Don't think too much of yourself. Instead, be honest about who you really are, empowered by the faith God has given you (Romans 12:3).

[G] [3] For [by the grace given [τῆς χάριτος τῆς δοθείσης] to me], I tell [PAI] everyone [among you]
a.) not to think more highly [PAN, ὑπερφρονεῖν] [of himself than he should [PAI] think [PAN]].
b.) [A] Instead, [/] [think [PAN] sensibly [PAN, σωφρονεῖν]],
[/] as God has distributed [AAI, ἐμέρισεν] a measure of faith [μέτρον πίστεως] to each *one*.

Just as a body has many different parts working together, so we are one body, and need each other (Romans 12:4-5).

[G] [4] ~~Now~~/For [/] as a.) we have [PAI] many parts [μέλη] [in one body [ἑνὶ σώματι]],
b.) [A] ~~and~~/but all the parts [μέλη] do not have [PAI] the same function [πρᾶξιν],
[/] [5] in the same way we who are [PAI] many are 1.) one body [ἓν σῶμά] [in Christ]
2.) [P] and [individually members [μέλη] of one another [ἀλλήλων]].

So, because of the grace God has given you, serve one another using your spiritual gift for the common good (Romans 12:6-8).

[[6] According to the grace given [APP, τὴν χάριν τὴν δοθεῖσαν] to us], we have [PAP] different gifts [χαρίσματα]:

1.) [C?] If prophecy [προφητείαν], [E] use it [according to the proportion of one's faith [τὴν ἀναλογίαν τῆς πίστεως]];
2.) [C?] [7] if service [διακονίαν], [E] use it [in service [διακονίᾳ]];
3.) [C?] if teaching [PAP, διδάσκων], [E] [in teaching [διδασκαλίᾳ]];
4.) [A] [8] ~~if~~/or exhorting [PAP, παρακαλῶν], [in exhortation [παρακλήσει]];
5.) giving [PAP, μεταδιδοὺς], [with generosity [ἁπλότητι]];
6.) leading [PMP, προϊστάμενος], [with diligence [σπουδῇ]];
7.) showing mercy [PAP, ἐλεῶν], [with cheerfulness [ἱλαρότητι]].

This is how I parse Greek verbs:

- I use a three-letter combination in square brackets (e.g. [PMI] for Present, Middle, Indicative) after a verb, which I underline.
  1. First letter indicates the tense. Tense deals both with time and kind of action.
  2. Second letter indicates the voice. The relation of the subject or agent to the action.
  3. Third letter indicates the mood, participle, or infinitive.
- Tense:
  - P: present, continuous or linear action.
  - I: imperfect, continuous action in the past.
  - F: future, both progressive and punctiliar action.
  - A: aorist, expresses punctiliar action that has happened.
  - R: perfect, represents an action that is complete but has an ongoing resultant state of being.
- Voice:
  - A: active, reflects the subject that performs the action.
  - M: middle, the agent participates in the results of the action.
  - P: passive, subject is being acted upon by someone or something else.
- Mood/participle/infinitive:
  - I: indicative, reality, that which is actually occurring.
  - S: subjunctive, likely to occur.
  - M: imperative, a command that is possible.
  - P: participle, participles are verbal adjectives that behave like a verb and an adjective..
  - N: infinitive, verbal nouns that use the preposition "to", and they can also be used with "ing".

This is how I indicate the function of conjunctions:

- I put a letter in square brackets before a clause to indicate a logical relationship.
  - [S] - SERIES, Each proposition makes an independent contribution to the whole (and, moreover, furthermore).
  - [P] - PROGRESSION, Each proposition is a further step toward a climax (then, and, moreover, furthermore).
  - [A] - ALTERNATIVE, Each proposition expresses an opposite possibility arising from a situation (or, but while...).
  - [W] [Ed] - WAY-END (ACTION-MANNER), Statement of an action and one which tells more explicitly what is involved in carrying out this action (in that, by).
  - [/] [/] - COMPARISON, Statement that clarifies an action or idea by showing what it is like (even as, as…so).
  - [-] [+] - NEGATIVE-POSITIVE, The relationship between two alternatives in which one is denied so the other is enforced, implicit in contrasting statements (not…but).
  - [Gn] [Sp] - GENERAL-SPECIFIC, Statement of a whole and one or more statements which set forth parts of the whole.
  - [Ft] [In] - FACT-INTERPRETATION, Statement and clarifying statement; does not set forth a distinguishable part of the preceding whole.
  - [G] - GROUND, Statement followed by the argument or reason on which it stands; supporting proposition follows the supported proposition (for, since, because).
  - [I'] - INFERENCE, Supporting statement followed by the conclusion drawn from it; supporting proposition precedes the supported proposition (therefore, wherefore, consequently).
  - [C] [E] - CAUSE-EFFECT (ACTION-RESULT), One action and another action which results from the first as an automatic consequence (that, so that, with the result that).
  - [C?] [E] - CONDITIONAL, Like cause-effect except existence of the cause is only potential (if…then, if, except...).
  - [M] [Ed] - MEANS-END (ACTION-PURPOSE), One action and another that is intended as the goal or purpose of the first (in order that, that, lest, to the end that).
  - [T] - TEMPORAL, Proposition and the occasion when it occurs (when, after, before).
  - [L] - LOCATIVE, Proposition and the place where it can be true (where, wherever).
  - [Adv] - ADVERSATIVE, Main clause that stands despite a contrary statement (although, yet, but, nevertheless).
  - [Q] [A] - QUESTION-ANSWER, Statement of question and answer to that question (question mark ?).
  - [S] [R] - SITUATION-RESPONSE, The relationship between a situation in one clause and a response in another.
  - [B] [L] - BILATERAL, A proposition which supports propositions in both directions, rarely used.

This is how I use colour highlighting:

- Orange: structure indicator, conjunctions, and prepositions.
- Yellow: verbs, Greek, and Scripture reference.
- Green: keywords.
- Red: repeated words.
- Pink: imperatives.
- Blue: main idea.

On my sermon preparation sheet, these are the questions and an explanation:

1. **How has the author organised this passage?**
   a) An outline: The author's organization (or structure) is a way of talking about the shape or form of a biblical passage. Beneath the surface of each passage is an underlying arrangement of material and a logic that the author has used to organize the passage. And each part of the passage has a role to play in that structure.
   b) Tools: Identify the text type, and any grammatical tools used to identify the structure.
   c) The emphasis: The structure will reveal an emphasis that the author is making.
2. **How does the context inform the meaning of this passage?**
   a) Literary context: How do the passage that comes before and the passage that comes after relate to your passage?
   b) Historical context: The historical situation or circumstances experienced by the first audience at the time when the book was written.
   c) Cultural context: The setting in the daily life of the people/characters in the book and how that will have been understood by the first audience. This is distinct from historical context in that it does not relate to a particular audience in a particular place at a particular time, but the details of life that the people/characters in the text had in common. Anything that requires extra-biblical knowledge should be treated skeptically.
   d) Biblical context: Is the author citing or alluding to some previously written Biblical passage? What connections could the author have reasonably expected his first audience to make.
3. **What is the main point the author is arguing to his audience?**
   The author's main point is a way of talking about the aim of a passage as a whole. It can be descriptive or prescriptive. It is not simply a summary statement. But rather, it is the idea of which the author is trying to persuade his audience. As you work on articulating the author's argument, please keep in mind that it needs to be specific enough to the passage that it clearly comes from the particular passage (and not any other passage), it is for the first audience, it should be one single sentence that is both short and clear, and captures the argument of the passage.
4. **How does this passage connect to the gospel of Jesus Christ?**
   What part of the gospel (the death and resurrection of Christ) is in view? Every part of the Bible, every passage of Scripture, in some way relates to the gospel of Jesus Christ. What parts of the passage connect to the gospel? The connection must be legitimate and textually driven.
5. **What is the main point you will argue to your audience?**
6. **What applications will you make? a) To believers, b) To unbelievers.**
   The main point of a sermon is the fundamental statement of what you, as a speaker today, are trying to convince your audience today. It will certainly be intimately related to the author's main point for his original audience and it will consider the gospel connection. It should be well reasoned and, perhaps, articulated as the result of proof (so depending on premises and building arguments).
7. What is your sermon title and your preaching outline? a) Sermon outline, b) Sermon title.

On my sermon preparation sheet, this is how questions relate to one another:

- 1 a) should be driven by the text.
- 1 c) should be driven from the outline in 1 a).
- 2) should be directly relevant to 1 c).
- 3) cannot be disconnected from 1 c), and should be clarified by 2).
- 4) must be found in the text.
- 5) cannot be disconnected from 3), and should be driven by 4).
- 6) should flow from 5).
- 7) should structurally relate to 1 a), and make the argument in 5).

Sermon preparation worksheet

Passage: Romans 12:1-2

1. How has the author organised this passage? *a) An outline, b) Tools, c) The emphasis.*

a) 1) Don't think too much of yourself. Instead, be honest about who you really are, empowered by the faith God has given you (Romans 12:3).
2) Just as a body has many different parts working together, so we are one body, and need each other (Romans 12:4-5).
3) So, because of the grace God has given you, serve one another using your spiritual gift for the common good (Romans 12:6-8).

b) I identified discourse and used syntax analysis. Paying attention to the verbs, conjunctions, and prepositions. The structure emerged from the repetitions (the τῆς χάριτος τῆς δοθείσης, grace given, in Romans 12:3 and 6 which act as brackets for the whole section, the threefold repetition of φρονεῖν, think, in Romans 12:3 focuses on the mindset believers must have as they serve, the threefold repetition of μέλη, body, in Romans 12:4-5 tightens the analogy between the physical body and the body of Christ, and the 7 couplets describing the differing χαρίσματα, gifts, in Romans 12:6-8 shifts the focus from the possession of gifts to the manner of their use).

c) Don't think too much of yourself, because we are one body, and need each other, but serve one another using your spiritual gift.

2. How does the context inform the meaning of this passage? *a) Literary, b) Historical, c) Cultural, d) Biblical.*

a) In Romans 12:1-2, Paul says we must offer our lives as living sacrifices by the renewal of our minds. In Romans 12:9-21, Paul describes what real love looks like in practice. This matters because Romans 12:3-8 is the first step of the renewal of our minds. We're to stop our prideful thinking, because we belong to each other, and so we must serve one another. The real love that comes later begins in humility.

b) The first readers were a mixed group of Jews and Gentiles who often looked down on each other and argued. This matters because Paul's command not to think too much of yourself was a direct solution to their fights. He was telling them to stop their pride so their body wouldn't fall apart, and to start serving the very people they disagreed with.

c) Greco-Roman culture taught people to use their talents and wealth to get famous and climb the social ladder. This matters because Paul was turning their world upside down. Don't think too much of yourself meant stop playing the fame game. And serve one another meant use your gifts to build others up, not to make a name for yourself.

d) Romans 12:3-8 does not cite any previous passage of Scripture that Paul expected his first audience to make a connection to.

3. What is the main point the author is arguing to *his audience?*

Reject your pride because we are Christ's body and serve one another with your God-given spiritual gifts.

4. How does this passage connect to the gospel of Jesus Christ?

Romans 12:3-8 is the practical outworking of the gospel detailed in Romans 1-11. The call to be honest about who you really are flows from the cross, which eliminates all grounds to think too much of yourself because we are justified us by faith alone. Our identity as one body also flows from the cross, which reconciles former enemies who have been made new creations. The grace God has given you to serve one another flow from the resurrected Christ who distributes His spiritual gifts. So, as pride denies the cross's verdict, refusing to serve rejects the resurrection's power.

5. What is the main point you will argue to *your audience*?

Let the cross humble you and the resurrection empower you to serve Christ's body.

6. What applications will you make? *a) To believers, b) To unbelievers.*

a) I want you to feel the weight of your pride as a denial of the cross and your reluctance to serve as a rejection of the resurrection's power. Therefore, I want you to identify one specific, practical way you will serve in your local church, using the spiritual gift God has given you.

b) I want you to feel the conviction that your natural pride has alienated you from God and the spiritual body He created. Therefore, I want you to consider Christ, whose cross offers you forgiveness for that pride and whose resurrection offers you new life as part of His body.

7. What is your sermon title and your preaching outline? *a) Sermon outline, b) Sermon title.*

b) Your spiritual gift isn't for you

a) 1) Humble mind (Romans 12:3)
2) United body (Romans 12:4-5)
3) Helping hands (Romans 12:6-8)

Pray

Read Romans 12:1-8

[1] Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies
as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship. [2] Do not be conformed to
this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the
good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.

[3] For by the grace given to me, I tell everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than
he should think. Instead, think sensibly, as God has distributed a measure of faith to each *one*. [4]
For as we have many parts in one body, but 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 members of one another. [6]
According to the grace given to us, we have different gifts: If prophecy, use it according to the
proportion of one's faith; [7] if service, use it in service; if teaching, in teaching; [8] or exhorting, in
exhortation; giving, with generosity; leading, with diligence; showing mercy, with cheerfulness.

Introduction

Your spiritual gift is not for you. The world would have you add your gifts to your resume. For your reputation. Or have you use them for your personal fulfilment. But, God's Word says otherwise.

God gives gifts so we can serve others.

This morning, the Apostle Paul shows us the way. Let the cross humble you and the resurrection empower you to serve Christ's body. We will see this in three parts. A humble mind. A united body. Helping hands.

Where does this life of service begin? Not with busy hands. But with a humble mind.

1) **Humble mind** (Romans 12:3)

Don't think too much of yourself. Instead, be honest about who you really are, empowered by the faith God has given you.

[3] For by the grace given to me, I tell everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he should think. Instead, think sensibly, as God has distributed a measure of faith to each *one*.

Don't think too much of yourself. This is the first fruit of Romans 12:1-2's renewed mind. But how is this possible? For sinners like us? We fall so naturally into the trap of pride. This seems impossible for us. This is impossible. In your own strength.

But in steps God's grace. He provides what we need to live by what He commands. He supplies according to His demands. Our text says, God has distributed a measure of faith to each *one*. This is your hope. God gives you the faith necessary as a gift. Faith becomes your divine lens. Faith serves as your supernatural ability to see reality as God sees reality. Faith is the gift that makes His commands possible.

Now you can *be honest about who you really are*. Now you can think sensibly. Soberly. Here is the antidote to your pride. Not self-hatred. Not self-exaltation. Sober judgment. Sober judgment that can answer eternal questions. Who are you before God? You are the creature. He is the Creator. Who are you before God's holiness? You are the sinner. He is the Saviour. The key to crushing your pride lies in *being honest about who you really are*.

Pride must be rejected. This is no small thing. This was Satan's original sin. I will make myself like the Most High (Isaiah 14:12-15). This was Adam's original sin. You will be like God (Genesis 3:5). This is our common sin. Every argument you must win. All the credit you must claim. The self you must promote. This is what alienates you from God. Isolates you from others. Makes true community impossible.

So use the gift. Point your measure of faith at the cross of Christ. The cross reveals your true state. You are far more sinful and flawed than you ever dared believe. A rebel in need of a rescuer. The cross reveals your true worth. But you are also far more loved and valued than you ever dared hope. God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8). A humble mind holds onto these two truths. I am deeply broken. And I am profoundly loved.

So, don't think too much of yourself. Instead, be honest about who you really are, empowered by the faith God has given you. This is the cross humbling you. Crushing your pride. Freeing you from yourself.

And a man freed from himself is a man freed for others. A humbled heart is not an isolated heart. It is a prepared heart. Where does a man, humbled by the cross, belong? He belongs in a body. He needs a body. Just as a body has many different parts working together, so we are one body, and need each other.

2) **United body** (Romans 12:4-5)

Just as a body has many different parts working together, so we are one body, and need each other.

4 For as we have many parts in one body, but 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 members of one another.

About six months ago, I broke a bone in my foot. Even after an operation, my big toe wouldn't move. My body was affected. A few months ago, I lost my balance and fell, twisting my ankle. I needed physio. To help my big toe heal. The body is a single unit. We need every part. The ear for hearing. The eye for sight. The thumb for grip. Diversity is God's design for function.

Now hear God's Word. In the same way, we who are many are one body in Christ. You are part of this body at Benoni Baptist Church. You were grafted in when you became a member. We are individually members of one another. Your life is now tethered to every other life in this room. The body is God's master metaphor for His church. One body. Many parts. Diverse in function. United in essence.

Pride is like cancer to the body metaphor. The first church in Rome was divided by race. Jew and Gentile. Different cultures. Different traditions. And they pridefully looked down on each other. They argued. Their pride was killing the body. Paul's words here are emergency surgery. *Don't think too much of yourself. We are one body, and we need each other.*

Has anything changed in 2,000 years? Pride still divides. Pride still makes us think we are too important to serve. Or that the role we've been asked to serve in is too small. Pride still makes us critical of other parts. Pride is still the great destroyer of local church unity. Pride must be rejected.

Listen to what happens when a body works together. Right here. We have over 125 people serving. Each month at our Sunday morning service at Benoni Baptist Church. And we need more. More voices for the choir. More hands for the tech desk. More mature saints to teach Sunday school. More strong saints to set up chairs. We need the visible parts. Like preachers. And elders. We need the unseen parts. Like counters. And prayer warriors. This is a portrait of a living body. A healthy body. Every role matters. From serving tea to preaching the Word. Every function is necessary for the whole body to thrive.

So, just as a body has many different parts working together, so we are one body, and need each other. Reject your pride. It has no place here. You are not an independent agent. You are a member of Christ's body.

A body is for action. So what does a humble body do? A united body serves. So, because of the grace God has given you, serve one another using your spiritual gift for the common good.

3) **Helping hands** (Romans 12:6-8)

So, because of the grace God has given you, serve one another using your spiritual gift for the common good.

6 According to the grace given to us, we have different gifts: If prophecy, use it according to the
proportion of one's faith; 7 if service, use it in service; if teaching, in teaching; 8 or exhorting, in
exhortation; giving, with generosity; leading, with diligence; showing mercy, with cheerfulness.

A mind humbled by the cross. A body united in Christ. What remains? Our church served according to grace. Paul brings his argument to its practical conclusion. According to the grace given to us, we have different gifts. *So, because of the grace God has given you, serve one another using your spiritual gift for the common good.*

What empowers this service? Grace. The text is clear. According to the grace given to us. This is an invitation to use the power God supplies. This grace brings spiritual gifts. Spirit-empowered abilities. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. No one is left giftless. Everyone gets something.

These gifts are diverse. Gifts are listed in Romans 12. In 1 Corinthians 12. In Ephesians 4. In 1 Peter 4. Each list is different. The lists are not exhaustive. They are illustrative. The Spirit's gifts are as unique as the people He creates.

Consider the gifts Paul names here. Some gifts speak to the body. Prophecy, teaching, and exhortation. Some gifts support the body. Service, giving, and mercy. And some gifts steer the body. Leadership. Each one a necessary function. Each one is a tangible act of service.

How then do you find your gift? By using it. Start serving. The needs of Benoni Baptist Church are a call from God. Try different things. Your gift often appears where your passion meets your effectiveness. Pray for insight. Ask God to show you how He made you. Ask for open doors. Look for fruit. Look for confirmation. Where does your service build others up? What do mature saints see in you? The body's affirmation is a crucial sign.

This act of service is the final rejection of pride. Pride demands a platform. Grace takes up a towel. Pride seeks a title. Grace finds a need. Pride withholds its gift. The body weakens. Grace employs its gift. The body thrives.

Your spiritual gift is not for you. The humble mind knows this. The united body needs this. Now your hands must do this. This is the resurrection power of Christ. It flows through a humble mind. It flows through a united body. It flows through helping hands.

And this vibrant picture of service, a humble mind, a united body, active hands, is the gospel of Jesus Christ on display.

Connect to the gospel

Romans 12:3-8 is the practical outworking of the gospel. It is the necessary result of Romans 1-11. The death and resurrection of Christ are not mere facts to be acknowledged. They are a message that is to be obeyed.

The cross humbles you. The cross kills your pride. The cross leaves no ground for boasting. You are more broken than you knew. More loved than you dreamed. Then the cross unites you. Your identity is now bound to Christ. And to every other believer in Christ. You are members of one another. The empty tomb empowers you. It fuels your service. To refuse to serve is to reject the resurrection's power.

The cross forges a humble mind. The cross creates a united body. The resurrection empowers helping hands. So, let the cross humble you and the resurrection empower you to serve Christ's body.

Believers

I want you to feel the cost of your reluctance. That service you avoid. That gift you withhold. That need you ignore. See it for what it is. It is preferring your own comfort to the Spirit's prodding. It is a return to pride.

So, act. Identify a practical way you will serve in this local body. A role. A task. A need. A practical way to use, or discover, the spiritual gift God has given you. Speak. Support. Steer. Start. You've been humbled by the cross. And empowered by the resurrection. Now, join in and help, for your own enjoyment and God's glory.

Unbelievers

I want you to feel the conviction of your pride. Pride is not a personality trait. It is a rebellion. It has alienated you from God. It has isolated you from the spiritual body He created. You have become a disconnected part. A toe severed from the body. A finger lying on the ground. You are dying. You know it.

Your pride condemns you. But Christ's cross offers you forgiveness for that very pride. He was condemned in your place. The verdict you deserve fell on Him. Your isolation kills you. But Christ's resurrection offers you new life as part of His body. He rose to graft rebels into a family. To make strangers members of one another.

This is your moment. Right now. The Spirit of God is pressing this truth upon you. Will you continue in your pride? It leads only to death. Eternal death. Or will you come to Christ? Look to Him. See your Saviour on that cross. See your King out of that tomb.

Come to Jesus. Repent of your pride. Trust in His finished work. Be forgiven. Be made new. By His resurrection, be grafted into His body. Today. Do not delay. Come to Jesus.

Conclusion

We return now to where we began. Your spiritual gift is not for you. Not for your resume. Not for your reputation. Not for your personal fulfilment.

God gives gifts so we can serve others.

My argument to you this morning has been this. Let the cross humble you and the resurrection empower you to serve Christ's body.

The cross forges the humble mind. It executes your pride. It reveals your true state. Deeply broken. Profoundly loved. The cross creates the united body. It binds you to Christ. And to one another. The resurrection empowers the helping hands. It fuels your service. It distributes the gifts. It is the power that brings Benoni Baptist Church to life.

So, let the cross do its work in you. Let the resurrection do its work through you. Do not think too much of yourself. You belong to a body. So serve one another. This is the gospel life. This is our calling.

Amen.

The benediction

Now unto him who is able to keep,
able to keep you from falling,
and present you faultless
before the presence of his glory
with exceeding joy;

To the only wise God our Saviour,
be glory and majesty,
dominion and power
both now and forever.
Amen.