week by week for the glory of Jesus Christ. And imagine a faith family where everyone contributes. Imagine the body of Christ where everyone contributes.

Now this is the purpose of gifts. who are gifts for? Let's think about it from a human practical perspective. If you have a gift obviously it's to do what with it?

To give it to someone else. You go when you purchase a and I'm using air quotes you go to purchase a gift you don't I'm going to give myself a gift.

[27 : 16] No, you purchase a gift for someone else. And the Bible teaches us that the gifts that God has given us are to be used for others. What about when it comes to spiritual gifts?

Well I think it's twofold. Obviously the gift is partially for us it's because God has given us that gift when we trust in Christ the Holy Spirit puts gifts inside of us but I think it's much deeper than that. I think if you look in the New Testament what we see is spiritual gift mentioned in the book of Romans chapter 1 chapter 1 excuse me Romans 1 11 and 12 Paul says for I long to see you Paul mentions spiritual gifts here in the beginning that I may impart to you some spiritual gift so that you may be established that is that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

Now I don't think what Paul is saying here that I want to come to you so that I can impart to you a spiritual gift is that Paul comes to Rome with a bag of spiritual gifts to give to the Corinthian Christians or Paul was acting in place of the Holy Spirit and saying okay I'm going to give you this spiritual gift and I'm going to give you that spiritual gift that's not at all what Paul is saying here I think what Paul is saying is I'm coming to Rome to take the gift that God has given to me and I want to use it in your midst to strengthen the body I want to impart to you a spiritual gift I want to provide to you this spiritual gift that God has given to me and so what I'm doing is I'm gifting you by using the gift that God's given me Paul couldn't give spiritual gifts that wasn't his job that wasn't his place even as an apostle nowhere in scripture does it say the apostles gave gifts gave spiritual gifts so I think what Paul says when he says

I'm imparting you a gift I'm imparting you a spiritual gift to you a spiritual gift Paul says I'm going to use my spiritual gifts and I'm going to give them to you I'm going to use them in your midst and it's like giving a gift that keeps on giving Paul was able to be there so if I think this is huge as we see that our gifts are given to us to give to others I think this is really really huge if this is all that we do as a church what we're doing here this morning then I don't think we're using all the spiritual gifts that God has given to us because we use the spiritual gifts in small groups we use the spiritual gifts two by two when we use the spiritual gifts when we come together and we walk through life together and we encourage one another and we exhort one another and we call each other out when we need to be called out and all of those all those things our gifts are going to come alive the body's going to come alive when we start using our spiritual gifts outside these four walls it's hard to impart a spiritual gift to someone when you're looking at the back of their head when you come face to face and we're doing life together that's when we can use our spiritual gifts together

[30 : 32] God is going to multiply the gospel God is going to encourage us gifts are intended to be used and I believe that's what Paul is doing here and then lastly imagine a faith family destined for glory because we are all destined for glory earth is not our last earth is not our stopping point we exist for God and this is where it gets really really good I want you to see how it all comes together in what the apostle Paul is saying because if you read on past Romans chapter 12 verse 8 you see the most practical portion you see a very practical part in Romans 12 13 Romans 14 and the first part of Romans 15 I think the apostle Paul is giving some very practical suggestions a very practical insight on the things that we do in the church but if you want to come with me very quickly to Romans 15 14 I want you to see where it all leads and I think what Paul is doing is he's giving a summary statement of his life and all the truths that he's shown so far up to this point up to chapter 15 and we see all the truths in Romans chapter 12

I think reiterated here are given again in Romans 15 look at verse 14 now I myself am confident concerning you my brethren that you also are full of goodness filled with all knowledge able to admonish one another he says nevertheless brethren I have written more boldly to you on some points as reminding you because of the grace we say that word again grace given to me by God that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles ministering the gospel of God that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable sanctified by the Holy Spirit I want you to listen to verses 17 and 18 he says therefore I have reason to glory in Christ Jesus in the things which pertain to God so what did Paul say he was going to glory in glory in

Jesus Christ look at verse 16 he says for I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me almost as if Paul is saying if it was a natural ability of mine I'm

not going to even talk about it because it's really not that important he says I don't even want to dare speak of those things which God didn't do so he said if it's of Paul I'm not going to even worry about it I'm not going to talk about it it's no big deal so we say you know if if Bart did it it's no big deal you know if Harry did it it's no big deal I know sometimes we say well what are you saying I'm just saying what Paul said Paul said if I did it and God wasn't involved in it it's not a big deal but what does he say I will not even dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me in word and deed to make the Gentiles obedient so what Paul says is the only thing I'll glory in is what

God did through me the only thing I'll glory in is what God has accomplished through me in the lives of others he's talking about God giving him the grace and the gifts to use those gifts to serve God in the body of Christ his glory and his boasting would be in Jesus so we would be a family that are destined to glorify God Christ is giving us the grace and the gifts to make all of that a reality that's what he boasted not anything that he had done but in everything that Christ had done through him so we are destined for glory and then with a savior worthy of all praise think about that Jesus deserves all of our praise he's the only one that deserves our praise and so when we're using our gifts for his honor for his glory

Jesus gets the praise and then lastly think about this the gifts you've been given and the mission that you and I have been given to reach the world with the gospel it's a mission that's guaranteed to prevail so says God the mission you and I are on is guaranteed to prevail because God says everyone that he has called will be his so that every time you share the gospel every time you and I use our spiritual gifts every time you and I serve others it's helping them to see the grace of God to see the mercy of God and God's Holy Spirit can then do the work in their heart in their life and then it's their choice whether they choose to respond to God or not it's not our responsibility to save people that's

[35 : 54] God's job our responsibility is just to tell them how good he is and to tell them what he has done for them so it's guaranteed to prevail that's a picture of the church the body of Christ displaying the glory of Christ scattering together in groups you say well that's that's scattering together in groups that's what the church did they scattered but when they scattered they were still together they got together in groups to pray and to study God's word together and I'm sure people were being saved because people were being affected by that it's the church awakened it's the church reform now using the gifts that God has given to us to accomplish his purpose his mission and it's not about using 50% of the component parts or 60% or 70% or 80% it's taking every single spiritual gift that God has given to us to accomplish this mission together and when we see that happening you won't see the pastor's mission you're going to see the people's mission every single one of us working together to accomplish his purpose and his goals because God has given the pastor

God has given those who teach the responsibility to equip the body of Christ so the body of Christ can do the work of the ministry so we do it all together and I believe that this mission cannot fail when all the component parts are working together all our spiritual gifts that you and I are providing to the body of Christ it will work so my question as we close are you in and he said well pastor I don't know what my place is and I've used this analogy before the analogy of a parked vehicle you ever try to push a parked car or truck it takes a lot of momentum to get that thing started but once you get it moving it's easier to steer so my advice to you my counsel to you is I don't know what my spiritual gift is now you might be able to take a spiritual gifts test and I'm all for that do you know what the best way to know your spiritual gift just to get busy and do something and then God's going to direct you and people are going to say I think that's God

God's gifted you in doing that you know this not so much but that you know what I believe that's where God is blessing your ministry that might be an inkling that that's my giftedness and that's where God's glory is being seen in a profound measure in my life so just do something it might be taking out the garbage and you've got the gift of mercy I mean excuse me the gift of helps it might be you know taking the bushes out there we got trees growing out of the bushes it might be taking your your snips or salt coming one day you know what I'm going to do that for Jesus got the gift of helps or what if you know what I know someone who maybe is not able to take care of themselves and I'm going to go fix some food for them and you enjoy doing that or going to the hospital or going to the nursing home and ministering and if you enjoy doing that and you're seeing fruit of it it might be God saying that's my hand on you and that's way I'm blessing so we all need you you need us

we need you get busy get involved don't wait for us to give you a job matter of fact there's nothing wrong with coming to one of our one of our deacons one of our elders or if you're a deacon or an elder hold your hand up go to one of these guys and say
I want to do something I want a job to do we'll find you something or if you say hey can I a lot of times we don't see things anymore because we've seen it so often you've seen that you got stuff at home that needs fixing but you see it every day and you don't notice it anymore and somebody comes to visit it's like big glaring thing you know you might see something we don't see and you say well how about if I take care of that is that okay you bet it's okay so let's all get involved and do the work together amen amen all right let's pray father we thank you for this day I thank you for your goodness and lord may you use us for your honor use us for your glory lord may all of our parts be working together father we give you all the honor all the glory all the praise and I thank you father for each one here this morning we are all necessary there is no one superior no one inferior everyone counts and lord let us be a place where everyone contributes we thank you for what you're going to accomplish as we work together the way you've designed us we pray in jesus name amen