

Step Up

Equipped to Serve

October 4, 2026

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Week 4

Ephesians 4:11-12; Romans 12 6-8

In this series, Step Up: What Grace Moves You to Do—we've been talking about the invitation, motivation and our attitude in serving. Why we serve. How we serve. But now, we turn a corner and learn about how we are equipped to serve. Because here's the truth: God doesn't call the equipped, He equips the called!

You are not underqualified. You are not overlooked. You are not unnecessary. If you are in Christ, the Holy Spirit has entrusted you with gifts for the building up of the church. The question is not if you are gifted. The question is: Are you using what God has given you?

1. Do you know how God has gifted you? How have you been able to use those gifts?

Here's what God has given according to Ephesians 4. "And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers...." (Ephesians 4:11, ESV)

This verse reminds us that the church is not a human invention—it is a divine design. And in that design, Christ Himself gives gifts. Notice: the focus here is not just on abilities, but on people who are gifted to serve others. These roles—apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers—are not about status. They are about function. They are gifts to the church. That means something important: The church is strongest when every part is functioning as it should.

2. What would happen if only 20% of a professional company's employees showed up, and the rest just observed from the breakroom? How would the company function?

Yet, this is how many churches function. A few people carry the load... while many watch from the sidelines.

But that's not God's design. Here's God's design. Look at the very next verse. "...to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ." (Ephesians 4:12, ESV)

This is a paradigm-shifting verse. The role of church leaders is not to do all the ministry—it is to equip the saints to do the ministry. The word in the original text that's translated "equip" is the same word used in the Gospels for when James and John were "mending their nets" (Matthew 4:21; Mark 1:19). That's what we do in equipping people for the work of ministry—we're mending, preparing, strengthening our lives and the tools for us to live a joy-filled life of serving Jesus as we serve others.

Who are the ones doing the "mending," the equipping? Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teaches. And who are they "mending" or equipping? The people, the "saints." Paul doesn't use that term to signify a few people set apart by the pope as super holy people. The "saints" are all of God's people, all of us set apart for His divine purposes. So, the ones doing the work of the ministry are not just church leaders but all of us. Every believer is called into ministry. Your job, your neighborhood, your relationships—these are not distractions from ministry. They are the context for ministry.

3. In what ways is it helpful to understand that every believer is called to ministry? What might ministry look like for you in your job, neighborhood, or relationships?

John Stott once wrote, "The New Testament concept of the pastorate is not that of a person who does all the ministry, but of one who enables the whole body to minister." (John R.W. Stott)

That means:

- The goal is not attendance—it's activation
- The goal is not consumption—it's contribution.
- The goal is not sitting—it's serving.

This is where the series comes alive, because now we GET to step up, not that we HAVE to step up.

When we flip over to another letter written by the Apostle Paul, we see this idea reflected yet again. Take a look at Romans 12. "Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them...." (Romans 12:6, ESV)

There it is again: “gifts that differ.” God’s grace is not one-size-fits-all. It is personalized. Intentional. Purposeful. You are uniquely wired for a unique role. Some of you are thinkers. Some are doers. Some are encouragers. Some are organizers. And all of those matters!

But here’s the key phrase: “Let us use them.” Not admire them. Not compare them. Not ignore them. Use them.

A.W. Tozer said, “God is looking for people through whom He can do the impossible. What a pity that we plan only the things we can do by ourselves.” (A.W. Tozer)

Your gift is not just natural ability—it is Spirit-enabled capacity.

4. Have you ever felt like God might be leading you to something beyond your abilities? How does the power of God working through you change the way you think about what’s possible?

Paul goes on in the last part of Ro. 12:6 through verse 8 to list several gifts—not an exhaustive list, but a representative one:

- Prophecy: Speaking truth with clarity and boldness
- Service: Meeting practical needs—often behind the scenes
- Teaching: Explaining truth so others can understand and grow
- Exhortation (Encouragement): Coming alongside others to strengthen and uplift
- Giving: Generosity that fuels ministry
- Leadership: Guiding others with diligence and direction
- Mercy: Showing compassion with joy

Now here’s what’s interesting—Paul doesn’t just list them. He says:

- If you prophesy—do it in faith
 - If you serve—serve
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- If you teach—teach
- If you give—do it generously
- If you lead—do it diligently
- If you show mercy—do it cheerfully

But sometimes these easier said than done. Sometimes, we hold back. Sometimes we struggle in using what God has given us. Let's be honest—if this is so clear, why don't we do it?

- We don't know our gifts. Many people have never taken time to discover how God has wired them.
- We compare ourselves to others. We think, "I'm not as gifted as them."
- We Fear Failure. "What if I try and it doesn't go well?"
- We're Too Comfortable. Let's just say it—serving requires effort.

Too often we agree to serve...only if it fits in with our schedule, our preferences, or our comfort. That's not service—that's convenience.

5. Which of these reasons for not using your gifts to serve do you relate to?

C.S. Lewis wrote, "If Christianity is something we make up as we go along, of course we can make it easier. But it is not."
(C.S. Lewis)

So how do you figure out your gifts?

1 Seek God in prayer. Ask Him: "How have You wired me to serve?"

2 Study Scripture. Let passages like Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4 shape your understanding.

3 Start serving. You don't discover your gifts in isolation—you discover them in action.

4 Listen to others. Often, people around you will see your gifts before you do.

5 Pay attention to joy and fruit. Where do you see impact? Where do you feel energized?

Gifts are not given for storage—they are given for service.

So where can you use your gifts?

- In the Church: Teaching a class. Leading a group. Serving in hospitality. Mentoring others.
- In the Community: Helping neighbors. Volunteering. Engaging in outreach.
- In Your Everyday Life: Encouraging coworkers. Leading with integrity. Showing mercy to those in need

This is not about adding something new to your life—it's about infusing your life with purpose. When this doesn't happen, when gifts go unused, the church is weakened. People are underserved. God's design is disrupted.

But when gifts are activated: The church is strengthened. Lives are impacted. Christ is glorified. Imagine a church where: Every member serves. Every gift is used. Every need is met. That's not a dream—that's the biblical model.

6. You have been gifted by God. Not randomly. Not accidentally. But intentionally. The Holy Spirit has entrusted you with something that the church needs. So, what are you going to do with it?

Click the link to access a spiritual gifts assessment and learn ways you can begin to use them.

<https://e91church.com/serving/>
