

Consider Carefully What You Can Do

By Robert C. Veil, Jr.

For I say, through the grace that was given me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but so to think as to think soberly, according as God has dealt to each man a measure of faith, (Rom. 12:3).

This verse teaches the importance of being realistic in our view of ourselves. To think too “highly” of oneself is to have an inflated, unrealistic self image. It is to allow vanity and pride to influence our judgment and self control. The Bible abounds with warnings against being “puffed up” or becoming “wise in our own conceits,” (cf. 1 Cor. 4:18-21; Rom. 11:25ff), or what Paul calls “lovers of self.” You know the kind. They think their opinion is significant and profound, and that other people actually want to hear it. They think too “highly” of themselves and too “lowly” of others.

One of life's difficult lessons is coming to understand that things are generally going to move along just fine without us. This old world will keep on turning long after we are gone. We need to be careful about thinking too highly of ourselves.

Not every member of the church is suited to do every job. While we encourage members, especially young members, to explore their talents and do all they can, in reality there are some talents not everyone has. Not everyone is a song leader. And some congregations have had to learn painfully that not every member is qualified to serve as an elder, a gospel preacher, or a Bible class teacher. Everyone is given talent from God, but not necessarily the same talent, or in the same amount. Every member needs to weigh carefully what they have been given by God, and develop it fully.

The context of Paul's statement in Romans 12:3 may well include reference to the miraculous spiritual gifts, like prophesying. There was a danger in failing to recognize which spiritual gifts have been given, and in what amount. Churches, such as the one in Corinth, sometimes struggled mightily with this short-coming. But there are principles in these passages even for congregations today, dealing with gifts of God in a non-miraculous setting. We need to consider carefully what God has given us, and use it to his glory.

You may have the gift of encouraging others. Everyone can and must do this to some extent, but some are better than others. Are you using your gifts? Do you have the ability to visit and freely converse with the lonely, the downhearted, the discouraged? Perhaps you are one of those special people who always seems to be able to say just what is needed at any given time. Consider carefully what God has given you.

You may have the gift of making money. I have known members of the Lord's church who were extremely wealthy. They had the acumen and experience necessary to earn large salaries, and could accumulate great wealth. How are we using our money? How are we using our ability to earn money? Do we realize that this ability is a gift from God, and the money is not really “ours” after all?

The gifts of teaching or ministering to others are truly special. Being able to exhort and persuade others is a remarkable talent which needs to be cultivated and better used. Do you have this special talent? Consider carefully how you might be used by God to persuade and encourage members of the church who are on the verge of losing their faith. Or, how God is longing to use you to persuade the lost to obey the Gospel. “How are we using God's golden moments?” There are many around us who need those willing to use these very gifts.

We need to avoid thinking more highly of ourselves than we should, but by the same token, we need to be thinking realistically about the talents and abilities God has placed in our hands. There is tremendous potential in everyone of us. When was the last time you spent time in fervent prayer, asking God to show you how to use your resources? How to more effectively use your talents and abilities. How to consider in a sober manner what God has placed in your hands.

Paul recognized that even the act of reminding the members of the church at Rome about this subject was itself done “by the grace that was given” to him. When God allows us to see and understand important matters of truth and significance, it is not because of our own wisdom. It is by the grace of God that we have what we have, that we understand what we understand. Let’s lovingly nurture and share what God has entrusted to us!