**Transforming Grace by Jerry Bridges**

**Chapter 11 – “The Least of All God’s People”**

1. Read Romans 12:4-8. Then answer the following questions.

*[A very short primer on spiritual gifts]:*

The word for “spiritual gift” is *charisma* in the Greek. It means “a thing of grace.” So, a spiritual gift is a grace-gift, a gift of God’s grace. It is a supernatural endowment given by Christ through the Holy Spirit to believers only at their salvation for the benefit of others in the church. There is no such idea of a gift being used for one’s own benefit – they are to be practiced in the church.

Our church holds to a “cessationist” position on spiritual gifts. We believe that the miraculous gifts of prophecy (receiving new revelation from God), healing (the power to perform a complete and instantaneous healing at will), and speaking in tongues (the ability to speak in a previously unlearned language) have ceased with the closing of the New Testament canon c. 100 A.D. These spectacular gifts were temporary “sign-gifts” (1 Cor 14:22) intended to validate the church’s message *before* the Scriptures were completed.

The other gifts, however, continue in operation to this day. The different lists of gifts in the New Testament are not exhaustive (Rom 12:4-8; 1 Cor 12:4-11, 28-30; Eph 4:11-12; 1 Pet 4:10-11). They give us *a representative sampling* of the kinds of gifts believers may have. Peter summarizes the variety of gifts as “the manifold (lit. “multicolored”) grace of God” (1 Pet 4:10). Think of the spectrum of colors and all the different shades of blue, for example. That serves as a reasonable analogy for the number of spiritual gifts.

When 1 Cor 12:28 speaks of the gift of “helps,” since it’s a broad term and plural, we are to understand that there are various gifts that fall under the umbrella of helping gifts.

1 Peter 4:10-11 neatly divides all spiritual gifts into two categories: speaking gifts and serving gifts.

All gifts are meant to bless the church (1 Cor 12:7; 14:26; Eph 4:12-13). They are not intended primarily for one’s own benefit.

1. According to v. 6, on what basis is any spiritual gift given to a believer?
2. Paul follows up his instructions on the use of our gifts with a longer section (Rom 12:9-21) which focuses on our relationships in the church and in the world. What does this say about the purpose of our spiritual gifts?
3. Read 1 Peter 4:10-11. Then answer the following questions.
4. What does it mean that we are “stewards” when it comes to our spiritual gifts?
5. What are we to speak if we have a speaking-type gift? Why is that important?
6. What does it look like to serve “by the strength which God supplies”?
7. According to the second half of v. 11, what is the ultimate purpose of serving one another with God’s “utterances” and by “God’s strength”?
8. Read 1 Corinthians 15:9-10 and Ephesians 3:8. What was Paul’s perspective on his own ability to fulfill the job God had given him to do?
9. What service or ministry has God given to you? Or what opportunities of service are available to you (don’t think of just “formal” ministries)?
10. If you have difficulty answering the first question, spend some time in prayer asking God to show you ways you can begin to serve Him right where He has placed you.
11. How do Paul’s words in these two passages encourage you in whatever God is asking you to do?
12. Why is it pride to focus too much on our unworthiness to serve God to the neglect of His grace (p. 179)?
13. Read 2 Cor 8:1-5. Then answer the questions.
14. What was the cause of the incredible generosity of the Macedonian churches according to 2 Cor 8:1?
15. What evidence do we have from 2 Cor 8:2-5 that their generosity was due to God’s grace operating on their hearts and not simply due to their superior character?
16. Read the following quote from John Owen in his work, *Sin and Temptation* (found on p. 188 in *Transforming Grace*). Then answer the questions.

“Yet the duties God requires of us are not in proportion to the strength we possess in ourselves. Rather, they are proportional to the resources available to us in Christ. We do not have the ability in ourselves to accomplish the least of God’s tasks. This is a law [principle] of grace. When we recognize it is impossible for us to perform a duty in our own strength, we will discover the secret of its accomplishment. But alas, this is a secret we often fail to discover.”

1. Why is it so hard for us to believe that “it is impossible for us” to perform any Christian duty in our own strength?

1. And how must we respond to the reality that we cannot perform a Christian duty in our own strength?