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Swim Like a Duck...Fly Like an Eagle
Ephesians 4, Romans 12

Once upon a time, supposedly right after creation, all the animals formed a school. They established a well-rounded curriculum of swimming, running, climbing and flying. All of the animals were required to take all the courses. The duck of course excelled at swimming. In fact he was even better than the instructor. But, he made only passing grades in climbing and was very poor in running. He was so slow he had to stay after school to practice running. This caused his webbed feet to become so badly worn he became only average in swimming. But average was quite acceptable so no one ever really worried about it, except the duck.

Now the rabbit was the top of her class in running. But after a while she developed a twitch in her leg from all the time she spent in the water trying to improve her swimming. The squirrel was a peak performer climbing, but was constantly frustrated in flying class. (Obviously this was not a flying squirrel) His body had become so worn from all the hard landings he did not do too well in climbing and ended up being pretty poor in running. Now the eagle was a continual problem student. She was severely disciplined for being a non-conformist. In climbing class she would always beat everyone else to the top, but insisted on using her own way to get there.

Each of the animals had a particular design. When they did what they were designed to do they excelled. When they tried to operate outside of their expertise, they were not nearly as effective. And if they spent a large percentage of their time and energy outside their area of giftedness they became frustrated and wounded. Certainly ducks can run and need to run at times, but is that what they do best? No! Given the limited time and resources each of us has it makes sense that we

spend the majority of our time serving God in the way that we have been designed and equipped by Him. Like a duck out of water when we serve I long-term in an area outside of our giftedness, we can become slow and tired out quickly. That is why getting to know how God has crafted each of us is important. It will help enable us to do our best with enthusiasm and effectiveness.

Last weeks sermon was a transition between studying the principles and truths that the Bible teaches on spiritual gifts and then getting into detail about what the individual spiritual gifts look like, act like, their strengths, their possible contributions to the body and some of the possible pitfalls people who have been gifted in that way may fall into. It was interesting the questions I fielded after describing the characteristics of the Apostle and Prophet last week. There were several folks that feared they were gifted with the prophet as they called out truth very clearly and were compelled to challenge others to stop sinning and live righteously. Others wanted to know how best to respond to this prophet type person that comes charging into their life like a bull in a china shop, insensitive and with little tact. How to respond to prophets will always be a challenge and that's really what prophets want. They want to challenge us out of complacency, sin where they see us as we need to change. They feel compelled to get their message out and do not see the need to water it down or softening its blow by worrying about peoples feelings.

Its helpful to recognize that person is a prophet type and will typically share their message with little encouragement, little tact and little regard for the other persons feelings. You will want to listen very carefully to what the prophet says. Try not to react to the presentation. This does not excuse the poor behavior of the prophet, they would do well to learn how to present their message in a way that is more winsomely received. Try to listen to the substance and ask yourself. Is there some truth to this that I need to work on? You may need to say to

them here is what I hear you are saying, is that right? Yes. Well at first brush I don't see that need in my life, but I am going to pray about it and ask God and I'm also going to ask a few of my friends that I trust will tell me straight and lets get back together in a couple of weeks. If we reject the prophets message because we didn't appreciate the way it was delivered we may well be missing an important message that God wants to tell us.

Today, we will be able to finish up the equipping gifts from Ephesians 4 and move on to several of the other gifts mentioned in Romans 12. I want to mention that as we talk about these gifts you may see some characteristics that apply to you directly and others that don't seem to capture who you are at all. We have a tendency to want to put others and ourselves in neat and tidy little boxes. But God did not choose to do that for us. He did not choose to wrap up the gifts in bright colored paper with a bow and our name on it and then inside give us a detailed description of the gift given, how to put it together and how we are supposed to use it. I believe God left plenty of room for variety in the area of spiritual gifts. None of the three main gift lists are the same. So God has given us some general direction in regards to gifts but we need to approach this with a constant talking to God as we present ourselves to Him ready for service. We've been encouraged to come to God asking two questions; God. How have you crafted me? What do you want me to do with those gifts.

As we study several more of the spiritual gifts this morning I want us to continue asking these questions. As we study these gifts remember that the Bible has mentioned the gifts, the Bible has given examples of people we see have demonstrated the different gifts. We can see that Paul looks like a classic prophet. Barnabus seems to be a great example for the encourager. But the Bible does not stop and say here is the gift of healing, this is what it looks like, this is how you know you have it, this is how you use it. Much of the characteristics I describe as being

characteristic of the gifts come from what I and others have observed from those who seem to have the gifts. So we hold those things that are not explicitly mentioned in the Bible somewhat loosely. It is not God's word but certainly in keeping with God's word. Again this is not an easy things to preach on because it is not clearly laid out for us in Scripture as others may want us to think it is.

I would encourage you to talk about the gifts with your friends who know you well. You may be surprised to learn how much they see a particular gift trait in you and you in them. By next week I hope to have a spiritual gift inventory you will be able to take and answer specific questions that will give you another tool to talk about as you and God begin the process of answering the questions. What have you crafted me to do? And how do you want me to use it? (PRAY) Thanks for God's greatest gift we are reminded of this time of year.

Let us look at our list of what many call the equipping list in Ephesians chapter 4. READ He gave....for the equipping of the saints. Some God gave the body of Christ, the church...as evangelists. **The gift of evangelism.** *This is the ability and the drive to communicate the good news of Jesus to those who are not believers.* All of us who are believers are commanded to evangelize to share with others the good news that God in Christ has reached down to deal with our terrible problem of sin. Christ died on the cross for our sin so that we didn't have to endure the penalty of sin which is death. So that we could have communication and relational contact with Almighty God. So that we could live life the way that God originally intended. Christ died for you because He loves you so much. God asks that we respond in belief and accept that incredible gift, open it up and begin to enjoy the free gift of salvation. Today may be your day to do just that and open up that free gift of salvation from God. You don't have to wait until Christmas to open up the greatest gift of all.

God has gifted some of us with the extra ability to obey God's command to evangelize in a very effective and compelling way. Those

gifted with evangelism have been given a special ability to effectively communicate the gospel to unbelievers so that they respond in faith and move toward following Jesus. They will communicate the message of Christ clearly and with conviction. They are unusually compelled to tell others about Christ and actively seek out opportunities to talk to unbelievers about spiritual matters. They are able to adapt the presentation of the gospel to connect with individuals' needs and where they are at. They will seek to build relationships with unbelievers. They have a deep concern for the eternal well-being of others and a profound sense that there are those around them that are going to hell. Some of the stereotypes that people have noted in many evangelists are that they usually are outgoing and personable. They have mastered the technique of conversing with strangers and quickly getting to know them, socially active, tends to be more lighthearted than depressed. The evangelist is tolerant of people and their weaknesses and sympathetic to sinners. Can be impulsive at times and not usually very self-disciplined. Is enthusiastic, talkative and often interrupts people. He likes being the center stage and having everybody looking at him. He remembers people's names and faces. The evangelist has a burden for lost souls. He is forgiving. Having people come to Christ brings him great joy.

Peter Wagner's thesis study found out that about 10 percent of the Christians in any congregation have the gift of evangelism. It's important that those of us who discover we have been given this gift are given enough time to exercise it and may need to be released from doing other tasks. We want to make sure the ducks have plenty of lake to swim and the eagles opportunity to fly.

When I began this series on spiritual gifts I had a woman come up to me after the service and said, I have been serving in the nursery and I can do that OK but I really don't get that tremendous joy of serving our children, what I really think God wants me to do is to go around the neighborhoods and knock on some doors and talk to them about Jesus,

ask if I could pray for them and invite them to church. Now to me that sounds like an evangelist. We need those people who God is calling to serve our children and mothers in the nursery so that they can free up others to evangelize. We need all kinds of people and gifts to build up the kingdom.

Acts 8 gives a classic example of an evangelist. A guy named Philip. READ Acts 8:5-6 and 26-40. This guy couldn't help it. He was tuned into God and sometimes had him go talk to people in strange places, like this desert road between Jerusalem and Gaza. I have talked with some here who have this gift of evangelism and they will often recount times where God has told them to pull over and pick up the hitchhiker because they need to hear about Jesus and sure enough he was hungry. One evangelist in our congregation was buying some horse equipment at a great deal and yet God impressed on him that these people had given up on their marriage and needed God to restore and come to faith. Sure enough they were thirsty to hear truth from the evangelist who was much more interested in them receiving the gift of eternal life than he getting a great deal on some horse equipment. The evangelist is constantly looking for opportunities to share their faith with others. He will create those opportunities if they don't happen along naturally.

The evangelist may want to be involved in preaching, visitation ministries, foreign missions, church planting teams, evangelistic home studies, music ministries, children's evangelism, youth groups, or simply freestyle life ministry that seems to weave the gospel into anything they are doing. The potential area for ministry can be widespread as long as it gives a forum and plenty of opportunity to share your faith with unbelievers. You may well want to start an evangelist outreach. Work with others who have this gift and observe how they are using it effectively. Make sure you are crystal clear on what the gospel message is and study the Bible to learn how to defend the gospel message in truth and love. Put yourself in a place that will challenge you to grow in your

area of gifting. Helping others to share Christ excites you by either sharing with them how or recalling your most recent experience of one with whom you shared your faith. Don't limit your contact with unbelievers by spending all your time doing things with Christians and doing just church activities.

Some of the pitfalls for those with the spiritual gift of evangelism. Sometimes the evangelist can come across as the used car sales man seeking to peddle their wares. But most of that problem is caused by how others view him, rather than his own motives. In their evangelistic zeal they can put undue pressure on those they are speaking with. Remember it is the Holy Spirit, not guilt that convicts men and motivates a person to Christ. Avoid being critical of others who are not gifted at evangelism. You will be tempted to look around and wonder what is wrong with people that they are not leading people to Christ at least once a month. Remember we are all witnesses but we are not all evangelists. Don't look down on others who don't have the same effectiveness as you do in introducing people to Jesus. The evangelist can tend to dominate people. Others may think he is pushy. He thinks that in every message there ought to be at least some attempt to win the lost. Some evangelists can become so preoccupied with "decisions for Christ that they fail to integrate believers into the local church so they can be discipled and grow in Christ. Satan can attack this gift by causing pride in the number of converts and see numbers rather than people with needs. Satan may cause discouragement when the converts are few.

Billy Graham was asked recently what is one thing he would change about his ministry if he could. He responded. I would make it more difficult for people to come to Christ. Make sure share the simply gospel the good news, but make sure they understand God is not just a trinket you go down to the store to buy and put in your pocket. Following Jesus demands a commitment of sacrifice those as those who fisherman along the sea of Galilee and Jesus said "follow me" where was he going?

That's right. To a Roman cross. Death. And Jesus calls those who would follow him to take up our cross daily. Its not physical martyrdom because we are to do it daily. Daily we are die to self and be alive in Christ. It is Christ that lives in me.

Some call this **next gift Pastor/teacher** because of the way it is closely linked together hear in Ephesians chapter 4. Also because so many pastors or those with the shepherding gift are also teachers as they work to build up and equip the body of Christ. We will look at these gifts each individually this morning.

The Pastor/shepherd is one who that the divinely enabled ability to care for, guide people toward spiritual maturity and becoming more like Christ. They will take the responsibility to nurture the whole person in their walk with God as they provide guidance to a group of God's people. Like a shepherd of sheep, this shepherd of people will be particularly attuned to the need of a group of people and be able to effectively guide and care for them, protect them, guide them to green pastures and quiet waters. The main thing on his mind is the welfare of those in his care. He is the shepherd and they are the sheep. This care involves a long-term commitment to a group. They love being with people and building people up. It is quite natural for this person to be a pastor of a local church, but there are more people in the body who exercise this gift then just the pastor. Note this is the gift of pastor/shepherd not the position of pastor. They may be LIFE group leaders, in youth ministry, helping to assimilate new people into the church, disciplers and mentors and counselors.

An important task for those with a shepherding gift is to help others discover their gifts and put them into practice. If you have the gift of shepherding you will find yourself often called upon to counsel others. Be sure to study what the Bible has to say about conflict resolution and growing spiritually. You as a shepherd model well for the rest of the group what it means to be a devoted follower of Jesus. Lead and protect those whom God has entrusted into your care.

Here are a couple of pitfalls for those of us with the gift of shepherding. Remember that God will judge you if you abuse or neglect your overseer responsibility. Lead and care for people well. Your desire to feed and support others may make it difficult for you to say “no” even at the expense of your family and emotional well-being. He may have a tendency to try and do it all himself. He may not focus on evangelism because he has so many to care for already. Your protective nature of people may create a situation where others become too dependant on you. There will be some of those you nurture to maturity that will grow beyond your ability and you need to free them up from you so they can continue to grow. Pastors who have this gift will have difficulty leading a church of more then 150-200 believers because they want to maintain close relationships with every single Christian but with more then that many it becomes impossible to do so and they will get easily overwhelmed and frustrated. Because he does so many things well, and in fact does too many things, others may think its his job to do all the work and let him. They may think he should always be available, know all the answers and be at every social function. Satan can use these dangers to cause pride because his sheep so look up to him and discouragement because the load gets heavy. Satan can cause problems in the family because to too little attention and time. The shepherd can become envious when the sheep choose to feed in other pastures.

The shepherd is usually patient and willing spend time in prayer for others. He is people centered and love them. He is more of a leader then a follower and typically has a very pleasing personality. His burden is to see others learn and grow. He feels the need to teach the whole Word of God. He will get frustrated if he has to present the same material over and over again. He is a peace-maker and conflict resolver. He will be self-sacrificing for the flock and can become a workaholic. He learns to be an all purpose person in order to meet the needs he sees.

Jesus of course is the true shepherd and One we follow (READ)
John 10:1-15 and I Peter 5:1-3

The **last equipping gift mentioned in Ephesians 4 is the gift of teacher**. This is one who has been *given a divine enablement to understand and then clearly explain and apply the word of God in such a way that people who listen want to live more and more like Christ*. You know you have this gift if when you teach the truth of God's word people actually learn and want to apply it inspiring obedience to God. They will practically apply the whole counsel of God's word for life change. They will be very attentive to accuracy and spend much time in study and preparation. They will be focused on the questions and concerns of their audience and desire to present their knowledge in an interesting and logical manner. They seem to be able to pull spiritual insights together so that the presentation is clear and insightful. People often walk away from your teaching and comment; "That is the first time I really understood what that passage of Scripture meant; or that was an interesting lesson I know exactly how I am going to put that into practice."

Acts 18:26 speaks of the Pricilla and Aquilla who more adequately explained the way of God." This husband wife team that worked alongside Paul and helped teach Apolos.

James 3:1 has a warning for teachers "Let not many of you become teachers for they shall incur a stricter judgment" So that is a warning for those of us with the gift of teaching that we exercise this gift with a high degree of responsibility. We also must practice what we teach. Teachers we must avoid the pride that may come with a superior Bible knowledge, as spirituality is not measured on what you know but what you apply. We teachers need to be careful not to be overly critical of other sound teaching because of some technical flaw. The teacher may give a general criticism for the entire teaching if he or she is able to spot a little flaw. You react to people who make unfounded statements. You pay close attention to words and phrases. Teachers may talk too much and appear

to have all the answers. They may tend to become too content focused and not enough people focused. Some teachers may try to communicate too much information for the average listener. Be sure that you are leaning not on human wisdom but on the Holy Spirit as your teacher. Proverbs 3:5,6 “Do not lean on your own understanding but in all your ways acknowledge Him.”

Teachers make sure you schedule time for study and preparation. Don't assume that just because you have this gift you need less time to prepare than others. Always maintain the attitude of a learner. Always buy of opportunities to learn from those who are willing to give you constructive feedback. Be sure to expose yourself to other teachers and teaching methods that might help improve your own gift. Learn the basics of Bible study methods and interpretation. Keep looking for creative visual ways to convey your message.

So did any of you see yourself in any of the equipping gifts of evangelist, teacher, pastor/shepherd. Even if you don't see yourself as having any of those gifts its helpful to think about those people you know that do. If its very clear you may want to jot them a note of encouragement to them that they would use there gift strongly for God. Just understanding how others are gifted may help you understand how to better relate to them and where they are coming from. Its not about putting people into tight, neat little boxes. Ultimately we continue to ask God the questions. How have you crafted me? What is it you want me to do with that gift?