

PUT ME IN, COACH!  
**Christ's Body--Healthy and Thriving**  
**Romans 12:1-13**  
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**AUDIO:** [www.buzzsprout.com/admin/episodes/316409-put-me-in-coach-christ-s-body-healthy-and-thriving](http://www.buzzsprout.com/admin/episodes/316409-put-me-in-coach-christ-s-body-healthy-and-thriving)

We begin this morning with a Parker Palmer quote. "Before you tell your life what you intend to do with it, listen for what it intends to do with you." We could tweak that slightly to say with the Apostle Paul, "Before you tell God what you intend to do with your life, listen for what God intends to do with it" (vv. 1-2). This is the good news about life transformation. Christ can change our want-to's, our desires, our attitudes, our view of the past, present and future. And it's all gift. We don't earn or deserve it. And note the order. Before Paul ever talks about our place in the church, he talks about our place before God, on the altar, totally sold out. Our U.C. (ultimate concern) defines our D.C. (daily concerns). Some of us try to flip that. We just go about our daily tasks in hopes of finding something ultimate, worthy of life commitment. No. You start with the big. And that gives you a direction for the daily.

Now with that established, we are ready to hear more about our place of service, our gifts. If the transforming power of Christ is a gift, so is our capacity to serve. So there's nothing to brag about! (v. 3). Note how Paul moves into body imagery to explain how a church functions (vv. 4-5). We need all parts of the body working. I have a pastor friend who is a runner. He was having problems with his feet. A friend who has a PhD in physical therapy told him that it was a core problem--his back was tense. All of the body is interconnected!

So in a healthy church, all body parts are functioning and each has a job. No one is overworked; all are involved. My five-year-old grandson Finneas introduced me to a great children's book, *The Day the Crayons Quit*, by Drew Daywalt. It seems Duncan went to class one day and when he took out his crayons, he found a stack of letters addressed to him. The first one read, "Hey Duncan, It's me, red crayon. We need to talk. You make me work harder than any of your other crayons. All year long I wear myself out coloring fire engines, apples, strawberries and everything else that is red. I even work on holidays! I have to color all the Santas and...all the hearts on Valentine's Day! I need a rest! Your overworked friend, Red Crayon." Then beige weighed in with how underused he felt. "...the only things I get are turkey dinners (if I'm lucky) and wheat, and let's be honest--when was the last time you saw a kid excited about coloring wheat?" Yellow and orange get in a feud over the color of the sun (yellow or orange?). After hearing from these and many other crayons, Duncan has an idea. He uses all of the crayons! It's beautiful. He got an A for coloring and an A+ for creativity. Now be honest with me. Would FBC JC get an A+ for creativity? Are all the crayons being used?

In the 1970 baseball season, the Baltimore Orioles had three pitchers who won at least 20 games --unimaginable in our day. I heard the staff ace Jim Palmer interviewed about that

magical year. He said it was a case of each teammate making the other better. What an apt analogy for us. I'm better for the amazing church staff I work with. And you, our amazing volunteers. We make each other better in service and love, challenging and encouraging each other. Spiritual gifts don't thrive in isolation; they thrive in constellation, arranged by the Holy Spirit in each church.

Have you noticed that I'm not spending a lot of time on the specific gifts listed in vv. 6-8? It's that I don't want you to think that these are the only ones. It's not because they're unimportant. Far from it. John Stott groups them as the speaking gifts: prophecy (preaching), teaching and encouraging; and the service gifts: serving, giving, leading and showing mercy or compassion [*The Message of Romans*, p. 325]. It's not an exhaustive list, but rather a suggestive one. And note serving/ministering is listed way before leading is listed (typical of a New Testament which puts serving others first). Paul was writing to new believers who had been saturated with a Roman culture of power, dominance, climbing to the top, getting others before they get you.

But guess what. These gifts don't mean anything if we neglect the two brackets on each side of them. The bracket on the left--total commitment to Christ. (vv. 1-2, as we said last week, God calls us to a relationship before God calls us to a job). The bracket on the right, vv. 9-10--total commitment to each other in love. To illustrate this reality, let me remind you of something Igor Fridrikh said when speaking to our church last year. He works in Eastern Europe--Belarus, Ukraine and other regions--to take the Gospel to children. He shared that some of the children's workers in Eastern European countries give 25% of their monthly income to buy supplies for Bible teaching. (This shows us that the teaching gift only thrives in a culture of total commitment to Christ and each other, vv. 1-2 and v. 9-10). Now you do the math. Quickly compute your monthly income. Would you be willing to give 25% of it to teach the Gospel?

There's a phrase we've been using in our Imagine If process that works as we seek to find our places of service in the Kingdom: God's will--nothing more, nothing else, nothing less. Amen.