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**Title: Discovering Your Spiritual Gift**

**Text: Romans 12**

From time to time I buy Diane (my wife) a gift and wrap it myself. I wrap it with nice paper, tape the edges down, and put a bow on it. Then I have the joy of watching her unwrap it.

We've begun a series on Spiritual Gifts. Last week we looked at 1 Corinthians 12:1 – *Concerning spiritual gifts, I would not have you ignorant...* The Word never puts a premium on ignorance. Today, we are going to look at Romans chapter 12. Verse 6 says, *“Having then gifts differing...”* Paul is talking about different gifts. You have one gift, I have another gift. No one has all of the gifts. Everybody has, at least, one of the gifts. If you are a child of God, I believe that He has gifted you. God has wrapped it up in you. Through scriptural instruction, if you haven't already, God wants to see you unwrap your spiritual gift or gifts. Now, a spiritual gift is not a natural talent. There is a difference. A spiritual gift is a supernatural ability. It may be married to or paired with a natural talent, but it goes beyond natural talents. It is not natural, it is supernatural. It is a grace gift. Perhaps you feel unworthy. You say, “Pastor, I'm not gifted.” The Word says otherwise. ILLUSTRATION: Alexander the Great, the great conquering general, one time gave a beautiful and priceless golden cup to a lowly servant. When the servant saw the gift, he said, “Oh no, that's too much for me to receive.” Alexander said, “It is not too much for me to give.” God is the one who gives the gift, so don't you dare come around with some false humility and say that you do not have any gift.

What would you think if Diane never bothered to unwrap the gift I give her? I would be disappointed AND she wouldn't know the joy of receiving what I gave to her. Do you think God is disappointed when He gifts His children and they never bother to unwrap their gift? Furthermore, at the Judgement Seat of Christ, you will give an account of what you did with your spiritual gift – your stewardship of that spiritual gift. So you need to discover your spiritual gift. Today we're going to be talking about how to unwrap your gift. Let me share some principles with you.

- 1. SACRIFICIAL PRESENTATION.** Chapter 12, verse 1: *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”* Paul is writing by divine inspiration, and he begins by saying, *“I beseech you...”* Do you know what it means to beseech someone? It means to plead with them. Since Paul is writing for God Himself, it is almost as if God is begging or beseeching us. In a manner of speaking, this is God's prayer to us. Now, we pray to God and we say, “Lord, I beseech You, I beseech You, Lord, please, Lord, please.” Well, if we won't listen to God's prayer to us, why should God listen to our prayer to Him? Our Lord is saying, *“I beseech you that you present your bodies a living sacrifice.”* Why? On the basis of the mercies of God. God is good all the time, is He not? I am so thankful to God for His mercies. When we were rebels, when we were cursed and bound for hell, when we were in the dark and could not understand, He, by His mercy, sought us, saved us, secured us, kept us, and He satisfied us. WE ARE HIS! We are bought with His blood. Now, listen to me very carefully. CONSECRATION, therefore, is NOT giving God anything. Consecration is taking your hands off of that which already belongs to God. You are not your own. Take your hands off. You can't say, “It's my life.” IT IS NOT! You are not your own! You are bought with a price, and we are to be a living sacrifice. What does it mean to be a living sacrifice? First of all, it's going to be different than any animal sacrifice in the Old Testament because no animal sacrifice ever volunteered. YOU volunteer. You present yourself. Have you ever done that? Have you ever said, “Here I am, Lord. I present myself to You. I am a volunteer. All that I have belongs to You.” ILLUSTRATION: Wilbur Chapman was a great evangelist. He asked General Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, “General Booth, what is the secret of your life? Why is it that God has so used you?” General Booth thought for a while, and then he said, “God has had all there is of me. There have been men of greater brains, greater opportunities, but I, from the day I had a vision of what God would do for poor old London [where the Salvation Army began], I made up my mind that God would have all there is of William Booth.” Have you ever really said that to God? “God, I am here. You can have ALL there is of me. I present myself as a sacrifice. ALL of my plans, ALL of my goals, ALL of my so-called possessions, I sacrifice them, Lord, to You.” Does that seem strange to you? It does to the modern American. We want to take our Christianity and tack it on to our regular life. We want to hold on to our lives, our rights. Let me tell you about Old Testament sacrifice. It was slain; therefore, no more plans of its own. It was put on the altar, and since it was a bloody sacrifice, it had a tendency to want to slip off the altar. So in the Old Testament they had two hooks. They called them flesh hooks. Those hooks would be put into that sacrifice that was to be burned, to hold it on the altar. Do

you know what will hold YOU on the altar? Have you ever tended to slide off the altar? I have. There are two hooks that will keep you on the altar – discipline and devotion. They will hold you there as a living sacrifice. Most of us don't want those flesh hooks. Most say, "I don't want to be bound. I would teach a class, but I don't want to get tied down. I would join the church, but I don't want to obligate myself. I would make a pledge to the church or I'd make a missions commitment, but I don't want to get tied down. I want to be free." What if Jesus committed Himself to us the way we commit ourselves to Him? What happened to the OT sacrifice? It was consumed. It was burnt up. Did you know that you have never fully worshipped God until you are consumed? Have you been consumed with the holy fire of God? We are called to make a sacrificial presentation. Whoa – if I did that, there's no telling what God would make me do. Suppose you had a son. He comes to you and says, "Dad, I've been thinking. You're so wise, so loving, so kind, and you have so much experience. I've had an epiphany Dad. I was thinking the other day, and it seems to me that the wisest, best thing I could do would be to come to you for advice, and whatever you tell me to do, Dad, I want to do it with all of my heart. You just tell me, Dad, what you want me to do, where you want me to go, who you want my friends to be. Dad, just tell me and I'll do it." Suppose your son really said, "Here I am, Dad. I really, from my heart, want to do your will," what would you do? Would you say, "Oh, boy, he'll be sorry he ever said that?" You go to your wife and say, "Boy, have we got him now. Now, what can we make him do? He'll be sorry he ever said that he'll do what we want him to do." Only an idiot father would respond that way! When you present yourself to God a living sacrifice, you will prove what is that good, perfect, acceptable will of God. Don't ever be afraid to turn yourself over to God. Don't be afraid to say, "Here I am, Lord. I give myself to You."

2. **SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION.** After the presentation, a transformation. Verse 2: *"And be not conformed [that is, squeezed in] to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."* The word "transformation" there is a translation of a Greek word "metamorpho." What word does that remind you of? Metamorphosis. You will go through a metamorphosis, like a caterpillar goes into a cocoon and goes through a metamorphosis, and that not-so-beautiful worm-like creature that goes into that cocoon comes out a beautiful butterfly. Why? It has gone through a metamorphosis, which literally means a change of form. When you present yourself this way to God, you're going to have a metamorphosis. The word literally describes that which happens when the inner nature comes to the surface. What is the inner nature of that caterpillar? It's a butterfly. Did you know this word was used of Jesus when He was transfigured on the Mount of Transfiguration? Remember the story? He went up in that high mountain with Peter, James, and John. There the Bible says He was transformed. He was transfigured. It's exactly the same word that's used here. Jesus went through a metamorphosis. What was the inner nature of Jesus? Glory. When He was metamorphosed, the glory came to the surface. His face shone like the noonday sun. His raiment was white as snow. The radiance of the Lord Jesus Christ was there. It had been there all the time, but that which was the inner nature went through a metamorphosis and it came to the surface, like the inner nature of a caterpillar. Now, question: What is your inner nature if you're saved? JESUS is your inner nature. The Jesus that is RESIDENT in you becomes the Jesus PRESIDENT in you. The Jesus HIDDEN in you is the Jesus REVEALED in you. There is a divine change and you are not squeezed in by this world. This world, which would camouflage and obliterate and hide your inner nature – those shackles are broken – and Jesus Christ comes out of you. You have a divine change, which gives you the mind of Christ. You are renewed in the spirit of your mind. You will never really understand your spiritual gift without the mind of Christ, without a renewed mind. If you're trying to discover your spiritual gift without making that presentation, that voluntary presentation, that sacrificial presentation, no wonder you don't know your spiritual gift. But, when you present yourself to God a sacrificial presentation, then there will be a spiritual transformation and you will *"...prove what is that good, perfect, and acceptable will of God."* Don't be afraid of the will of God. That's the highest, happiest, and holiest place for you.
3. **SOBER CONSIDERATION.** Verse 3: *"For I say, through the grace given unto me..."* Do you know what that word "grace" is? "Charis", the charisma given unto me. *"...to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."* Three times in one verse he says what? Think, think, think. Now, didn't we just say that He's going to renew your mind? Well, what would you do with a renewed mind? May I suggest that you think with it. Would that be all right? Do you think that it's wrong to think? Do you think that when you become a Christian you just put your mind in neutral and then you just live by feelings and goose bumps? NO! God renews your mind so you can think with that renewed mind. How do you think about yourself? I want you to do an inventory on yourself. How are you to think? *"...not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think.* We hear people say, "Oh, you can

just do anything you want.” There’s a Greek word for that – it’s baloney! You CAN’T just do anything you want to do. You say, “Yes I can.” Okay – take Michael Jordan’s place. Become an NBA basketball star, the greatest that ever lived, just because you think you can. It probably won’t happen because you don’t have the gift or physical ability. If there is such a thing that someone was born to play basketball, it would likely be Michael Jordan. He’s just got it! Just as he has natural talents, you have supernatural talents and abilities, BUT you must NOT think in SINFUL EXAGGERATION. Now, secondly, neither think in FALSE HUMILIATION. Look at the verse again. The word “soberly” is an interesting word. It comes from two Greek words which mean “to save” and “the mind.” Think soberly. Say – “I am what I am by the grace of God.” But don’t go around saying you don’t have a gift. That’s just as bad. False humiliation is just as bad as sinful exaggeration. Saying that you have a gift, if you have a gift – AND YOU DO – is not pride. Saying that you DON’T have a gift, when you do – is REBELLION. The Word is telling us to think soberly about what you have. To deny your grace gift is not humility, it is unbelief and rebellion. So, do not think in false humiliation or sinful exaggeration, but in SOBER ESTIMATION. You just look at yourself and take inventory. You say, “Well, Pastor, that’s rather vague. I need more help than that.” Let’s go a little deeper. Let me give you some principles beginning with the letter “E” to help you remember. **A. Enlightenment.** The Holy Spirit of God that’s in you, will enlighten your mind. There is a mystical part here. That is, it’s not a mathematical formula. The Holy Spirit will begin to speak to your heart. **B. Enjoyment.** When you feel the Holy Spirit of God moving you to do something – you’re enlightened – and you do it, and you enjoy it. Often when God stretches you, when the old passes away, you find that old things become new. Things you might not have enjoyed, you now find fulfillment in. Ask yourself, what rings my bell? What is it that you do for God that you really enjoy doing? Let’s revisit and expand the story about the animal school I mentioned last week. The animals had a school and they were going to be taught running, climbing, flying, and swimming. When the DUCK enrolled in school, he was great in swimming. He was fair at flying. He did poorly in climbing and running. Since he was SO GOOD in swimming, they didn’t give him any courses in swimming. They made him work out on the track all day long, running and running and running. After a while, he got worse in his swimming and not much better in his running. Now no one was threatened any longer by the swimming ability of the duck. They dummed the duck down. Then there was the EAGLE. He was great at flying. He always got to the top of the tree first, but he wouldn’t do it their way. They wanted him to climb. They scolded the eagle because he didn’t do it their way and then made him enroll in swimming classes. For some strange reason, the eagle hated his swimming classes. After a while, the eagle got so rebellious that they expelled him from school. And then there was the RABBIT. The rabbit was an incredible runner. He loved running, but he wasn’t so good in the rest of the things. He was bad in swimming and not a tree climber at all. After a while, the story tells that the poor rabbit had a nervous breakdown. Today, instead of last week’s squirrel, we’ve got a turtle coming to the school. You’ve got to feel sorry for the turtle. He couldn’t run. He couldn’t climb. He couldn’t fly AND he didn’t even swim that great. One teacher went so far as to ask, “What’s this turtle good for?” They determined that his shell was the problem, so they took off his shell. It helped him a little tiny bit in his running UNTIL the horse stepped on him! Poor turtle. He’s gone. You say, “That’s ridiculous!” Maybe, but sometimes the church is guilty of the same sort of thing. Rather than letting people do what God has equipped and gifted them to do, we tone them down in an area where they are strong and try to beef them up in some area where they aren’t gifted at all. God gives severally as HE wills. Generally you’ll find enlightenment and enjoyment in your gift or gifts. **C. Encouragement.** You’ll likely find other people encouraging you in your gift. Why? Because they are blessed by it. In 1977 I graduated from Valley Forge Christian College in Phoenixville, PA. I was coming up to graduation and didn’t know what I’d be doing or where I might land. In the early part of 1977 I got a Christian service assignment. I got a good many of them because I sang and played. This meant I’d go to a church and participate in their service by playing keyboard, singing, speaking, doing children’s ministry, or sharing a testimony. On this occasion, my assignment took me to Pennsville, NJ to play the piano for Raphael Ortiz, another student. He was an older student who had sung opera professionally at the New York Metropolitan Opera House. I had never played for him. I was scared to death! I was an unskilled pianist from a tiny town in West Virginia. He’s a professional. Sounds like a train wreck to me. I was in over my head. We practiced a time or two and to my amazement the evening went rather well. I knew several families at the church as they had attended family camp at Potomac Park. This is probably the only church in New Jersey where I knew anybody. I had prayed several young people through to the baptism in the Holy Spirit from that church in the back prayer room at camp. I sang and played a song myself that evening. To my surprise, following the service, the pastor asked me if I’d consider being their music minister. Having been there with Raphael, I wouldn’t have thought anyone would have even noticed me. At that time, Valley Forge didn’t even offer a music degree. My

music education was rather limited. So I began attending the church on weekends. I moved there immediately after graduation, got married two weeks later, and returned as minister of music. I later served four churches as minister of music. I owe much of that to the encouragement I received. By the way, if a preacher tells you that he doesn't like for you to tell him he did good, he's lying! **D. Enablement.** God will enable you if He's called and gifted you. 1 Timothy 1:12 says, *"I thank Jesus Christ, our Lord, who hath enabled me, in that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry."* Paul knew he could not do what he did in the ministry without the enablement. If I were to go way back to my high school days – do you know what I really enjoyed the least? Speaking. (So much for the enjoyment theory, huh?) Guess what I do? How do I do that? God knew that there was a latent gift there that He had put into me, and He has enabled me. So, when God gives you this mind, what do you do with it? Think with it – *"...not more highly than you ought to think, but soberly, according as God has dealt to every man the measure of faith."* While I was in my last year or two of high school, I began taking organ lessons right here (different organ). I took my lessons on Saturday. Many Saturdays I didn't take a lesson because of my schedule or my teacher's schedule. So all told, I might have taken a year's worth of lessons. I graduated high school and left for Bible College. Of course, I had filled out all the application papers. One of the questions they asked was what instruments you play. I listed a few, including the organ. I wasn't at college but a few days, when Brother Reardon, the music director at the college, came to see me. He was an incredible musician. He was blind, but he had the most incredible hearing! He'd hear a song once, and play it perfectly – probably better than the original. In addition, he had studied music in Germany under the Fulbright Scholarship. Presently, he's the chief bagpipe director of the Mummer's Day Parade in Philadelphia. Anyway, he asked me to be the traveling choir's organist. I laughed. I promptly told him I wasn't very good. He persisted. I told him I only played for my own enjoyment, and that sometimes it was so bad, I didn't even enjoy it! I said, "Seriously, once you've heard me, you won't want me to play for your choir." He said he would work with me. I said, "That's rather big of you, but you don't have that much time. I'm sure once you've heard me you won't want me. I'm just a beginner." He persisted and to make a long story shorter, I ended up playing for the traveling concert choir. We traveled all over the East Coast and we recorded a long play VINYL album. (Long time ago.) Brother Reardon coached me and the Lord enabled me.

4. **SHARED PARTICIPATION.** Verses 4 and 5: *"For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office [that is, the same work. It doesn't mean a place where you do your work], So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."* We need to know that when we present ourselves to Jesus, we're ALSO presenting ourselves to one another. There's to be a shared participation. When you belong to Jesus, you belong to me. When I belong to Jesus, I belong to you. Remember, that the church is HIS BODY. It's not an organization with Jesus Christ as the president. It is a body with Jesus Christ as the head, and we're all members in that body. It is arrogance, conceit, and pride that divides us. It is the Holy Spirit that UNITES us. So when we find our gift, there's to be this shared participation. Everyone's gift is not as obvious. As I preach this morning, you hear my voice and see or hear the fruit of my mind. It's doubtful that anyone here has been intrigued by the function of my liver today. However, if my liver wasn't functioning this morning, I wouldn't be preaching. There are people who are doing things in this church right now that you're not aware of, but there is a shared participation, and each gift is given to perfect the Body of Christ. If you're NOT using your God-given giftings or aren't fulfilling the purpose for which God put you in this body, you are robbing this church body of a blessing and, in essence, are harming and hurting this body. Anyone know how many ACTIVE members we have here? When I was a kid and we passed a cemetery, my dad asked, "Do you know how many dead people are there?" Do you know his answer? "All of them!" The answer to how many ACTIVE members are here is similar. They're all active. Some are ACTIVE tearing down and some are ACTIVE building up! They're ALL active! God put you in this body as it pleased Him, and there's to be a shared participation. Nobody has all of the gifts. Everybody has, at least, one of the gifts, and we are dependent upon one another. God made us different that He might make us one.
5. **SPECIFIC ACTIVATION.** Now he says in Romans 12:6-8, *"Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; <sup>7</sup>or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; <sup>8</sup>he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness."* He mentions here seven gifts, and he says, "Get with it – get activated!" So you want to know your gift? Well, just pick out something that you think may be your gift and get busy. It's hard to steer a ship that's not moving! Don't just sit there. God's not going to zap you! You're going to find your gift as you get busy. He says, *"...prophesy, in proportion to [your] faith."* (We may look at this passage more deeply next week.) You may not have a lot of faith, but the Word tells us that He's dealt to

every man a measure of faith. Take what you've got and put it into practice. Let's look quickly at these seven gifts. See if you can spot yours. There's some more over in 1 Corinthians, chapter 12 and Ephesians. First of all, he talks about **PROPHECY** in verse 6. Now, what is prophecy? Prophecy is declaring truth. If you have the gift of prophecy, you might find yourself teaching a class or being used in mission work or jail ministry. You'll likely find in your teaching a desire to be persuasive. A prophet is generally persuasive. A prophet moves people to action. Then he mentions **MINISTRY** in verse 7. That's another word for service. If that is your gift, you will find yourself meeting spiritual needs in a practical way. Those who work in the office, ushers, nursery workers, bus drivers, church grounds keepers, those who work in maintenance, those working the sound system right now – these are wonderful people. That's the gift of ministry. Then there's the gift of **TEACHING** in verse 7. If you have this gift, you want to clarify truth. You'll have a desire to search out things and validate truth that's been presented. You'll have a questioning mind and may be used in Sunday School, small groups, Royal Rangers or Girls Ministries. You may even use that gift in parenting. Next he mentions **EXHORTATION** in verse 8. What is exhortation? That's the desire to stimulate people in their faith. It is exhorting people to love Jesus better. If you have this gift, you'll likely enjoy personal counseling. You might find yourself in music ministry. Sometimes after hearing a song, I just want to know Jesus more. I so appreciate our worship team. You may be given to visitation and going after those who are lost, strayed, or stolen. Soul winning, the ministry of encouragement – that's exhortation. Then he mentions **GIVING**. We're all commanded to give, but some people have the GIFT of GIVING. And what is that? You're motivated to entrust your personal assets to others, that the work of God may be carried on. You make good decisions to meet immediate needs. You're careful in your giving, but you're willing to give and you have the ability to accumulate and disperse assets. There are people in our church who have the gift of giving, and I thank God for that. Then he mentions **LEADING** (or RULING) in verse 8. Maybe that's your gift. It's the motivation to coordinate things. It has nothing to do with being the Big Shot. It's helping people see the bigger vision and moving them toward that vision. It's to coordinate the activities of others for a common goal, for the glory of God. It's the gift to preside, to lead, to stand before others. A person who has this gift also has the gift of vision. He or she sees where we ought to go, and then motivates people to that. The last gift mentioned here is **MERCY**. Maybe that's your gift. This is a much needed gift. What is the gift of mercy? You identify with people and comfort people who are in distress. You feel empathy and sympathy for the misfortune and heartaches of others, and you mentally, emotionally, and practically relate to those needs. You might find yourself in hospital visitation, benevolence, or counseling. All of these things. Now, let's come to the final thing. Let's go back to verse 2. *“And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”*

- 6. SETTLED CONFIRMATION.** You will prove what is that good, perfect and acceptable will of God. You will prove it in your own heart. You will have this confirmation and you'll say, “I'm doing what God wants me to. That is my spiritual gift.” Once you see that – Number one, you accept yourself. Number two, you begin to be yourself. Number Three, you begin to give yourself. When you accept yourself, be yourself, and give yourself, then you are blessed, God is glorified, and the church is strengthened. What would happen at Marlowe Assembly of God if you presented yourself a sacrificial presentation, and had a spiritual transformation, and then made a sober consideration? “Lord, what do you want me to do?” You know the problem with many of us? The flesh hooks. We just don't want to get tied down. You say, “Well, let somebody else do it.” **ILLUSTRATION:** London is home to the Kohinoor Diamond along with the crown jewels. The diamond was 186 carats uncut. I read that at one time it was worth half the daily expense of the whole world. This is before it was cut and shaped. It is part of the crown jewels collection. It was reportedly given to Queen Victoria by a Punjab prince, a youngster, who had it in his possession. Years later, this prince, now a grown man, went to the Tower where the jewels are kept, and said, “I want to see the diamond.” He had given it as a child. They wondered if he was going to want it back. They brought it out, though, because he had been the one that had given it. He said, “Would you place it in my hands?” With a measure of fear, they honored his request. Then he turned and said to the Queen, “When I was a child I gave you this, but I had a child's mind. I did not fully understand all that I was doing. And now, as a man, more fully understanding the worth of this diamond, one more time I want to give it to you.” When I heard that, I want to say, “Lord, you know when I was a little boy I gave my heart to Jesus. And now I'm a man. I didn't know all I was doing. I meant it. But one more time, I just want to give my life to You.” Anyone else feel that way? “Lord, because of Your mercies, I present myself a living sacrifice.” That's the first step in discovering your spiritual gift. I trust that's your heart this morning. Perhaps there is one here today who has never yielded their life to Christ. I encourage you to make Jesus Lord of ALL. You can't present yourself a living sacrifice until you present yourself

a sinner needing to be saved. If you want to be saved today, may I guide you in this prayer? Dear God. I know that You love me, and I know that You want to save me. I am a sinner. My sin deserves judgment, and I will receive judgment unless I get saved. But Lord, I want to be saved. Jesus, You died to save me. You promised to save me if I would trust You. I do trust You. Jesus, I receive You as my Lord and Savior. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Save me. I believe You are the Son of God. I believe You paid for my sin with Your blood. I believe that You were raised from the dead. And now make me the person You want me to be, and help me never to be ashamed of You. In Your holy name I pray. Amen.