

Introduction

- <https://www.foxnews.com/travel/flight-passenger-mistakenly-boards-wrong-plane-lands-surprising-country-after-many-hours> - You don't want to end up at the wrong destination.
- If you are a follower of Jesus, you did not end up at the wrong destination this morning. You are exactly where you are supposed to be - in a local church that is focused on helping you to grow in your faith in Jesus Christ.
- You belong here.
- There's an even bigger danger than landing in the wrong place: bringing the wrong mindset to the right place.
- How often do we bring a self-centered, self-serving mindset to the local church? And, how does that damage what God wants to accomplish in the local church?
- Sometimes the church can be no different than the culture: full of division, selfish ambition, backbiting, and gossip. It's easy to let sin pollute what God wants to accomplish in the local church.
- When the church is a place of conflict and isolation instead of a place of belonging and mission, it's frustrating.
- How can we help our local church be a place of belonging and mission? From this text, let me give you three ways we can all strengthen our local church.

Assess the way you think about you. (vs. 3)

- [Romans 12:1-2](#) calls for a transformed mind. Verse 3 shows the first evidence of that transformation: how you think about yourself.
- vs. 3 - For by grace given to me... Paul speaking with authority - God called him as an apostle to speak truthfully to the church.
- Don't think too highly of yourself. You likely think about you more than you think about anyone else.
- **What do you think about you?**
 - **Self-inflated?** - deserve praise and accolades.
 - **Self-deprecating?** - I don't matter. (Both superiority and insecurity are forms of self-absorption.)
 - **Independent?** - I don't need anyone.
 - **Comparative?** - How do I rank? E.g., "Am I more successful than...? Am I more gifted than...? Am I more useful than...?"
- vs. 3 - think sensibly OR use sober judgment - instead of comparing, or thinking too highly of yourself, think rightly of yourself. How? Examine the measure of faith.
- What Paul means by "measure of faith." What is "measure of faith?" Paul is most likely talking about the responsibility and spiritual giftedness that God has given you in the Gospel.
- Spiritual giftedness shouldn't make you prideful, nor should spiritual giftedness cause you to compare yourselves to others. Rather, spiritual giftedness should humble you. You didn't save yourself. The object of your faith, Jesus Christ, loved you enough that He saved you through His death and resurrection AND He gifted you for service in His Kingdom.

- When you think the measure of faith given to you - it affects how you think about you:
- **I think humbly** - NOT less of myself but think of myself less. I'm not the center of the universe. God is!
- **I think cooperatively** - I'm not isolated from Christ or His people, I belong to Christ and His people.
- **I think with thankfulness** - Praise God that I'm not stuck in the comparison trap, or the ego trap. I'm freed to live how God wants me to live.

Commit yourself to be an active member of the local church. (vs. 4-5)

- The local church is not an optional “add on” to your Christian faith. The local church is essential to your Christian faith.
- Apart from committed life in a local church, your spiritual growth will be fragile and your faith will drift toward isolation.
- The church is God’s family that you belong to. Notice three realities about the church that Paul points out in these verses:
- Unity - We’ve been brought together by the death and resurrection of Jesus. We are not united by personality, politics, or preference. We are united by union with Christ.
- Diversity - Uniqueness of each person. Diversity can be frustrating. We have different opinions, different backgrounds, etc. BUT, beauty in diversity. By His Spirit, when we think right about ourselves, with humility instead of pride, God unifies a diverse group of people and makes us interdependent on each other as we carry out His work together.

- Mutuality - we belong to each other. What does this mean? Your growth affects me. My faithfulness affects you. Your absence affects us. You need the local church and the local church needs you.
- Commit yourself to be an active member of the local church. While you don't see in the Bible: "Become a member of a local church," the New Testament does assume belonging to a local church. Church membership is our practical way of living that out.
- Why practice church membership?
- Floating from church to church will just make you a consumer of religious services rather than a contributor to God's Kingdom. You weren't gifted to consume - you were gifted to contribute.
- Being a member of a local church shows that you value accountable relationships.
- Being a member of a local gives you the opportunity to know and to be known. You desire community. You desire a family to belong to - that's what your local church becomes. In the local church, as relationships grow, you get to practice the one another's of Scripture. (Our church covenant reminds us of our commitment to our faith family.)
- What do we expect from you as a member?
- **Make gathering a priority.** It's hard to grow as a family if you're not here. Your presence matters - it matters for you and it matters for us.
- **Make connecting a priority.** Many in our church need to move from a row to a circle. Over half the people who attend are not involved in a Life Connection Group - a place to build real relationships.
- **Make serving a priority.** Think what we could accomplish if we were all using our unique giftedness for the sake of the Kingdom. What keeps you from serving others in this local body? What keeps you from serving in a specific ministry?

- You need to be an active part of the body of Christ. This is how you flourish as a Christ-follower.

Serve the local church with joy. (vs. 6-8)

- vs. 6 - According to the grace given to us... In His grace, Christ has given us a variety of spiritual gifts.
- According to the grace given to us, Christ has distributed spiritual gifts. These are Spirit-empowered abilities given for the strengthening of the body. Every believer is gifted. Not all in the same way, but all by grace.
- Most often, a spiritual gift is a specialization in a duty given to all Christians. For example, we're all called to serve, show mercy, give, etc. But, some of us are especially gifted in those areas.
- The goal of using our spiritual gifts is the overall health of the body of Christ.
- vs. 6-8 is a partial list. There are partial lists in 1 Peter and 1 Corinthians as well. We don't have an exhaustive list of spiritual gifts.
- You discover your spiritual giftedness by serving in a variety of ministries. You discover your spiritual gift as other brothers and sisters in Christ affirm your giftedness.
- This list is straightforward. Prophecy = speaking truth to someone as God leads you. Exhorting = encouraging someone in the faith. Paul's point: use your spiritual gift. Don't look for accolades. Just serve.
- **Don't believe the lie that you're unnecessary.** You are. If you are a part of this church, it's by God's design. You can't give the excuse, "This is a big church, I'm not needed." Big churches have big needs and God placed you in this body for the good of the entire body. Don't rob the church of the gift that God has given you.

- **Don't believe the lie that someone else's gift matters more.** Comparison kills contribution. You will be slow to use your giftedness if you're always wishing you were gifted like someone else. God has uniquely gifted you by His design.
- **Don't rob yourself of the joy of serving.** Nothing more joyous than serving the Lord and knowing you're being used by Him. Nothing like seeing how God is using you in the life of someone else. Don't miss the joy of serving.
- **Don't wait for us to tell you how to serve.** We want to plug you into ministry. We always need help in various ministries. E.g., children's ministry, guest services, etc. But, as you connect to the body, needs will become apparent. If you have the gift of encouragement, as you connect to the body, you're going to see in our church who needs encouragement. If you have the gift of giving, you're going to see needs in our body that you can meet. Just do it. If you have the gift of wisdom, as you get to know people, you'll see where you can give wisdom. If you're waiting for an invitation to serve, here it is - as you see needs in our church, step in and use the gifts and abilities God has given you to be a blessing.
- At the end of the day, none of this matters for you if you don't belong to Christ. Do you have a relationship with the God of all creation? What Paul told us in the first 11 chapters is that our rebellion against God separates us from Him. We deserve hell, but God has given us a gift in His Son Jesus Christ. Jesus lived a sinless life for us, died on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins, and rose from the dead so our sins could be forgiven and we could be given the gift of life. Today, if you are not a follower of Jesus, repent of your sins and turn to Him by faith.