

- **October 13 1992, a man named Vice-Admiral James Stockdale stood on a stage as a participant in an event he had never imagined he would be part of. Beside him stood two other men, Dan Quayle and Al Gore, both vice presidential candidates. Stockdale was the VP candidate for the most successful third party candidate in modern American history- H. Ross Perot, and the event was the VP debate. Even though both Quayle and Gore would both in their time be actual Vice Presidents, and Stockdale but a historical footnote, the only thing remembered from that debate are the two questions Stockdale asked with his opening words- while you may not know who Stockdale was, You have asked his questions... WHO AM I, WHY AM I HERE.**
- **Romans 1-11: WHO I AM. When we receive life Christ has for us- forgiven, new identity, set free from condemnation.. everything true of us IN CHRIST- WHO I AM, because of WHO GOD IS.**
- **Starting in chap 12, we move from the miraculous truth of WHO YOU ARE, to the great gift...**

✠ The great gift of knowing **WHY** you are!

- **If “WHO AM I” strikes at identity, then WHY I AM strikes at all important question of PURPOSE, MEANING, SIGNIFICANCE. Why am I where I am right now? Why do I matter?**
- **We try to answer this question in so many ways...**
 - **Find meaning in trying to please ourselves... meet our expectation for ourselves**
 - **OR, how we please others... measure up to people’s expectations**
- **IOW, we try to answer the question “what is my significance”- WHY I AM- based upon what WE say, what OTHERS say... but it is a GREAT GIFT if we choose to believe what GOD SAYS...**

Ephesians 2:10 For we (IN CHRIST) are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. (NASB)

- **Workmanship- Poemia... God’s creative masterpiece.**
- **GOOD WORKS- to express the hope and goodness of God in everything we do- and the great promise, that God is working in front of us...**
- **“Walk in them”... calls back to last week’s discussion of God’s will- these “Good works” will involve specific actions, projects... but most importantly, they are the CHARACTER of how we live... As we love God by loving people**
- **THIS brings up question- If I am created for God to express his goodness through me, then what is the context where this happens? What does this look like? Clear NT answer is....**

✠ The Context of **COMMUNITY**

- **One of most succinct statements...Peter**

1 Peter 4:10 Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.

- **“Whatever Gift you have received”... this is how God has created you. Equipped you. Your bents, your uniqueness, your talents- will talk more about this in a minute, but the PURPOSE of these Gifts is to SERVE OTHERS. LOVE PEOPLE!**
- **Remember when we talked about worship- same question for ‘service’- WHERE does service to God happen? In our homes. Our work. Social circles. Any place where we interact with people in the reality of daily life... we serve God by serving people, just as we love God by loving people.**

1 John 4:20-21 *Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen.²¹ And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.*

- **And this brings us to where we are in Romans- because a foundation of loving people through a heart of service, being able to purposefully express God's goodness through the relationships we have in community, is...**

† The foundation of **HUMILITY**

Romans 12:3 *For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.*

- **NIV says “think of yourself with sober judgement”. This sounds kind of depressing, but this is SO IMPORTANT, and it is a source of hope and freedom.**
- **KNOW THE REALITY OF WHO YOU ARE, how God has created you! ONE reason is to deliver us from PRIDE... but as/more important, is the gift of setting aside all the expectations that seek to define us, and through the faith that God gives us, ask the question... HOW HAS GOD SHAPED ME. What is my REALITY- again, my bents, my personality, my talents, what makes me tick, my challenges. BE AT PEACE/CONTENT, because GOD has created me!**
- **DO WE GROW? Yes! When we trust God- faith- to guide us in honestly assessing who we are, where we are in life, this will reveal things that we need to surrender. Areas we need healing. False beliefs about ourselves that we need to be freed from. Sin that we need to confess and allow God to do his work of setting us free.**
- **But the foundation of peace is coming to see the GOODNESS OF HOW GOD HAS CREATED AND SHAPED ME- because scripture declares that HE has created YOU, AS YOU, for a reason, and it is GOOD.**
- **This leads us to one of the great miracles of the TRUTH of Christianity! As followers of Christ, we are DIVERSE! We are different! And yet, IN CHRIST, we are ONE- share a spiritual unity with each other, and we are essential to each other.**

† Unity in Diversity: The miracle of being **ONE BODY** in union with Christ

Romans 12:4-5 *For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function,⁵ so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.*

- **WHY ARE YOU? Why do you matter? You matter because God has created you as an essential part of His body- the community of believers, and we- everyone else- are incomplete without you.**
- **This is essential to God's desire/plan for us as the church, and it is counter-cultural to one of the really negative things about fallen human nature...**
- **We want to be around people who are like us, and we are suspicious of people different from us- tragedy that this human weakness has persisted in the church, because NT proclaims that we are DIFFERENT, and that is GOOD!**
- **Humorous French saying...**

† **Vive la différence!**

- **‘long live the difference’... usually in respect to appreciating qualities of opposite sex. (smile).**

- **For Paul, if he has spoken French, he might have said, VIVE LA DIFFERENCE! God has created us, shaped us, with great diversity! Different Gifts! YES! Not only is this GOOD, it is indispensable!**

Romans 12:6-8 ⁶ Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly:

- **Few things.**
- **Meaning of GRACE- not just forgiveness and mercy. God's grace is his presence, his power, being expressed through our lives. When we allow God to show us who we are, how he has shaped us, gifted us, and we DO THIS, live it out, we are GIVERS OF GRACE!**
- **Interesting phrase "exercise"... God has shaped you for a purpose... put it to use! Exercise! Implies intentionality, discipline, and increasing health as we live out the 'why' of how God has created us.**
- **WORD ABOUT SPIRITUAL GIFTS. LOTS out there, tons of books, lots people have to say about spiritual gifts... much of it can get really mystical... things like speaking in tongues, healing, highly spiritualized and emotional experiences. God can use these at times, and scripture does speak to this, but THE BIG PICTURE- reality of spiritual Gifts...**

Reality! Spiritual Gifts are not mystical experiences focused on ourselves, but *practical and unique* expressions of God's GRACE (PRESENCE/POWER) at work in and through each of us.

- **Now, Paul goes on to describe some of these...**

- **The gift of PROPHECY**

if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith;

- **Real quick- Not telling the future, but God working through a person to be able to discern truth of God's word, nature, in a given situation.**

1 Corinthians 14:3 *But the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort.*

- **The gift of being a SERVANT**

⁷ *if service, in his serving;*

- **Word for servant very humble. 'Waiter'. This is not demeaning, it is perhaps the most essential role God calls us to**

- **The gift of being one who TEACHES**

or he who teaches, in his teaching;

- **The gift of being one who ENCOURAGES**

⁸ *or he who exhorts, in his exhortation;*

- **'exhort'/ encourage... presence that speaks truth- hope- into a persons life**

- **The gift of being one who GIVES**

he who gives, with liberality;

- **As with most of these, we ALL are called to be generous! But God shape and equips some people to do this is a very special way... 'give liberally'- deep desire, receives joy- to be generous. ("Give until it feels good")**

- **The gift of being one who LEADS**

he who leads, with diligence;

- **This leadership doesn't seek its own glory and power, but the good of others. Imagine that!**

- The gift of being one who shows MERCY

he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

- ***Mercy is a true gift. To show mercy, we will be humble, not judge, patient... but also, to show mercy means that we are walking with people in the difficult times of their lives. Rather than a burden, it is a source of joy!***

✠ The gift of Communion: Because of the Cross, the proclamation of *who* we are, *whose* we are, and *why* we are!

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 *For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.” ²⁵ In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.” ²⁶ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes*