

08 – The Seventh Day **Romans 12: 6-8**

Objective: Students will be reminded that Christians aren't fully mature when they first believe in Christ, but like 'ugly ducklings' that turn into beautiful swans, Christians grow.

Step 1: Link: Swans

Today we will learn about the meaning of the seventh day of Christmas. On the seventh day of Christmas I will receive swans. What can you tell me about swans? (ugly ducklings, swim, long graceful necks, etc.)

One of the most well-known facts about swans is that they start out as 'ugly ducklings.' But as they grow, they turn into beautiful swans. This is a good picture of a Christian. When a person believes in Jesus, they become a new, baby Christian. This is a relationship with God. As the new Christian deepens their relationship with God, God changes them more and more to become like His perfectly beautiful Son, Jesus Christ. And He will make all Christians perfect and beautiful in heaven, after death. Every Christian is waiting for this day!

Step 2: Background: Gifts

Each Christian has a special gift, that they receive from God. No one has all the gifts. So Christians need each other. The group of all Christians is also called "the body of Christ." Just like our body has eyes and ears and feet and hands, all different parts but all necessary, God gives the gifts to different Christians, but all Christians are important to the body of Christ.

So, how many different gifts are there? (wait. The answer is 7. Although there may be other gifts mentioned elsewhere, to avoid confusion, let's stick with these seven for our Open House students.)

Step 3: Motivation

Today let's do something a little different. I will let you read the passage quietly, and list the seven gifts. (might be a good idea to have scraps of paper ready for them to use to list the gifts. If you want to read it out loud and discover the gifts together, that's OK too, but this might lead down 'rabbit trails' of 'what is prophecy' etc.)

But before we even open the Bible, what kind of gift do you think God gives to believers? What kind of gift does God give?... There is no wrong answer.... What do you think that maybe God gives? (try to get the students to say something, that you can later compare with the Scriptures.)

Step 4: Read: Romans 12: 6-8

Step 5: Share Lists of Gifts (have each student add one, go around the class...)

Step 6: Pause for questions or comments.

Step 7: Discussion/ Review

Were you surprised by God's gifts? ... What do you think about God's gifts? This is just your opinion. There is no wrong answer.

(Note: Be prepared from the background notes to handle students questions about the gifts. Some of the gifts are rather straightforward and not included in the notes. You may also reiterate the first paragraph of Step 2: Background. There probably won't really be very much time for discussion. It is important to remember that we are introducing the students to basic Christian truths in the spirit of "O taste and see that the Lord is good." An in depth look at gifts is probably best left for a discipleship group.)

Don't forget to sing the song!

Notes for Open House Teachers

08 – The Seventh Day of Christmas The Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit (God)

Remember that Greek is a more precise language than English.

From the Geneva Bible:

“The word ‘gift’ (lit. ‘donation’) appears in connections with spiritual service only in Eph 4:7,8. Paul explains the phrase ‘He... gave gifts to men’ (Eph 4:8) as the ascended Christ giving to His church persons called to and equipped for the ministries of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher (Eph 4:11). Also through the enabling ministry of these persons, Christ bestows a ministry role on every Christian. Elsewhere (Rom 12:4-8, I Cor. 12-14) Paul calls the divinely given abilities to serve *charismata* (specific manifestations of *charis*, ‘grace,’ I Cor 12:4) and *pneumatika* (specific demonstrations of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, God’s *pneuma*, I Cor 12:1).

“Amid many debated questions regarding spiritual gifts in the New Testament, three certainties stand out. First, a spiritual gift is an ability to express, celebrate, display, and so communicate Christ in a way that builds up and strengthens the faith of other Christians and enlarges the church. Second, spiritual gifts may be broadly classified as either abilities of speech or of loving, practical helpfulness. In Rom. 12:6-8, Paul’s list of gifts alternates between the categories: prophecy, teaching and exhorting are gifts of speech; serving, giving, leading and showing mercy are gifts of helpfulness. However much they differ as forms of human activity, all are of equal dignity when one properly uses the gift one has (I Pet 4:10,11). Third, no Christian is without some gift of ministry (I Cor. 12:7; Eph 4:7). It is every believer’s responsibility to find, develop and fully use whatever capacities for service God has given.”

In Basic English: The Greek word in this passage is *charismata*, which has a slightly different meaning than the English word ‘gift.’ The word ‘*charismata*’ means a special ability that God has given Christians to serve each other. The gifts are special ways to serve.

Christians serve because they want to share Christ with each other and the world. Every Christian has some gift, and as we grow in Christ we discover our gift and learn to use it.

From the Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia

“A spiritual or charismatic gift is a supernatural capacity or power bestowed upon a Christian believer by the Holy Spirit to enable him to exercise his function as a member of the Body of Christ (I Cor 12:4-27). These gifts are not to be considered natural abilities, but supernatural manifestations of the Spirit Himself (v.7). They are not to be confused with spiritual graces or fruits of the Spirit – facets of

Christ's character which every believer is to cultivate (Gal 5:22,23). They are not identical with spiritual offices – positions in the church whether for spiritual or temporal oversight of its affairs (elders, deacons, I Tim. 3:1-13) or for public ministries (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastor-teachers, Eph 4:11). Only certain believers are appointed to these spiritual offices (I Cor 12:28a,29a) - Christ's gifts (domata) to His church (Eph. 4:8) – in view of specific charismatic endowments already evidenced in their lives.”

In Basic English: God gives us these gifts so that we have a place as a member of the church. These are not our natural abilities. They are from God Himself. We use our gifts by God's power.

These gifts are also different from the official positions in the church, like pastor or elder. Only certain Christians are called by God to be a pastor or an elder. But every Christian has one of these gifts.

Note: I don't think you need to explain that these gifts aren't the same as the fruits of the Spirit, because I don't think our Open House students know about them (our advisors might – don't confuse them.) But this might come up as a question when you talk about the fruits of the spirit on the ninth day of Christmas. The main thing is that Christians should be growing in all the fruits of the Spirit, but they will only have one of these gifts.

From Matthew Henry:

“Prophecy.... It is not meant of the extraordinary gifts of foretelling things to come, but the ordinary office of preaching the word. The work of the Old Testament prophets was not only to foretell future things, but to warn the people concerning sin and duty. And thus gospel preachers are prophets.... As to the matter of our prophesying, it must be according to the proportions of the doctrine of faith. There are some staple-truths, as I may call them, plainly and uniformly taught in the Scripture, which are the touch-stone of preaching, by which we must test everything, and then hold on to the good. I Thess. 5:20,21. Truths that are more dark must be examined by those that are more clear, for it is certain on truth can never contradict another. See here what ought to be the great care of preachers – to preach sound doctrine.”

In Basic English: This word prophecy doesn't mean seeing the future. In the Old Testament the prophets could see the future. But they also preached God's word to the people, about sin and duty, for example. This is what the gift of prophecy is. It is accurately preaching the Word of God. In proportion to faith means this: some truths in the Bible are very clear, and other truths are not very clear. But we know that truth is one thing, not many different things. So it is important to study the truths that are not so clear by first studying the truths that are very clear. If preachers do this, they will not go away from the real meaning of the Bible.

“... Showing mercy... this must be done with cheerfulness. A pleasing countenance in acts of mercy is a great relief and comfort to the miserable; when they see it is not done grudgingly and unwillingly,

but with pleasant looks and gentle words. Those who have to do with such as are sick and sore, and commonly cross and peevish, have need to put on not only patience, but cheerfulness.”