



GROWTH EXPECTED

“How to Come to Grips With the Real You.”
Romans 12:3-8

We all grow old but we don't all grow up

OPENING DISCUSSION: Often in the world we live in there are super-stars and there are the rest of us. The stars walk the red carpets and wear clothes and jewelry most of us would only see behind a glass display case. The rest of us get up early, get the kids to school, go to work, come home exhausted, help the kids with homework so that we can get to our project that has a deadline at work. We consider ourselves regular, even insignificant people. **Who do we tend to look at as the superstars in our world (city, state, nation, world...even in the Church)?**

READ: ROMANS 12: (NLT)

Because of the privilege and authority God has given me, I give each of you this warning: Don't think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us.

We often think that this means that we are to think about our failures and sinful condition before God and others, but we are forgiven and new creations. “Paul wants believers to form an accurate picture of themselves in their own minds. They should not consider themselves more important than they are; but neither should they think too little of themselves. Sincere and unreserved service of God and the church begins with a realistic appraisal of one's own strengths and weaknesses.” (*Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary, Vol. 3*)

Vern talked about life's three fundamental questions:

1. Who am I? *Who you really are*, an accurate assessment of your strengths & weaknesses.
2. Where do I belong?
3. What am I supposed to do?

WHO AM I?

What are some of the influences in your life that influence the way you think about yourself? *e.g. Parents, teachers & grades, work and job performance ratings, close relationships, media....*

Last week we considered God's priority of transforming you through your mind in Romans 12:2.

READ: Romans 12:2 *Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.*

How would too high a view of yourself and of your abilities hinder your influence on others? How would too low a view of yourself and your abilities hinder you influence on others?

Vern described God's view of a Christian, one who has been forgiven and restored into a relationship with God through accepting Christ's punishment on their behalf. Read this to the group.

Christian = A blood bought child of God, Jesus' friend, forgiven, righteous, clean, holy, and at peace. You are God's possession, a member of God's family, an heir to God's inheritance, a citizen of heaven, a participant in God's life-changing work, a masterpiece, a saint, a child of light, a living stone being built into a spiritual house, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a person belonging to God and therefore an enemy of the devil. You make God laugh and dance because you bring Him great joy. You are acceptable to God, free from punishment, secure in Him, sealed by the Holy Spirit, blessed with every spiritual blessing, freed from slavery, rescued from Satan's grip, set free from the control of sin, debt free, without blame and rooted in Christ. You have been given power, love, self-control. You have the mind of Christ. You have been chosen and adopted, saved and set apart, raised up and seated with Christ, and you have access to the throne room of God. You have abundant life, and everlasting life, and the life of Christ. You have new hope, ultimate joy, significance, meaning and purpose. You are victorious and triumphant and the one thing that brings the greatest glory to God!

Have you ever had someone tell you that you mean that much to him or her? *Unconditional love makes another worthy of that, rather than you being worthy of that love.*

WHERE DO I BELONG?

READ ROMANS 12:4-5

Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other.

Romans 12:3 focuses the individual on thinking correctly about themselves, now he shifts to thinking of themselves as part of a community. It is difficult to influence others when you do not have a correct view of yourself (either arrogant or self-effacing).

According to Romans 12:4-5, how should the individual Christian view their connection to the community of Christians? *We are part of a Church family with many skills, and the individual has skills to contribute to that family (called a body). Because I am gifted by God with a skill (gift) that is necessary to the health of the Church, I must consider myself as a member of, or belonging to the others.*

Why do you think that the last phrase of Romans 12:5 (*and we all belong to each other*) is difficult for some (if not for you)?

WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO?

READ ROMANS 12:6-8 *In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.*

As you look around at each one in your group, identify one of the gifts mentioned in this section with a person who displays that gift. *e.g. prophesy (or applying God's word to an issue with boldness), serving, teaching, encouragement, giving, leadership, kindness.*

A BRIEF INSTRUCTION OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS:

Gifts are God's distribution of the ministry skills that Christ used in His ministry to individuals when they became a Christian. No one Christian has all of the gifts, and no one spiritual gift is given to everyone. Your gift was given to you the moment you received God's Spirit when you became a Christian. The purpose for your giftedness is first to equip the Church to become more Christlike, second, to model an attribute of Christ so other Christians can see Christ in you and become like Christ by imitating you. So, the fact that you don't have a spiritual gift does not exempt you from building that characteristic of Christ, it calls you to find someone who does have that gift and imitate them. When you serve in the Church in the area of your giftedness you will experience the greatest fruitfulness and fulfillment.

Take some time as a group to take the Spiritual Gifts test that is on the Harvest website. Or, assign this for next week's group time and come ready with the results from your assessment.

READ EPHESIANS 2:10

We are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

If God has planned your area of impact from before creation, and gifted you with a spiritual gift at your new birth, what do you think you should do next?

Another way to clarify your Spiritual Gifts and how they can be used at Harvest is to sign up for the SHAPE class starting in January on Wednesday nights from 6:30-8:00. SHAPE helps you discover not only your spiritual gift, but combines that with revealing your personal passion (heart), Abilities, Personality and Experiences to guide you into service opportunities that will energize you and help mature others in Christlikeness. This is an 8-week class that ends with a personal assessment with a trained assessor who will help clarify your findings and guide you into some service opportunities that might fit your SHAPE profile.