

Questions for reflection, application, and discussion

1. In his message Pastor Mike said that most people have a hard time believing and accepting the idea gives us spiritual gifts and uses us in ministry purely as an expression of his grace. Deep down we can't let go of the belief that God blesses and uses people who are worthy and deserving.
 - a. Do you agree with this? Why or why not?
 - b. What did you think of Pastor Mike's illustration comparing the generosity and kindness of God as the ultimate gift giver in comparison to our society's view of Santa Claus as the ultimate gift giver?
 - c. Why is it so important to understand and believe that God gives us spiritual gifts and uses us purely as an expression of his grace? What are the possible negative consequences to not understanding and or believing this?
2. In teaching about the nature of God's grace in giving gifts, in Ephesians 4:8-10 Paul uses the imagery of a conquering king returning to his home city with a great parade or procession. What about this imagery and Pastor Mike's explanation of its meaning stood out to you and/or what did you find meaningful?
3. Many people believe that while they may have been given a small bit of God's grace in a spiritual gift, God has gifted pastors and church leaders with extra grace to do the important ministry of the church. But Ephesians 4:11-12 inverts this picture, teaching that God gave the church pastors and leaders as the means of giving extra grace to the members of the church, equipping them to do the work of ministry.
 - a. How does this impact or change your understanding of your ministry? How does it impact or change your understanding of the ministry of pastors?
 - b. If the pastor's job is to equip and support you in your ministry, what does that say about the importance of your ministry?
 - c. How can God use you in front line ministry in ways that allow you to be more effective than Pastor Mike or our other pastors?
4. In Ephesians 4 Paul teaches that the only way for a Christian to grow "to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ," is through using their gifts by serving within the ministry of the church.
 - a. Have you found this to be true in your own life? How your personal spiritual growth during times of involvement in church ministry in compared to your growth to times when you were not involved?
 - b. How does this idea contrast with the "consumerism" mindset that has become so common in the American church? How can the church teach this idea to people who come to the church thinking like a consumer?
5. Respond to the following statement; *A person cannot grow to spiritual maturity as a follower of Christ if they are not involved in ministry where they are using spiritual gifts.* Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not.