

Finding Your Call 3-17-02

Romans 12:3-8

To move forward we must consolidate the ground that we have gained. If the Holy Spirit is indeed moving us forward, and speaking to us in the messages, we should be like little Samuel and not let His word fall to the ground. If it is indeed the Lord laying upon my heart what we need to hear each week, in answer to our prayers, then all glory for any good results are all His. Man will always fail but God will never fail you! So for a moment let me review with you the ground we have covered together.

Love one another! It is the Lord's command. We can't love God if we are unwilling to love our brothers. If we will let God's love for each other be evident here, then there won't be enough space to hold everyone that will be drawn here. Love is the fulfilling of the Law. God loved us and we ought to love one another. If we allow the love of Christ to dominate our relationships, people will know it's safe to come back to church. Love one another!

Then we talked about the need to level the mountains and fill the valleys. If there is anything in our hearts that keeps us from welcoming the presence of the Lord it must go. Conviction must drill the holes in our rock hard hearts and the word of God will blast loose those mountains we have allowed to be in His way. I encouraged you to memorize Galatians 5:6b (NIV). *The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.* Let your heart be always sensitive to the Holy Spirit – always welcome the King with a straight clear road to your heart.

Keep short accounts with your brothers and sisters. Refuse to be offended. But if you are offended quickly go in humility and clear the air. Don't let anything get in the way of loving one another. We have no right to hold on to a grudge when Jesus forgave us a million times as much. If we hold a grudge, it poisons us and those we share with. Forgive from your heart your brother or sister if you want God to forgive you.

Last week the Lord challenged us to leave the driving of our lives to Him. To climb up on the altar and present all that you are as a living sacrifice. To lay down all your rights and surrender yourself to the Lord. I challenged you to give up your dreams and desires and replace them with the goal of living to love and obey your Lord. That is a radical commitment, but He did that for you. We owe that to Him. If we do that we will know what God's perfect will is. We will not be conformed to the world, but will be transformed, and so will our city. God's goal for us is Christ-likeness. Eph 4:11-16

Lets move on with the Apostle's instruction to the church in Rome. After those verses about surrendering to the Lord and being a living sacrifice, transformed not conformed, Paul goes on to tell us what a transformed life looks like.

Romans 12:3 (NIV)³ *For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.*

We are merely servants doing our duty. If we do everything God has commanded us, loving Him with all our heart, and our neighbor as ourselves, then we are just doing what we ought to do. No credit is due us. None of us is any more special than anyone else. I would much rather hear how the Holy Spirit spoke to you personally than to hear I did a good job. Luke 17:10(NIV) *...when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'* The church will not grow with the right elders if the people will not lay down their lives. Nor will it grow with loving members if you have elders, (I include the pastor in that group) who are not servant leaders. We all need each other, and all of us must be submitted to God. When we recognize our gift and calling, we need to step into that role and recognize it is a gift from God. So then whom do we thank for the results? God! Every time you are praised for doing a good job you should feel uncomfortable. I do! It is Jesus working in us, and we are doing our duty. That is all. We can be honest and speak of our surprise that God did work through us. Be honest and recognize the measure of faith God has given you, but give Him all the glory as the source. Don't get a big head! The church will go on without any of us, including me. Still, recognize His gift and use it in accordance with the faith God gives you. He'll increase that faith when you use what you have.

To think too highly is pride. To not be honest about your gift is false humility- pride in disguise. Did you hear about the guy who got a pin for being humble? The next Sunday they took it away from him because he wore it. If we obey this simple instruction to not think too highly but soberly, God can help us to build one another up. That is what the gifts are for. Then He gets all the glory.

Romans 12:4-5 (NIV)⁴ *Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.*

Do you need your hand? How about that big toe? A falling tree hit my mother-in-law. One nerve in her back was severed. It was the nerve that affects her toes. Did you know you can't balance enough to walk without your toes? Doctors once thought the appendix and the tonsils were unnecessary, a hold over of evolution. Now they know different. We need all the parts. They all have a function and add to the whole. The recent scandal over the crematorium in the south began when a dog found a body part. A body part by itself is not a pretty sight. Body parts belong to other body parts and can't really function unless they are properly connected and working together with the rest of the body. That is why we need to appreciate each other. Every individual is here by God's design. If you want to limit them because you don't like something about them personally, you limit yourself. It is like severing that nerve to your toes. You don't think it is so important but then you find you can't stand. Everyone has a place in this church body just as all your body parts have a purpose. Have you found yours? If my thumb won't cooperate

with my fingers what happens? I'm handicapped. We have handicapped ourselves, our church, because we don't find the gift and calling of each individual, and then equip them to function in that calling. Too often we just place willing people where there is a need. When was the last time your ear smelled a fire?

It is less painful to be a non-functioning body part – lying inactive by yourself, but if you want to function and be useful you need to get connected and work together. Proverbs tells us that where there is no ox the stable is clean, but much work is accomplished by that messy ox. The same is true for the body of Christ and the human body. If things are getting done there will be a mess and some pain. Work your body hard and there will be pain. When the church starts really functioning there will be pain. But we work through it and function together for the glory of God.

That should be one of our priorities in the future. We need to find where each of you fit in the body. Most of you already know. Some of you just need to try a few things and find out for yourself. Joe was asked to be the head-usher. I don't think he ever did that before, but he does a great job. I don't think Judy, Barbara or Mariko were on a praise team before but they fit right in. Where is your place? Are you functioning? You'll get an idea when you feel you are doing something beyond what you would have expected you could. The first time I had to fill the pulpit I started off the sermon by saying preaching wasn't my call. When I was done that Sunday God changed my mind. Something much more than me happened there. If there is a need in the body God will stir someone's heart. Is He stirring your heart? You don't have to respond, but you will miss a blessing and fulfillment if you brush it off. God will call someone else. If we, as a church, need to be involved in some type of ministry, we need to trust God that in His time He will inspire (breathe into) someone to act.

For some it will be behind the scenes, in prayer, in quiet, unseen work. We need them as much as noisy ones like me. Without them I'm a sitting duck. I have people across the U.S. praying for me because I know it is not in me. Without God I am nothing. Without God's protection this will be another sad chapter in the church of Sedona. But if we humbly step into the role God has for us, if we honor one another's gifts, and we are living sacrifice on the altar of God –then LOOK OUT! Jesus is at work! When He has freedom to do it His way, then there is fruit that remains. That is more than a full sanctuary, it is transformed lives!

Notice in verse 5 we all belong to all the others. That does not mean just the people inside these walls. It stretches out across the city. It goes around the globe. It includes ages past and ages to come. Together we make up the body of Jesus and that is a wonderfully mind boggling thing. Let us all do our part so as not to handicap that beautiful bride the Father is preparing for His Son. You are not your own. We all belong to one another. Every believer in this town and around the world belongs to you and you to them.

Romans 12:6 (NIV)⁶ *We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith.*

All gifts are from the grace of God. Our faith will determine the extent of the use of our gifts. Here Paul begins a list of the gifts. It is slightly different in 1Corinthians 12 and in Ephesians 4. Vines describes the word 'prophecy' as *pro* - "forth" *phemi* "to speak" It is the declaration of that which cannot be known by natural means. (Matt. 26:68) It is the forth-telling of the will of God, whether with reference to the past, the present, or the future. We tend to think of someone standing up like a prophet and proclaiming some future event that will occur. In Matthew the word was simply used as speaking what could not be known naturally. I hope that every Sunday the word spoken is prophecy. How can I know what God would share with you? I have to go to prayer and find out what cannot be known naturally. Where do we need to look this Sunday? I can't know that by natural means. There is the eternal truth of the passage but the application for today with this body of believers must be discerned. 1John 2:27 tells us that His anointing will teach us about all things. The purpose of this gift was to edify, to comfort, and to encourage the believers. (1Cor. 14:3) The effect upon unbelievers was to show that the secrets of a man's heart are known to God, to convict of sin, and to constrain to worship.

I pray that happens in every service. 1. That you are edified, comforted and encouraged. 2. That God shows He knows the secret things in man's heart so we are convicted and constrained to worship. If that does not happen then I doubt it was prophecy. If it does, you know it was prophecy.

Romans 12:7 (NIV)⁷ *If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach;* We are all called to serve, but some have an extra grace to do so lovingly and graciously. In 1 Corinthians 12 this gift is listed as 'helps'. Many people think this would be their gift. Good! We need more people that serve than we do most any other gift. This is like being the hand on the body. It is one of our most useful members. It is involved in many kinds of work. It assists others in their calling. Man would tend to think of this as less significant. Nothing could be further from the truth. Without humble helpers little would get done. Those with more visible gifts would wear out quickly without their help. The Kingdom way of thinking is that each gift is equally important. Humility sees the reality that we need each other equally.

Teaching – Ephesians 4:11 combines pastoring with teaching and this is usually true because elders, Paul told Timothy, were to be 'apt to teach'. There is a great need for teaching. I teach 7 classes a week and could use some help. Let me know if you feel called to teach and I will help equip you. We have need for teachers of every age and gender. If we prepare to teach others, God will bring us hungry sheep. Shepherds guide sheep to pasture. Prepare and they will come. As I shared with you last week, we have what I think is an urgent need to teach teens. Do you realize the vast majority of people who come to Christ for salvation do so before the age of 21? If we want this church to continue on, then we must evangelize and disciple the young people. We need to pray in someone to focus on the teens.

Imagine Jordan Hall with about 20 teens studying God's word. Do you think that is God's will? I do! Then let's pray in faith.

Pat and Mariko and Wren are ready to work with the younger ones for Sunday School and children's church. If you would like to be an alternate for them let Pat know. We need to give these little ones a foundation in the word and opportunities to receive Jesus. We need to give the teachers a chance to be in the worship service.

At the other end of the age spectrum, Nellie Whitford has been teaching simple Bible stories and singing hymns weekly out at the Sedona Winds. Her mother had a stroke and so she is not able to continue with that ministry. Is God leading you to fill her shoes there?

Romans 12:8 (NIV)⁸ *if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.*

When we say encouraging we all think of Jesus, then Ida. What a demonstration of the gift of encouragement! Now lest she get all puffed up about that let us say it in another way. Thank God who has given the gift of encouragement to Ida. Let her encourage you. If she has something positive to say – let her, it's Jesus through her. It is her duty. Thank God for her and learn from her. Some of you may be called in the same way.

Leadership as a gift is only mentioned here. We have leaders in the church and they are instructed here to give all diligence to the application of their gift. Leadership often needs to ask others to help in getting things done. Let us do all we can to cooperate and assist them with that burden. Pray for your leaders. Pray for the boards that make decisions that they are led by the Holy Spirit and not personal preference. Pray that they are led in unity. They struggle like you do trying to discern God's perfect will.

And last but not least on this list is mercy. When you really empathize with other people's pain you hurt with them. This can weigh you down if you do not constantly cast your burden on the Lord. We have a lot of hurting people in our midst and we need to show the mercy that the Lord shows us. He hurts with us. Let us also allow ourselves to hurt for others. It is a big price to pay but someone needs to pay it. God will put heavenly reward to your account when you can't be rewarded on earth. This is a gift that is really needed in our community. We have many elderly people, some who have just lost their mate. Some are at death's door and need someone to walk them through to the arms of Jesus. It may be your calling. It may be your spiritual act of worship. Pastor Ed ministers to those in the community whose mate has died. It is a calling that requires the compassion of Jesus. Pray for that ministry.

I can give you all kinds of ideas for where I think God wants us to move, but I can only do so much. We need the Holy Spirit to speak to our hearts and inspire us with

His leading. If you come to me and say, "We need this or that ministry!" I'll respond, "Great! What can I do to help you start it?" God has probably already laid on your heart some type of service for His Kingdom. Sometimes we are hesitant and fearful because we don't think we could do it. You can't! But God can! He is more than able when you realize you can't. If He calls you then He will equip you and be the strength and wisdom in you to see it through.

What has God called you to do in this body of believers? Don't think within the box. Let the Spirit of God direct you to your calling in Him. When each of us steps into that call, we'll see Wayside really start to touch this town. Do you remember when God spoke to Moses at the burning bush? He asked him, "What is that in your hand?" It was just a shepherd's rod. With that rod God was going to shake the most powerful nation in the world. Just an ordinary stick for herding sheep, but when the power of God was on it, wielded at God's direction, it was an instrument to deliver a nation.

What is in your hand? What is in your hand? Think about that this week. How does the Lord want to use it, within the body, connected to one another, to bring His presence into your world? Whatever you have been entrusted with can be His instrument to transform lives and make a way where there was none. You don't think it is just a coincidence that God gave you those gifts and talents and then called you as His own do you? Over the next few weeks I hope to receive a number of phone calls as the Spirit of God lets you know what He wants to do through you. Where God guides He provides and empowers. Do not fear little flock for it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Pray, listen, act! Read Ephesians 4:11-16