

Last week, we kicked-off a new year w/ a call to go higher, farther, and deeper w/ God in 2015. To help us on our journey, we discovered in Romans 12, the basic principles necessary to **elevate** our lives to God.

*To elevate means to lift something to a higher position; or to raise something to a more important and impressive level.*

We learned last Sunday – **if you want to GO up w/ God you have to GIVE up to God**. Meaning the key to elevating your life w/ God begins w/ your complete surrender to Him.

**Picture** – Problem is like a sign I saw yesterday driving to our church – *Forward Church*. What's wrong w/ this picture? To move forward we usually don't make U-turns. I find this occurs all too often b/c we don't know how to move forward so we turn back to what is natural/comfortable. This is where Paul's words in Romans 12 come into play. Known as the Executive Summary of the Christian life, Paul teaches us the necessary steps to moving forward/higher w/ God.

Today I want to continue our discovery of the essentials of moving higher w/ God by looking at the ABC's of Elevation.

Read – ***Romans 12:1-8***

## I Think ACCURATELY of Your Capabilities

<sup>3</sup> *For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Don't think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself w/ sober judgment, in accordance w/ the faith God has distributed to each of you.*

Humility has fallen on hard times in our culture. Simply put, too many of us lack an honest assessment of ourselves. More often than not, we think too much of ourselves – *ego-holics*, but sometimes we think too little of ourselves. Both extremes have their issues. **If you think too much of yourself you'll think serving/caring for others is beneath you, while if you think too little of yourself, you'll never believe you're worthy to receive anything from another.**

*True humility is nothing more than thinking accurately and appropriately of who you are in light of who God is.*

Hudson Taylor modeled this well. Once he was scheduled to speak at a Presbyterian church in Australia. The moderator of the service introduced the missionary in eloquent terms telling the audience of all that Taylor had accomplished in China, and then presented him as “*our illustrious guest.*” Taylor stood quietly for a moment, and then opened his message by saying, “*Dear friends, I'm the little servant of an illustrious Master.*” **Hudson understood his worth was found in nothing other than in the grace of God.**

But we often don't compare ourselves w/ God, but rather to others or to the pipe-dream of who we want to be. This week I was watching *American Idol* and was perplexed by the number of contestants who tremendously over-valued their abilities. I was both saddened and a bit humored by the zest they had over their inabilities. Too many people today so over-value themselves and their abilities they make Ali look humble – and that is saying something.

## A Don't OVER or UNDER Value Yourself

**think** (*hupo-phroneo*) over-estimate or over-value (used 4x)

This kind of thinking believes, “I am better than others and no one can do it better than me. They think they're right and everyone else is wrong. They believe they're more special.

A read of a man who had a high opinion of himself who stepped on a coin-operated scale that dispensed a card sharing his weight along w/ a few comments about his personality. After reading the card, he handed it to his wife and said, “Look at this!” She read aloud, “*You're dynamic, a born leader, handsome and admired by women everywhere.*” To which she replied, “*I see it got your weight wrong too!*”

*If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves. Galatians 6:3*

Paul clears the deck and says, “If you want to go higher w/ God you can’t over or under value yourself; instead, you have to think accurately of yourself in light of who God is.

## B Do CORRECTLY Value Yourself

**think** (*so-phroneo*) to have sober and sound judgment – to have clarity as one who is NOT impaired by intoxication.

Don’t think more highly of yourself, or less highly, just have a proper estimation of who you are.

I’m reminded of the American co-ed visiting the Beethoven Museum in Bonn, Germany where she became fascinated w/ the piano on which Beethoven had composed some of his greatest works. She asked the guard if she could play the piano – and she played the opening of the Moonlight Sonata. As she was leaving she asked, “*Have all the great pianists who’ve come here wanted to play on this piano?*” He replied, “*Padarewski (famed Polish pianist) was here a few years ago but he said he wasn’t worthy to touch it.*”

One understood who he was in the light of greatness and one missed it completely – we must always see ourselves accurately and appropriately in light of who God is.

Always remember – **the biggest difference b/w you and God is that God doesn’t think He is you.** Think accurately!

## II Think **BROADLY** of Your Calling

*<sup>4</sup> For just as each of us has one body w/ many members, and these members do not all have the same function, <sup>5</sup> so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. <sup>6</sup> We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us.*

If you've given your life to Christ by receiving by faith His grace/mercy – **then you now have been called to be a part of something greater than yourself** – the body of Christ.

### A You **BELONG** – You are part of the body

*You are members of God's own family and you belong in God's household w/ every other Christian. Ephesians 2:19*

The Christian life is not just a matter of **BELIEVING**, it is also a matter of **BELONGING**. And now, as a result of faith in Christ – we belong to God and to one another.

The analogy of the Body speaks to our belonging. You might be an eye, a hand, or a pinky toe – but you're needed. Can one part of the body function effectively w/out the other parts – NO! Paul's point is we all need each other to function together to build each other up, to spur one another along, and to accomplish the Great Commission. I need you and you need me – **you complete me!**

## B You are UNIQUE

There's no one else in this church or faith like you. You are fearfully and wonderfully made for God's divine purposes – shaped by His grace w/ a unique Spiritual Gift – Relational Style/Personality – Abilities/Talents – Christian Experience – and Enthusiasm/Passion.

***Ephesians 2:8-10*** explains that we're saved by grace to serve by grace – as we have become God's workmanship.

**gifts** (*charisma*) spiritual endowments of God through the H.S. that are neither earned or deserved but imbue of God's sovereign choice and design.

Paul explains that we each serve God and His mission by striving together and complimenting one another through the unique working and gifting of the H.S.

## B You have PURPOSE

**grace** (*charis*) a reference to our unique calling as designed of God – which speaks to our divine purpose.

We don't choose our Divine destiny and will – we discover our Divine design through our surrender. God's personal will reveals our purpose. Our job is to seek first His Kingdom and righteousness so that we can join w/ God for His will.



### III Think CREATIVELY of Your Contribution

While I'm not going to go in depth here – let me say I believe the gifts are often greatly misused / misunderstood.

The purpose of the gifts is to edify and build up the body. Yet if you look at the typical spiritual gifts list (not including the sign gifts), every gift is the responsibility of every believer. For example, are only those w/ the gift of giving called to give? No. we all are called to faithful, biblical stewardship. Do only those w/ the gift of evangelism called to share their faith? No! All believers are called to give an account of the hope that is w/in them.

So how do they work? Every believer is given a spiritual gift to connect him to the body and to provide him w/ a specific role of edification. So that if I am struggling in the area of stewardship, then the brother/sister who possesses this gift can teach and assist me in becoming a faithful steward. And should I have the gift of evangelism – it doesn't mean that I only share my faith, but that I help all believers to be prepared to give an account of the hope that is w/in them.

*If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance w/ your faith;<sup>7</sup> if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach;<sup>8</sup> if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.*

**prophecy** (*propheteia*) to speak forth truth

**serving** (*diakonia*) a gift of helping and spurring along

**teaching** (*didaskon*) one who rightly divides/imparts truth

**encourage** (*parakaleo*) to exhort, build up and give courage

**giving** (*meta-didomai*) one who shares generously

**lead** (*prostemi*) to stand before to guide and influence

**show mercy** (*eleeo*) actively demonstrating sympathy