

Romans 12:1-8

I. ME

A. **Welcome [in building & online], who I am a bit:** Elder, Leadership Team, Director of Connect Groups; teaching is my paid gig. Jon took a well-deserved vacation with his family.

B. Series Review

1. "BECOMING"; ALL becoming something. Something we may not stop to think about often... Who do you want to choose to be as an individual? Who can we be as a community? As a church of Jesus followers (if you already are one) or people curious about Jesus? What do we value? How do we live out those values?
2. Last week = Value of Courageous Faith.
 - a. We have a choice between FEAR and FAITH.
 - b. **Faith is not about what you know or believe, but who you choose to trust.** It takes COURAGE to trust God but He CAN be trusted. In the midst of tough times instead of giving in to pointless FIGHTING or RUNNING AWAY from Him, we can CHOOSE to trust God instead. Jon asked you to try that for 3 days last Sunday. I bet if you did that it made a difference! You can continue for more than 3 days if you want! :)

C. This week, week 2 = Value of Shared Ministry.

1. "Shared" is easy. "Ministry" is kinda churchy.
 - a. Meaning = helping each other out; doing the work of the church/ "churchy" work; working and living life together; caring for each other's needs; DOING the work of helping one another in community
 - b. "Church" in Greek is "ecclesia"= assembly of citizens/ a bunch of people getting together, SO REALLY regardless of who is doing it (church people/ non-church people)...
 - c. **"Shared Ministry" is people working together to help out.** Don't consider yourself X-tian? That's ok

here, we welcome it. "Ministry" basically = "service"

2. Lots of examples, focus on ONE = my last 4 hours
 - a. 12:45 pm bike flat:
 - i. "Call of shame". Her response...
 - ii. Didn't even have bike put away, buddy John Case offered to get me a new tube
 - b. More obviously: SOMEONE has to talk up here, hopefully this message will help you out? :) Money back guarantee; if it doesn't, Teaching Pastor Jon will be back next week to refund your \$. :)
 - c. BUT "ministry" is NOT just what you see right now! Behind the scenes:
 - i. 2 pm text: Don't show up early, set-up = done
 - ii. Jon giving me thoughts & direction for this message (SOMEONE has to give direction otherwise ...) Ken helping with Bible interpretation
 - iii. Monica making slides (SOMEONE has to)
 - iv. ___ doing sound & video so you can hear (& see online) me (SOMEONE has to)
 - v. ___ running slides (SOMEONE has to give you something to look at besides just me up here...)
 - vi. ___ teaching my younger son downstairs (I can't be down there today; SOMEONE has to)
 - vii. ___ getting snacks ready for afterwards; SOMEONE has to eat them ;)
 - viii. etc.
 - d. The work of helping out and doing what needs to be done today is the work of a TEAM a whole bunch of SOMEONES , ALL helping together
 - e. Personally, how do I feel about "shared ministry" in the context of giving today's message?
 - i. Excited!
 - ii. Nervous... NOT my wheelhouse. Uncomfortable.

- iii. Also, tired. Other projects half-done. Lots to do to prepare for the school year. Got back from work training early Thurs. morning.
- iv. Honesty time: In life- Sometimes I don't WANT to help others. Teaching is exhausting at times. Don't WANT to help a kid with their HW or another teacher with anything. Don't WANT to help someone move, or come to worship practice; WANT to listen to records or read a book in the quiet, by myself, or go for a bike ride. That's just me... maybe you can relate?

II. WE

- A. Enough about me for a bit... Let me pose a few QUESTIONS to us, as a group, at this point:
 - a. How do we as Crosscreek (those of us that consider ourselves a part), or as a greater community/society approach helping others?
 - b. For those of us that consider ourselves Jesus followers, how do we ACTUALLY approach helping others? How SHOULD we approach helping others?
 - c. Whose JOB is it to help out? If we are honest with ourselves here...

B. Often, our approach to ministry is that it's someone else's job.

- a. Lots of attitudes/ approaches to ministry and service- let's consider 3 basic categories/types of approaches. Maybe you've experienced or participated in one or all of these. If it makes you feel better, I have BOTH experienced AND participated in all 3. If it seems like I have a pretty good understanding of them, it's because I've been on the giving AND receiving end of each one.
- b. Also, "school" thing; AFTER I explain each, "20 second sketch" symbolizing each approach; I encourage each one of you to make a sketch; NOT graded or judged; just fun, especially looking at your neighbor. Will help you remember these... as I said, "school" thing. You can take the teacher out of the school... :)

1. Someone else gets paid for that / "Janitor" approach to ministry/service
 - a. Unfortunately I hear this a lot in middle school- Trash the room or hall & "That's what the janitors get paid for" or just ASSUME someone else will pick it up "I can't, I have to go to lunch/ my next class/catch my bus..." My favorite = "That's YOUR job"
 - b. It happens elsewhere, too. At work: "It's not in my job description". "My contract reads..."
 - c. At home: "That's not one of my chores..."; "I changed the last diaper"
2. Someone else should really do something about that / "Mother Theresa" approach to ministry/service
 - a. There are super people (in this case super HOLY people) who have given their lives to helping others; they were made for that or are just really good at it. They have a special "calling" (churchy word)
 - b. Think we're not really made for that OR not qualified/trained for that. Leave it to the experts, right?
 - c. Too busy, can't do it all!
 - d. Maybe, honestly, we just really don't want to do that.
 - i. The work is beneath us
 - ii. It's too icky, uncomfortable, or difficult
 - iii. We don't really like "people" that much or "those people" that we're supposed to help that much; different culture, place, political background
 - e. [20-second sketch]
3. Every someone else should just take care of themselves/ "Cowboy" approach to ministry/service
 - a. My kids on vacation- What did Grandpa play when he was growing up?
 - i. Dad (71 yrs. old): "We grew up playing 'cowboys'"

- ii. For many of us DEEPLY ingrained; in the American psyche overall, the image of a cowboy in the old West; cowboy X-tians
 - b. If we each just took care of ourselves, everything would be ok. "I don't really ask for help from others, why can't everyone else just do that, too?"
 - c. How can I be expected to help someone who can't even help themselves? (Addiction, mental illness, cycle of abuse)
 - d. [20-second sketch]
4. Maybe you've found yourself thinking/living out these approaches to ministry/service. QUESTION: What do the "Janitor", "Mother Theresa", and "Cowboy" ministry/service approaches all have in common?
- a. **"Someone else". BIG PROBLEM, because:**
 - b. **No one EVER helps if it's ALWAYS someone else doing the helping.**
 - c. If each of us with our unique perspective, experience, opportunity, and abilities does NOTHING to help others, NOTHING ever gets done to help others by anyone; NO ONE gets help. People struggle, families, schools, communities, whole countries fall apart. People suffer individually and collectively.
 - d. Let's face it, every single one of us has needed help at one time or another. Maybe that was you. As recently as TODAY! :)
5. There's another approach, the "Apollo 11" approach...
- a. 50th anniversary recently on July 20th
 - b. Fascinating for me; read, watched videos, read special Statesman Journal insert
 - c. How many people were involved with the Apollo 11 mission?
 - i. 1 (Neil Armstrong)? 10? 1,000?
 - ii. How about 400,000! Amazing!
 - 1. That one step WAS an amazing leap for all humankind
 - 2. Was made possible by the contributions of a very sizeable number of humans! Roughly the #

of people in Marion & Polk counties combined. Imagine if that many people worked together on ANYTHING how amazing it could be!

d. [20-second sketch]

III. GOD

- A. At this point, you might have a very IMPORTANT QUESTION: **WHY?** WHY should I? WHY jump into other people's messes? WHY use my time and resources that way when they are limited to start with? WHY do something I don't even think I can do or WHY start if don't even know what to start on?
- a. From a non-Christian perspective, I struggle to think of even one single example of a person who is admired and did something great that did it all by themselves. Not one. Every person celebrated by a community for their contribution to it had help, had a team, had the support of usually LOTS of others; is an example of SHARED service, not INDIVIDUAL service.
 - b. From a Christian perspective, shared ministry exemplifies both parts of the "law of love". Jesus said the most important law was 2-fold: to love God with all you are AND love your neighbor as yourself. If you have never heard/considered that, think about it as I rephrase that: X-tianity, being a Jesus-follower, is SHOWN THROUGH "shared ministry" and actually super simple [4 words: love God; love others]. LOTS of examples in "the Bible" of that [Hebrew scriptures & life of Jesus and his immediate followers]. Let's consider one very powerful example of shared ministry/service, WHAT that is, WHY we should do it, and HOW:

B. Rom 12:1-8

- a. Quick Background as you turn there if you have a Bible. If not, on the screen... NEW testament, towards the end: Matt, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans
 - i. Apostle Paul wrote it. Top award for Christian-hater? He earned it. Then he met Jesus. His life illustrates "cowboy" to "Apollo

- 11" transformation to ministry/service. X-tians were bad guys beyond help, and he was cleaning house. He was a cowboy out in the wild mid-East, persecuting X-tians. THEN, Jesus gave him a new mission & His team (Silas, Timothy, JESUS) helped Paul; he ended up writing over ½ the "New Testament" and starting churches all over the Mediterranean (fantastic example of "shared ministry"; you should read how many people he thanks in his writings; it's a LOT of shout outs!)
- ii. Written about 55-57 AD to help baby church in Rome (former pagan Romans, Jews, & others). LOTS of questions about what being a X-tian meant; no "the Bible" yet. Where was I without God? Where am I with God now if I believe in Jesus? Most importantly, today = HOW do we live like Christians in the world today, what does it mean?... Something still pertinent today? Something you are still figuring out? No way, me too! :)
 - iii. By many considered Paul's BEST writing; reads like a powerful theological essay. You should really read it, it's incredible... :)
 - iv. ***Disclaimer: If you are NOT a Jesus follower, this letter is written to X-tians, so you are expected to do exactly NONE of what I'm about to say. If you would like, you can still use the ideas and your abilities to better your community and the lives of others. They still work the same way. You are free to try them out for free, no strings attached! :)**

b. V. 1-2

- i. "Therefore" = "because of what I already wrote." God showed himself to humankind through Jesus. We X-tians WERE and ARE in need of Him.
- ii. "In view of God's mercy" =
 1. X-tian starting point; think about what God has already done for you. Much of

this letter already dealt with the fact that before Jesus we were deserving of punishment for our sins (breaking the law of love) but Jesus took the punishment for us.

- iii. We have a new life in Jesus. "Worship" = "giving best of you/ saying 'thanks'"
 1. We can say "thank you" to God for that fresh start by using what He has given us to live out the law of love and help God and others!
- iv. God is making you into something new all the time, don't try to be what you were, you don't fit that shape anymore, you have become, and are becoming, something completely different.
 1. Trying to fit your old form is like a butterfly trying to get back into a cocoon to become a caterpillar again, it doesn't fit that "form"/"shape" anymore. Neither do we as Jesus-followers fit our old shapes.
 2. Good news if you're not perfect yet- transformation is a process! If it feels like it's taking forever, that's because it does!
- v. Being a Jesus follower means you start to think and act more like him all the time. You figure out what God wants from you by thinking more like Jesus as you learn & grow.

c. V. 3

- i. Paul considered himself the chief/#1 sinner. "Grace" = God gave Paul a peace, a life, relationship w/ God & others he didn't deserve. God does the same for each one of us through Jesus. Paul is NOT pretending to be a know-it-all, he's just sharing what God has shown him SO FAR.
- ii. Pause: God has given you the faith you have. It may be just an invisibly tiny speck; maybe you are just starting out, maybe you have a

decent-sized chunk of faith; but whatever you have, God's given it to you and it can be grown and cultivated like a seed into a gigantic redwood. Use the faith you have now! :)

d. V. 4-5

- i. BEAUTIFUL analogy. How do we live in healthy community? What is helping each other LIKE? We, God's children, EACH have a job to do. Just like parts of a body each have a job to do. Brain = control the nervous system & body; eyes = interpret sights from the world; feet = get us from place to place.
- ii. Don't miss this- we are EACH ONE OF US important. YOU are important to the functioning of YOUR community.
- iii. AND we each belong to EACH OTHER; we are connected like our body parts are connected. We each have our part to play; we are INTERDEPENDENT on each other to function.
 1. Science example = We work TOGETHER like muscular & skeletal systems; without muscles, bones are an immovable skeleton in a Halloween display; without bones, muscles are just a rubber chicken on the ground. Put them together/ work together, you get MOVEMENT! :)

e. V. 6-8

- i. God has given us each different gifts.
- ii. NASB clarifies the meaning of the Greek...

"Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, *each of us is to exercise them accordingly...*" like a muscle, faith to use these gifts and their ultimate strength/power grows through exercise.

 1. Gifts are to be shared & used to make the whole body stronger!
 2. Prophecy = You understand something of the mind of God and can explain that to others.

3. Maybe easier to get your head around the others: Service, teaching, exhortation/encouragement, giving, leading.

- iii. This is NOT an exhaustive list of gifts, just some examples Paul is giving so people can say "oh, I could maybe do that or use that to help out". More listed and explained in 1 Cor 12-14
- iv. NO ONE PERSON can do it all- no one pastor; "saint"; amazingly gifted person gets all the gifts. If you can teach, do it! Serve, do it! Encourage someone else, do it! :)

- f. In essence, the "Apollo 11" approach is actually the approach of vibrant communities (including Jesus followers), God's approach AND Jesus' approach, to helping people! It's God's approach to ministry/service! Basically...
- g. **God's design for ministry is to have each one of us help out.**

- C. What Paul's letter to the Romans says about living in Christian community; we CAN make a difference in our lives and those of those around us, inside and out of the "church", we CAN live out our love for God & others by sharing the gifts we have and contributing to the ministry of the church. OVERALL: **The best ministry is shared ministry!**

IV. YOU

- A. Maybe you are thinking "Ok message, so far"; "I already know the "WHAT"= I'm supposed to help others; "WHY" = because God says so, I mean because I'm thankful and I love exercise, blah blah blah. BUT... Aaron, You don't understand...
 - a. "I'm not a teacher, so I can't teach (I wonder that myself)"
 - b. "I'm not good with technology, so I can't do slides
 - c. "I don't really play an instrument or am terrified to get on stage (me, too, sometimes)"
 - d. "I don't have the 'gift of prophecy' or feel like I have those other gifts you talked about either"
 - e. "I don't really know what my gifts are"

- f. "I don't really WANT to get involved, honestly. **HOW** do you expect me to do all this?" GOOD question!
- B. Ask for God's help. I pray ALL THE TIME for God to help me see my students as He does; EVERY week in Connect Group.
 - a. Reminder if Jesus follower, YOU ALREADY HAVE A "HOW". DON'T MISS THIS: GOD (HOLY SPIRIT) LIVES INSIDE YOU! Holy Spirit is THE "helper" Jesus promised us who trust Him before he left for when He left. Tap into his power & love. Ask for His guidance & vision. Take JUST ONE step trusting Him. He WILL help you! Just start sharing your gift and contributing and God will clarify what it is you can and should do next!
 - b. NOT a Jesus follower? "2 for one" offer... Accept Jesus and get Holy Spirit, as well. Trust Jesus with your life. He loves you so much that he DIED for you. Then He beat death and sin forever and came back to life. If he can transform Paul's life (one of the greatest all-time sinners and Christian-haters) he can transform your life, too! That transformation includes being part of a vibrant community of people helping and supporting one another (NOT perfect, but AWESOME). Accept His gift of forgiveness and restoration. Let Jesus lead you and get the Holy Spirit's help, as well! Want to do that today? Join our community of Jesus followers? Be enabled & empowered to help where you see a need in the world? Want to take God up on this offer? Have questions about it? Want prayer? Talk with ____.
 - c. CHALLENGE/ "ALL PLAY": Do ONE thing. EVERYBODY grab a Connect card. Hold it up. (Online: under "You can contribute", click on "Join a team"; fill out and submit the online form). Some are already contributing (couldn't do this today AND Crosscreek wouldn't even exist without you); this is an OPPORTUNITY for you to help out here; it will help YOU to help OTHERS. Fill out & take to the lobby and put it in the wooden box out there. Ken will be standing next to it. :)

V. WE

- A. What would the world look like with everyone living out shared ministry? What if everyone helped someone? Too big? What if just YOU helped out in just ONE way? That's all I'm asking today... baby steps...
- B. What would our communities look like if we each had an attitude that each one of us could help just a little bit?
- C. What if we as a church, a movement of people continually discovering what it means to follow-Jesus, leaned on Him and the Holy Spirit, to help us in this work? Saw a need and helped with just one thing?
- D. Individuals would grow & fulfill their purpose, families would heal, neighborhoods and schools would be better...
- E. **Shared ministry transforms individuals, families, churches, and the greater community.**