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Title: 212: Responsibility

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:27-31

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Good morning and welcome again to Orchard Hill. I want to just put a date in front of you if you aren't aware. On November 3, 4, 5, and 6, several options at different campuses, we have our annual Year-End Giving event this year. Our initiative is called Next. And you may say, well, Year-End Giving event, no thank you.

And I get that because you may say we've done what we're going to do. We don't want to do anymore. I've been here a long time. I've been through the event. I will pray about it, make our decision, and all of that. But here's why I want you to put the date on your calendar. If this is your church home, this is one of those events every year where we get together and celebrate what God has done, and we talk about what's coming in the year ahead and the part that we can play.

There's no pressure, no manipulation. It's just a simple event of saying, here's what God's done, and here's what we hope God will do. And this year on November 3 and 6 at Wexford, so a Thursday night and a Sunday, two on Sunday, one in the afternoon, one at night, three different options, all the same basically, except one is outside. But other than that, there will be a musician who's coming in who's really fun, interactive time just to have some fun together. And then you'll hear a little bit about what God has done, and again, where we're headed as part of that. If you're in the Strip District campus or part of that November 4. And if you're in Butler, it's November 5, similar events.

And so, I just want to encourage you to go online, register, and maybe get a table with some of your friends. Maybe you say, I just want to meet some new people and so register, and you get placed at a table and have a chance to make new friends. But this really is a big part of just our year, every year. And if this is your church home, I'd love just to have you be a part of that event.

So, let's pray. Father, thank you for just each person who's gathered this week and at Orchard Hill Online, the Chapel, Strip District, Butler, Wexford, wherever we're coming from today, and God, I pray that you would speak to us, that my words would reflect your word in content, tone, and emphasis. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

So, maybe when you were in school, you remember the school having something like a gifted program, or if you're a parent or grandparent, maybe you've watched your kids or grandkids go through this. And this is where we test kids when they're in first grade, second grade, or third grade, and we decide that some kids are gifted and some kids are not.

And so, we put kids in a gifted program and then we perpetuate it year after year where they're in the gifted program. And parents feel really good because they say, my kids are gifted, and they get a bumper sticker and put it on their car. I have a gifted child and the kids who are in the program feel good about themselves because they go to the gifted program and they learn math at a higher level or whatever it is. And the other kids sit in the regular class going, I guess I'm not gifted now.

You can probably tell by the way I'm talking about this that I'm a little snarky with it, and that's because to me, it doesn't make a lot of sense to say to a child in second grade, oh, you're gifted and this kid is not gifted simply because you test a kid who's a little older and they test a little better, and you put them in the gifted program.

And I'm not trying to rain on anyone's parade, but I would guess if you did some research that the kids who are "not gifted," end up doing just as well as the gifted kids later on in life. And the gifted kids have just as likely a rate not to do as well. That's just a guess. I haven't done any of the research, but here's why I bring this up.

Spiritually speaking, every person is gifted. That is the teaching of the New Testament. It's the teaching of Scripture that if you're a follower of Jesus Christ, you have unique gifts, unique talents, and a unique contribution that only you can make. In fact, here's what Ephesians chapter two says. This is a different passage than the one we're looking at, but I think this says it so beautifully. Verse eight says, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast." And those are familiar verses.

If you've been around the church, you've probably heard those verses. Saying it's not your works that make you right with God, that gets you a ticket to heaven, but it's grace that's accessed through faith so that no one boasts, no one says, I've done well, I've done enough, I'm good, therefore God likes me better or lets me in. We're all in the same boat. We all need the work of Jesus Christ.

But then the next verse says this, "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." A couple of things about verse ten when it says we're God's handiwork. The Greek word there is the

word *poiema*, and sometimes that's translated poem. It means handiwork or work of art. And so, what that means is that once you've come to faith in Jesus Christ, God is saying, I have made you like a work of art. I've created you for good works to contribute to the thriving of the world, for things that are not necessarily for you to do to gain access but because of who I made you to be, I've not saved you by good works, but for good works.

And then, when we come back to First Corinthians 12, what we see is a list of gifts. There are four different lists of gifts throughout the New Testament. We'll talk about this in just a moment. But here's why this is important. Stuart Briscoe, an older pastor who died I think last year, used to say this. He said, "The church is full of people who are absolutely convinced that they cannot do what they have never tried."

My guess is some of us came here today and we're part of the church community. And maybe over the last couple of weeks, as we talked about community, where we talked about how the church needs you and you need the church, you weren't entirely sure. And last week when we talked about receiving, maybe you said, yeah, there are some gifts of the body that would be good for me.

But some of us come here and we say, I don't have much to offer. Maybe we feel that way because right now we feel like we can barely keep our stuff together in our own lives. Maybe we feel young. Maybe we feel like we sin too much. Maybe we feel as if we've made some mistakes along the way, and so we don't feel like we have much to offer. Maybe we're in a place where we just simply say, I'm really busy and there will be another time or another place where I can invest more. But today I'm just simply doing what I need to do.

Or maybe your thought process has been somebody else can do it. Somebody can do it better than me. Or maybe you've just said I'd love to contribute, but if I'm going to contribute, then I need to contribute to something the way that I want to contribute to it. I need to lead it and be in charge because the way that people do it isn't the way I would do it. And I don't want to be a part of something that isn't the way I would do it. And so, we have this moment of saying, I don't have much to give.

But the teaching in First Corinthians 12 about being part of the body, about each person, verse seven, being given a manifestation of the spirit for the common good, is you have been gifted and your gift matters if you're a follower of Jesus Christ. And not only this, I believe that when you use the gifts that God has given you, you will actually find that it is spiritually enriching.

Sometimes we get to a place where we start to feel a little dull, and this whole series has been built on the premise of this idea of a boiling point and adding heat to our spiritual life. And one of the reasons that sometimes we end up feeling a little lukewarm, a little indifferent, is because we've turned so inward that we don't use the gifts God has given us. But when we take responsibility and say, I'm part of God's body to impact the world, then it produces spiritual heat and transformation in our own lives.

And so, what I'd like to do today is just talk about three questions that emerge from this text in First Corinthians. The first one is this, and that is, what are the gifts? Simple question. And as I mentioned, there are four lists in the New Testament. I think we have a list here that will go up on the screen that shows the four different lists and all of the different gifts that appear in the different lists.

And we're certainly not going to talk about all of these. And if you take and synthesize the lists and some of the definitions a little bit, you typically get 18 or 19 gifts. Some people don't include hospitality in their list of gifts because it's right before that. But if you include that, there are 19 gifts that are mentioned.

Sometimes people use them in different ways and certainly, there's a difference between natural talent and a gift. You may have a talent at something that is not a spiritual gift, not something that's supernaturally energized by God. Certainly, there's a difference between gifts and fruit, the gifts of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit.

And what I mean by this is you if you've been here, you've heard me mention tongues a couple of times. It's in this passage again. And maybe you say, okay, we've talked about that enough, or maybe they haven't said enough about it. We're actually going to talk more about that in the weeks ahead because there are a couple of times where it comes out in chapters 13 and 15 of First Corinthians. But the reason I mention this here is sometimes people will say, well, the evidence of the spirit is speaking in a prayer language, an ecstatic utterance.

But the evidence of the Spirit in the New Testament is the fruit of the Spirit. It's love, joy, patience, goodness, and kindness, Galatians 5. So, it's possible to have gifts of the spirit and do things for God and not be living in the reality of the Spirit in your own life, because the fruit is shut down and so we want to understand the difference between those.

And then there's a difference between a command and a gift as well. If you noticed on the list of gifts that mercy was on there. And what that means is that there are people who have a spiritual gift of showing mercy. If you've ever encountered one of

these people when you're hurting, you know it because you sense the smile or the presence of God through them. If you're in the hospital, you want a person with mercy to visit you, but that doesn't mean that if you say, I don't have the gift of mercy, you're off the hook forever showing mercy to anybody.

The same thing is true with evangelism. You can say, well these people have the gift of evangelism. It doesn't mean that you don't have a responsibility. Or we could talk about giving. There's a spiritual gift of giving. But to simply say, well because I don't have that gift, I don't feel compelled to ever be a part of something like this.

Now, there are different ways people have tried to categorize these, just to wrap their heads around them, because a list of 19 is admittedly a little like drinking from a firehose. And here's just one way that people have tried to talk about them, and that is to say, there are what they call primary gifts, support gifts, and sign gifts.

If you put some things together, here's what you could think about. Primary gifts would be gifts that lead directly to some kind of activity. So, the gift of apostleship, which is in this passage, or evangelism, most people put those together. In the New Testament, the idea of the office of Apostle, I believe, was tied directly to seeing Jesus in person so that somebody who claims to be an apostle today is not.

But the gift of making inroads to communities and to people still exists. And so does the gift of evangelism. Helping people come toward faith. Teaching is evident. Pastor Shepherd is somebody who has the gift of caring for others, checking in, and bringing people along spiritually. Administration and leadership are, what it sounds like, mercy, giving, and hospitality. All are gifts that tend to be very direct.

And then there's what is often called support gifts, things like discernment, being able to discern. And maybe there's a ministry for discernment somewhere, but usually, you don't get a chance to say, oh, great, discerner, tell us what's going on here. And then there are gifts of encouragement and exhortation. And again, maybe there should be a ministry of encouragement, but some people just have a knack for knowing what to say and how to say it to encourage you or to challenge you at the right time.

There is a man who used to attend here. He passed away a few years ago, but in the years when I first started here, I would always sit over on this side and he would sit right behind me. He'd come every Saturday night. His name was Darian. And Darian had the gift of encouragement. And I don't know if he just knew, you're a first-time pastor in this church or a young pastor in this church, but every weekend, no matter how bad the message was, he would say that was just spectacular. I needed that. And

then he would say this. He would say, that was so good. I'm coming back tomorrow, and I'm bringing friends. And he would do it.

Now, you may say I don't know if that's the gift of encouragement. It felt like it to me in that time period. You may say, well, maybe he should have told you when it was bad. But my point is just that there's not an official ministry but he took it so seriously in that season that it mattered. And when you're around somebody who has that kind of gifting, you feel it, you sense it.

And then beyond that, there's a gift of faith, which we did talk about a little bit last week, which is the idea of being able to believe in God when it seems dark to people around us. Intercession, knowledge, wisdom, and prophecy. Again, we'll talk about prophecy in the weeks ahead.

And then there's what some have called the sign gifts, which are gifts that we're given to authenticate the apostles at a certain time. This would typically be seen as tongues, the interpretations of tongues, healing, and miracles. And that's not to say that those things don't happen today, that miracles and healings and speaking in other languages don't happen today as much as it is to say that however they are utilized today, they appear not to have the same function that they did then in terms of authenticating the original apostles. And again, we'll talk more about that in the days ahead.

But here's what I want you to get today, and that is, if you're a follower of Jesus Christ, whether you're in middle school, high school, three weeks into being a follower, or 30 years into being a follower of Jesus, you have been given a spiritual gift that exists so that the whole body can thrive.

In fact, if you're trying to understand the gifts, here's one way that somebody just tried to understand it. They talked about if a bus carrying a bunch of people from a church were to break down, here's how the gifts would function. Somebody with the gift of administration would say, does anyone know where the insurance and mileage forms are? Somebody with the gift of prophecy would say, well, I just sense that God is saying to us that we need to trust him because, after all, Romans 8:28 says all things work together for good. Somebody with the gift of mercy would find the person responsible for maintenance and give him a hug.

Somebody with the gift of exhortation would find the person responsible for the maintenance and say, why didn't you take care of this? Somebody with the gift of encouragement would say, it's going to be okay and we'll get there. Somebody with the gift of giving would say, let's take up a collection and make sure we can fix the

bus. Somebody with the gift of miracles would say, let's pray for a plane. Somebody with the gift of ruling or leadership would say, some of you guys give us a hand with the transmission. Somebody with the gift of knowledge would say, I once read where a bus transmission could be overhauled just using a screwdriver. Somebody with the gift of helps would say, I'll hand you the screwdriver.

An evangelist would say, I'll share Christ with the bus driver. Somebody with the gift of serving would say, I'll crawl under the bus and fix it. Somebody with the gift of teaching would say, here are three things we can learn from this experience. And somebody with the gift of wisdom would say, in the future, we should get the bus serviced before we leave. Now, that's just a goofy way to kind of talk about that. But the point is, however you come to a situation is actually unique, and it is needed inside the body of Christ. So, what are the gifts?

Here's the second question. How do you know what gift you might have? Well, there are a few ways that we can think about this. It does say in First Corinthians 12, again, this simple statement, and that is, now you are the body of Christ and each one of you is a part of it. So how do you know which part you have?

Well, one answer that people have given over time is to take an assessment. This is a test that you can take that tells you about your spiritual gifts. And one assessment that I've seen used well is one that's called *Uniquely You* spiritual gifts assessment. If you Google it, you can find it. And I think it's \$10 and you can take a bunch of questions and it'll tell you maybe what gift you have and what context you might be able to use it in. And they have, I think, 6, 9, 16, and 23 gift inventories. I like the 9 because it tends to be a little cleaner and simpler.

Another way to think about it is just simply affirmation. And that is, where am I affirmed in the gifts that God has given me when I do something? Now, obviously, you have to be a little careful with this. As I mentioned, the guy who used to encourage me, you may say, well, sometimes people just like to encourage people. And maybe he had the gift of falsehood. And so maybe that isn't helpful all the time.

Or if you sing, you've known this, if you've ever been around the church, if somebody is pitchy, people still tell them they did a great job because we want to be nice. And so, it isn't always true. But affirmation, when I talk about it, is the idea of saying when you use your spiritual gift, you sense, or people tell you that it matters. You have a sense of satisfaction. And what happens at that moment, sometimes it's a sense of impact with what you're doing, meaning you see the good that's happening.

A story has been told about Mike Singletary, who was a linebacker who played for the Chicago Bears and All-Pro, and later the coach of the San Francisco 49ers. He used to go to his church once a month on Saturdays, including during the season to help clean windows. He was on a rotating team that cleaned windows in the church. And when he was asked about it, he basically said, I just love being able to come and feeling like I'm doing something that's contributing to the greater good.

Dan Irvin, who leads our Strip District campus, put it this way last week in teaching on First Corinthians 12. He just simply said it's not so much the part that we play as what we're a part of that brings about the joy that we have. And so sometimes it's the impact.

And then I would also just add the phrase where we sense joy and passion. And this comes from Frederick Buechner, who used to say where our deepest joy and the world's greatest need meet is where we find basically the purpose of God in our lives. And so, you can see a Venn diagram that just has joy and need. And where those two intersect is where God has something unique for you. And so, how do you know, maybe an assessment, maybe affirmation, maybe a sense of impact or joy but there's a sense in which when you utilize a gift God has given you, you have a little sense of the smile of God.

So then where do you start is the third question. If you've heard this and you say, well, I have a gift, but right now I'm busy, right now my life is hard, right now I'm young, right now I don't even drive, or whatever your situation is. Well, in a way, we need to go back to Genesis two to understand this. In the Bible narrative, Genesis one is creation. Genesis two is part of the creation story, along with the fall that comes into being in Genesis three. And as God created, what He did is He created man to be in a relationship with Him and man and woman to be in a relationship with each other and to have dominion over creation.

And when you get to the fall, what happens is it's all reversed. If you remember the story, Adam and Eve eat the fruit out of the tree in the middle of the garden. And when they eat the fruit of the tree, what is it that they do? They hide from God, creating alienation from God. They cover themselves. Before this, they were naked and unashamed is what the text says, and then they cover themselves because they were alienated from each other.

And now instead of being able to just eat the fruit from the tree, the curse on creation, in a sense was that they had to be and experience alienation from creation and had to work the land moving forward. So, the fall brings about alienation from God, from others, and from creation or the physical being of our universe.

And what happens when you say I have a gift that God has given me is you begin to address one of those areas of alienation, either saying I will be able to help some people come to faith in Jesus Christ, maybe by participating in something that's happening in a broad environment or maybe very personally, I'll help bring reconciliation to people and people groups that are struggling, and I'll help bring about physical restoration to what's been alienated.

And any time that God is not our master and there's spiritual, psychological or physical alienation, then there's an opportunity to say, this is where I can help bring a little piece of the kingdom of God. You see, using your gift isn't about just perpetuating the mission of the church. It is part of that, but it's about bringing the Kingdom of God to bear in the world in which we live.

And here's what's true for most of us, and that is, being part of something is much better than watching something happen. I remember years ago I was living in Michigan and my boys were at the age where they had started participating in youth sports. And for those of you who have kids in youth sports, it is an intense time where you run everywhere for every sporting event. And it feels like all of your nights and Saturdays and Sundays are filled with youth sports.

And so, I'm a big NBA fan, I've watched the NBA. My kids like it. They were playing youth basketball. And at the time, the church we were at was doing business with some contractors. And one of the contractors offered us box seats to the Piston game. And so, I took my son and I drove to Detroit to the Pistons game and it was awesome. We were there. We got to see the game. There was food there. They were great seats.

And I still remember, though, as we were driving home, I was asking him about his experience and I'll never forget what he said. He said, you know, this was really great, dad, thanks for taking me. But if I had to choose, I think I'd rather play a game than watch one. And you know, as we get older, that's still true. We'd rather be part of something than simply watch. And what happens is when we get used to watching, then we get used to standing on the side and saying here's what could be better, here's what somebody could do better, rather than simply saying, this is part of what I do because of how God has made me.

Now, to be fair, there are what I'm going to call tangible and intangible ways to use your gifts. And what I mean when I say that is tangible is where you say, I'm going to plug into something that's part of a whole. And I do believe that when you plug into the whole of a local church, it helps the church and helps you.

But what can happen sometimes is you can say because I do tangible things, because I'm part of something, then I don't need to do the intangible. And what the intangible is, is this the moment when you say, here's a person who needs some love, here's an opportunity right now to invest part of myself into somebody's life. And if your ministry activity keeps you from actually ministering to people, then you're not using your gift. You're not bringing reconciliation to the world of alienation.

But at the same time, it's just as possible to say, I do all kinds of intangible ministry, therefore I don't need to do anything tangible. And we say because I'm open to doing intangible ministry, therefore I don't actually need to do anything tangible.

And it's easy on either side of this to miss maybe where God wants to build something in and through you. And I know that if you've invested in something over time, you may hit a point where you say, I'm just tired. I'm tired of working at this and doing this. But I just want to encourage you to keep going. Don't stop. And maybe there's a time to change the exact context in which you do something, but being energized to say this is something that I believe has benefits.

Last week I talked for a few moments about the gym. And when I talked about going to the gym as a parallel to spiritual life, what you know is that if you only went to the gym when you felt like it and you saw instant results, you would never go. You go to the gym because you want results that you can't see today and you go when you don't feel like it. Now, again, sometimes you need to change the routine because you go and you've hit a plateau. And I get that. But my point is you say there's something here that's worthwhile.

Now, again, I'm just going to come back and say, I know some of us who are gathered here today will say, well, I don't have a lot to offer and I just want to tell you on the authority of God's word that as you sit here today, you have been gifted by the Holy Spirit to bring a supernatural element to the Church of Jesus Christ if you're a follower of Jesus. It doesn't matter your age, it doesn't matter how you've blown it, it doesn't matter the things that you say I can't because of this, you have been given a gift by God.

Some of us may say, well, I don't have enough time, and that's understandable. Some of us might be in a high-demand season at work, and with kids. And we may say this is just really a season where right now I can't be very tangibly invested. And if that's true, my only word of encouragement to you is don't let that season become a lifetime pattern, but instead say, this is a thing that I believe God has called us to do.

Some of us might feel like we just don't have enough sway. In fact, in this passage, one of the interesting things is how he says, "Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?" And the implication is, no, no, they don't. And then it says this, "Now eagerly desire the greater gifts."

Brady Randall, who leads our Butler campus, pointed out to me this week that grammatically this idea of, "Now eagerly desire the greater gifts," which is an imperative the way it's stated here and normally how it's translated, can exegetically, grammatically be translated as an indicative. And all that means is that instead of reading it as a command that says, do this, now you desire the greater gifts, that it could be indicative, meaning you are desiring the greater gifts.

And that actually makes this passage make a lot more sense because what he's doing is he's saying some of us are trying to say, I'll only participate if I get recognized, I get a lot of sway. And what we want to do is say, now I'll bring the best of who I am and we'll try to help contribute to what God is doing.

And here's what you know and I know, and that is if you simply stand back from anything and say, this isn't all it could be, it will not get better or improve. But as you say, I'm part of what God is doing, then you get a chance to simply say, I'm going to use what God has given me to help more and more people come to understand who Jesus is and to walk in the reality of God's kingdom in this world.

We have a board of elders and servant leaders here at Orchard Hill that are charged with the oversight of the church, my role at the church, and the ministries of the church. And at our last meeting, we had several ministry leaders come in just to tell a little bit about where they were at and how they were working. And we asked them the question just very simply, what is your greatest challenge today? And each one of them who answered the question without them knowing ahead of time how this was going to be asked, said, we don't have enough volunteers for the things that God is encouraging us to do.

Now, some of those are in the church. Some of those were ministry partners that are beyond the church. But my point is this, and that is what Jesus said in Luke about the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. What was true then can be true now. That some of us have gotten comfortable saying, I just receive and we've gotten stale spiritually because of that, when if we will put ourselves in a place of saying, I'm investing, it will raise our spiritual temperature and bring about a change in the broader community. First Corinthians 12 says, if you are a follower of Jesus Christ,

you're in the body and you have a gift, something to bring that matters to the body, to the church, but also to you.

We're going to pray and then have a chance to partake in communion together. Would you pray with me? Father, we ask today that you would help each one of us who's gathered just to understand and see the gifts that you've given us, and get over whatever hurdles or challenges have kept us from bringing those to bear so that as we utilize them, you will be made much of and we will see our own spiritual temperature grow. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.