



LESSON 4 – PARTICIPATION: FROM SPECTATOR TO PARTICIPANT

Romans 12:1-8

REVIEW

1. **Assignment:** Who contacted a ministry leader this week? How did it go?
2. The Body Principle: Every part is essential, different, needed, and placed by God
3. Sweet Spot Formula: (Gifts + Passion) × Need = Your Place
4. Three levels: Attender → Volunteer → Leader

Today we're wrapping up this series with the most important lesson: PARTICIPATION. You've discovered your gifts. You've identified your purpose. You've found your place. Now it's time to GO ALL IN. Let's read ***Romans 12:1-8***.

FROM SPECTATOR TO PARTICIPANT

Let me tell you about a man named Mike. Mike came to church for three years. Every single Sunday, there he was ... third row, left side. He'd worship, take notes, shake hands, go home. Rinse and repeat.

One day his pastor asked him, "Mike, have you ever thought about serving somewhere?"

He looked at his pastor like he asked him to fly to Mars. "Oh, I'm not really the serving type. I'm just here to learn and grow." His pastor asked, "Mike, do you work out?" "Yeah, I go to the gym five days a week."

"Okay. Imagine if you went to the gym five days a week, but all you did was watch other people lift weights. You'd sit on a bench, take notes on their form, cheer them on ... but you never actually picked up a weight yourself. What would happen?"

He laughed. "I'd never get in shape!"

"EXACTLY. That's what's happening to you spiritually. You're watching everyone else serve, but you're not actually doing anything. And you're wondering why you're not growing."

That conversation changed Mike's life. He started serving in the parking lot ministry. Just directing cars. Simple. But something shifted in him.

Within six months, Mike was leading the entire parking team. Within a year, he was discipling three other guys. Today, he's one of the most passionate, on-fire believers in the church. What changed? He moved from being a spectator to being a participant.

LESSON TEXT

Romans 12:1-8 is Paul's blueprint for participation. Let's read it:

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness."

Did you catch **verse 1**? **"Present your bodies a living sacrifice."**

God's not asking for your opinions. He's not asking for your good intentions. He's asking for YOUR BODY. Your hands. Your feet. Your time. Your energy. Your actual participation.

And look at **verse 6**: **"Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, LET US USE THEM."**

Not "let us think about using them someday." Not "let us wait until we feel ready." **LET US USE THEM.** Now. Today.

THE AVAILABILITY-TO-PARTICIPATION PIPELINE

Here's how the journey works:

Stage 1: Awareness "I have gifts." (Week 1 - Discovery)

Stage 2: Clarity "I know my purpose." (Week 2 - Purpose)

Stage 3: Placement "I know where I fit." (Week 3 - Placement)

Stage 4: Availability "I'm willing to serve."

Stage 5: Participation "I'm actively serving." ← This is where we are today

Stage 6: Multiplication "I'm raising up others to serve."

Most people get stuck between Stage 4 and Stage 5. They're available ... they're willing ... but they never actually DO anything.

It's like standing at the edge of a pool saying, "I'm totally willing to swim!" But you never jump in. Today, we're jumping in.

FIVE SHIFTS FROM AVAILABILITY TO PARTICIPATION

Let me give you five critical shifts you must make to move from being available to actively participating:

SHIFT #1: FROM CONSUMER TO CONTRIBUTOR

A **consumer** asks, "What can the church do for me?"

A **contributor** asks, "What can I do for the church?"

A **consumer** evaluates the sermon, critiques the worship, and judges the coffee.

A **contributor** shows up early to set up chairs, serves in the nursery, and brings the coffee.

A **consumer** has opinions about everything but ownership of nothing.

A **contributor** takes responsibility and makes things happen.

It's easy to be a consumer. It requires zero commitment. You just show up, take what you want, and leave. But Jesus didn't die on the cross so you could have a comfortable Sunday morning experience. He died to set you free to serve, to give, to participate in His work.

Acts 20:35 says it clearly: *"It is more blessed to give than to receive."*

The blessing isn't in what you get ... it's in what you give!

SHIFT #2: FROM SOMEDAY TO TODAY

How many people have been saying *"someday I'll serve"* for the last five years?

Someday when the kids are older. **Someday** when work slows down. **Someday** when I know more Bible. **Someday** when I feel more equipped. You know what someday really means? **Never.**

Someday is a dangerous word. It lets you feel good about your intentions without ever taking action. **Proverbs 27:1** warns us: *"Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth."*

You don't know what tomorrow holds. You might have another 50 years, or you might have 50 days. Don't waste today waiting for a perfect someday that may never come. James put it even more bluntly in **James 4:17**:

"Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin."

Ouch. You can't say you didn't know. You've sat through four weeks of teaching on spiritual gifts. You know what you're supposed to do. Now the question is: Will you do it?

SHIFT #3: FROM PERFECTION TO PROGRESSION

Here's a secret: **You're never** going to feel 100% ready. **You're never** going to have it all figured out. **You're never** going to be the perfect version of yourself. If you wait until you're perfect, you'll be waiting forever.

God doesn't need your perfection. He needs your participation. Look at the disciples. They were a hot mess! Peter was impulsive. Thomas was a doubter. Matthew was a tax collector (basically a traitor). James and John had anger issues.

But Jesus didn't wait until they got their act together. He said, **"Follow Me,"** and they learned on the job. You learn by doing. You will grow through serving. Perfection isn't the goal ... progression is. So stop waiting to be perfect. Start where you are. Grow as you go.

SHIFT #4: FROM COMFORT TO COURAGE

Let's be honest ... serving requires stepping outside your comfort zone.

It's uncomfortable to show up early when you'd rather sleep in. It's uncomfortable to talk to strangers when you'd rather hang out with your friends. It's uncomfortable to lead when you'd rather follow. It's uncomfortable to give when you'd rather keep.

But here's the thing: Everything significant happens outside your comfort zone. Your comfort zone is nice. It's safe. It's familiar. But nothing grows there.

Joshua 1:9 says: ***"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."***

Three times in that one verse God says: ***Be strong. Be courageous. Don't be afraid.*** Why? Because courage is required. But you don't have to do it alone ... God is with you.

When you step out in courage, God steps in with power.

SHIFT #5: FROM INDEPENDENCE TO INTERDEPENDENCE

One of the biggest lies of our culture is that you can do it all on your own. "I don't need anyone. I'm self-made. I'm independent." But that's not how God designed the church.

We NEED each other. You can't do my part, and I can't do your part. But when we all do our part, the body functions beautifully.

Romans 12:5 says: ***"So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another."***

Members of ONE ANOTHER. You belong to me. I belong to you. We're connected. Interdependent. When you serve, you're not just helping the church ... you're helping me. And when I serve, I'm helping you. That's the power of the body.

THE PARTICIPATION PROMISE

Here's what God promises when you fully participate:

PROMISE #1: YOU'LL EXPERIENCE JOY

There's a joy that comes from serving that you can't get any other way. It's the joy of obedience. The joy of purpose. The joy of making a difference. ***Psalm 100:2*** says: ***"Serve the Lord with gladness; come before His presence with singing."***

Serve with gladness! Not begrudgingly. Not out of obligation. With JOY.

PROMISE #2: YOU'LL GROW SPIRITUALLY

When you serve, you grow. You learn to trust God. You see Him work. You develop character. You become more like Jesus.

Jesus modeled this in ***John 13*** when He washed the disciples' feet. He said, ***"I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you."***

Serving makes you more like Jesus. And isn't that the goal?

PROMISE #3: YOU'LL MULTIPLY YOUR IMPACT

When you participate, you don't just help one person ... you create a ripple effect. You serve in the nursery, and a parent gets to worship freely for the first time in months, and they encounter God, and their whole family is impacted.

You greet someone at the door with a smile, and they feel welcomed, and they come back next week, and they give their life to Jesus, and their kids grow up in the church, and their grandkids do too. You never know how far your obedience will reach.

PROMISE #4: YOU'LL HEAR "WELL DONE"

This is the big one.

Matthew 25:23: "Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord."

Imagine hearing those words from Jesus. "Well done." Not "Well said." Not "Well intended." WELL DONE. That's what you get when you participate.

THE FINAL CHALLENGE

We've spent four weeks together. We've discovered your gifts. We've identified your purpose. We've found your place. Now comes the moment of truth: **What are you going to do about it?** You can close this workbook, go home, and do nothing. You can let all this

information sit in your head and never make it to your hands. Or you can decide today that you are going to become a full participant! Right here, right now!

FINAL DISCOVERY EXERCISE: DEPLOYMENT PLAN

In your manual, create your personal deployment plan:

1. My Top 3 Spiritual Gifts:

- _____
- _____
- _____

2. My Purpose Statement: (In one sentence, what is God calling you to do?)

3. My Ministry Placement: (Where are you committing to serve for the next 30 days?)

4. My First Step: (What's the very first action you'll take this week?)

5. My Accountability Partner: (Who will keep you on track?)

FINAL ASSIGNMENT

Serve for 30 days. Then come back and tell us your story. We want to hear:

- Where you served
- What you learned
- How God showed up
- What surprised you
- How you grew

Your story will inspire others. Your obedience will create momentum. Your participation will change lives. This isn't the end ... it's the beginning.

Resource Credits

1. Warren, Rick. *The Purpose Driven Life*. Zondervan, 2002.
2. Wilkinson, Bruce. *The Dream Giver*. Multnomah, 2003.
3. Maxwell, John C. *Developing the Leader Within You*. Thomas Nelson, 1993.
4. Blackaby, Henry & Richard. *Spiritual Leadership*. B&H Publishing, 2011.
5. Coleman, Robert E. *The Master Plan of Evangelism*. Revell, 1993.

CONGRATULATIONS! You've completed the NEXT GIFTS series!

Now go live it out!