

Spiritual Gifts

- Chart Summary of the Spiritual Gifts
- Multiple Resources on Spiritual Gifts

SPIRITUAL GIFTS
CHRIST IS THE CENTER
BELIEVERS ARE HIS MEMBERS

SPIRITUAL GIFTS: DEVOTIONALS, QUOTES, ILLUSTRATIONS

C H Spurgeon - The spiritual gifts of the church are for the good of the rebels as well as for the building up of those who are reconciled.

Whatever spiritual gifts we have, they are not our own to use as we please; they are only entrusted to us that we may employ them to help our fellow-Christians.

There is no person without a talent of some sort or other, no one without some form of power either given by nature or acquired by education. We are all endowed in some degree or other, and we must each one give an account for that talent.

Warren Wiersbe - Spiritual gifts, no matter how exciting and wonderful, are useless and even destructive if they are not ministered in love.

I once ministered with two men who had opposite attitudes toward their gifts: the one man constantly belittled his gifts and would not use them, and the other man constantly boasted about gifts that he did not possess. Actually, both of them were guilty of pride, because both of them refused to acknowledge God's grace and let Him have the glory. Moses made a similar mistake when God called him (Ex. 4:1–13). When the individual believers in a church know their gifts, accept them by faith, and use them for God's glory, then God can bless in a wonderful way.

Spiritual gifts are tools to build with, not toys to play with or weapons to fight with. In the church at Corinth, the believers were tearing down the ministry because they were abusing spiritual gifts. They were using their gifts as ends in themselves and not as a means toward the end of building up the church. **They so emphasized their spiritual gifts that they lost their spiritual graces! They had the gifts of the Spirit but were lacking in the fruit of the spirit**—love, joy, peace, etc. (Gal. 5:22–23).

Kind Instruction on How to Use Spiritual Gifts - Konnie Stevens took over as pastor of a large southern church after spending eight years ministering in Moscow and other Eastern European cities. Things had changed a lot in America, especially in the world of technology. Cable, computers, cellular phones—it can all get a bit confusing. So when pastor Stevens complained to his new secretary that he didn't think that the paging device folks asked him to wear was working, she was gentle in pointing out that he was wearing his garage door opener. That of course explained why his pager wasn't having much success opening the garage door. Pastor Stevens had all the tools. He just needed a little good information on how to use them. Today the body of Christ (the church) is facing a similar information crisis when it comes to spiritual gifts. (6000 Plus Illustrations for Communicating Biblical Truths)

Question - Why Do So Many Christians Either Not Experience or Do Not Utilize Their Spiritual Gifts?

In 1 Cor 12:31 Paul had written "But earnestly desire (zeloo in [present imperative](#)) the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way."

Then in 1 Corinthians 14:1 Paul commanded them to '**Pursue** ([present imperative](#)) love, yet **desire earnestly** (zeloo in the [present tense](#) = continually desire) spiritual *gifts*, but especially that you may prophesy."

Earnestly desire ([2206](#)) (**zeloo** from **zelos** = zeal in turn from **zeo** = boil; source of our English word "zeal") properly, to bubble over from getting so hot (boiling) and figuratively to burn with zeal (or intensity), to be fervent. Zeloo is an onomatopoeic word imitating the sound of boiling water! The idea is to be deeply

committed to something, with the implication of accompanying desire – and in this context to be earnest, to set one's heart on, to be completely intent upon. **Does that describe your approach toward spiritual gifts?** First keep on pursuing love (something that you can only do supernaturally as you rely on the enabling power of the Holy Spirit - [See discussion of the Need for the Holy Spirit to obey NT commands](#)). But don't stop there! Be continually burning with zeal to know and use your spiritual gift or gifts (And as an aside to continually desire spiritual gifts also necessitates continual reliance on the power of the Holy Spirit!). Now tying the two clauses together (**pursue...desire earnestly**), it is clear that Paul wants **love** to be the motivation behind one's being fervent for spiritual gifts! If you reverse the order (and even leave out love), you have become like "a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal (1 Cor 13:1)!!!"

Desire earnestly - Beloved do you **desire earnestly** to know your spiritual gift and to use your spiritual gift for the glory of God? Then first pursue love. And then ponder the following note...

Gary Hill on desire earnestly (zeloo) - zēloō is used of earnestly desiring spiritual gifts. 1 Cor 14:1 literally commands, "Constantly boil over (i.e. 'with red-hot intensity') for spirituals" (= spiritual gifts)! We should literally "boil over (in intensity) about desiring spirituals" (pneumatikós; plural, ta pneumatika). This means earnestly seeking God's grace-endowments as we are convinced we should experience the Lord's fullness. **Clair D. Hutchins**, "Many Christians do not experience spiritual gifts ('spirituals') today. **Why?** Because **they lack red-hot zeal** which God requires in properly pursuing them. Rather we should be like a pro-golfer – playing at least 18 holes a day to 'keep their swing in shape.' How much more important is it to move in spiritual gifts? This will happen as we burn (boil with intensity) with desire to see 'the demonstration of the Spirit and power' (1 Cor 2:4)!"

David Holwick - Every Christian has at least one gift. God will give us the ability, and the desire to use it. Many Christians seem to sit on that desire. Steve Goodier shares the story of a piano player. He played in bars and he was pretty good at it. People came out just to hear him play. But one night, a customer told him he didn't want to hear him just play anymore. He wanted him to sing a song. The piano player said, "I don't sing." But the customer was persistent. He told the bartender, "I'm tired of listening to the piano. I want that guy to sing!" The bartender shouted across the room, "If you want to get paid, sing a song. The customers are asking you to sing!" So he sang a song. A piano player who had never sung in public did so for the very first time. And nobody had ever heard the song, "Mona Lisa" sung the way it was sung that night by Nat King Cole! He had talent he was sitting on. He might have lived the rest of his life as a no-name piano player in a no-name bar. But because he HAD to sing, he went on to become one of the best-known entertainers in America.

David Jeremiah - When geese migrate, they can be seen flying in a V-shaped formation. To us on the ground, it is a thing of beauty; but to the geese it is essential for survival. If you watch them, you will observe that at certain intervals relative to the strength of the wind, the lead bird who is doing the most work by breaking the force of the wind against him will drop off and fly at the end of the formation. It's been discovered that the flapping wings create an uplift of air, and the effect is greater at the rear of the formation. **So the geese take turns uplifting one another. By cooperating and working together, the geese achieve long migrations that otherwise would be exceedingly difficult for even the strongest.** It is in a similar manner that God has called us as His people. As believers in Christ, we are to lift one another up through prayer (and active use of the spiritual gifts He has given each member of the Body of Christ). We are to share material means and heart to heart friendship in caring. And we can go further into godliness than we ever would be able to if we attempt our pilgrimage all alone.

Prisoners of war from the Vietnam War, some of whom endured as much as seven or more years of captivity, say that the most effective tool their captors used against them was isolation. Prisoners who could communicate with each other generally fared better, even despite physical torture, than those who were completely cut off from their fellow captives. People need each other--and the church is no exception. In fact, Jesus Christ specifically designed His church to function like a human body, in which each part needs the support of every other part. Times of persecution have a special way of teaching us this reality. God has even given all of us spiritual gifts by which we can serve Him and each other.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS - Britain's Queen Elizabeth recently turned 78. Her birthday actually falls in April, but her subjects celebrate her birthday with lots of pomp and circumstance on a Saturday each June. Locals and foreigners alike flooded through the royal gates hoping to catch a glimpse of the Queen, and be part of the celebration. Representatives of several military units marched past the Queen and her husband Prince Phillip to honor her. Later, while military bands played tributes, Royal Air Force Jets flew overhead in her honor. The most unique feature of the celebration was that the Queen gave gifts to her subjects instead of receiving them. The queen honored several people during the celebration. Ten Brits and others who aided in the aftermath of the November bombing of Britain's consulate in Istanbul received awards. Jamaican born baritone Willard White and English Football Association Director

Trevor Brooking received knighthoods, and actor John Hurt became a Commander of the Order of the British Empire, or CBE. The architect of the new Queen Mary II ocean liner, Stephen Payne was made an Officer of the Order of the British Empire, or OBE, as were a couple of other English celebrities. Colin Cross who traveled from Lancashire, northern England for the event said, "It's the greatest free show on earth. They should never do away with the monarchy." (Associated Press, Britain Celebrates Queen's 78th, Regal Pageantry Marks Birthday, by Rachel Gould. June 13, 2004. Submitted by Jim Sandell.) Jim Wilson comments - The celebration of the Queen's birthday in England sounds strangely familiar. As His subjects, we honor the Lord with our praise and worship, and yet He is the one who bestows the greatest gifts to His loyal subjects. -- Fresh Illustrations

J D Greear on Spiritual Gifts - How You Can Discover Your Spiritual Gifts

In three primary passages (1 Cor. 12 – 14, Rom. 12, and Eph. 4) Paul lists out various spiritual gifts. None of the lists are identical, and each contains a few the others leave out. This shows us that spiritual gifts are not so much a defined set of functions as much as they are various manifestations of God using us in the lives of others. We are not to list out these gifts on a spreadsheet and assume they comprise the full scope of all that God empowers his people to do. Each list simply gives examples of how God works through his people, identifying the most significant ways God is at work in the church. In this chapter we will not discuss all the gifts Paul mentions, but rather five guiding principles to help you discover the pneumatika in your life:

1. A spiritual gift bestows an unusual effectiveness in a responsibility given to all believers.

Most spiritual gifts are assigned somewhere as duties to all believers. For example, God commands all believers to serve, evangelize, prophesy, pray for healing, intercede for others, trust God for provision, be generous, exhort one another, and so on. But some believers are particularly effective in those things. This unusual effectiveness is the sign of a spiritual gifting.

2. We discover our spiritual gifts as we actively pursue those responsibilities.

As we obey the commands God has given to all believers, God reveals to us, through our own experiences in obedience and by the testimony of others who observe us, where we are the most effective for him. The Spirit of God called out Paul and Barnabas, for example, to a special gifting of evangelism and directed the church to send them out into the nations as their ambassadors (Acts 13:1 – 3). That happened as they were evangelizing their neighbors in Antioch. It was out of this obedience God called them to their special task. Think of it like a baseball player getting called up into the major leagues. You're playing the same game — you just get called up to a higher level. As we faithfully execute our duties, others recognize an unusual ability given to us, and God uses their observation to call us up into the major leagues of a spiritual gift. By "major league" I am not referring exclusively to full-time ministry, either. God gives each of us a major-league role in his kingdom. As we learned earlier, God steers pedaling bicycles. **He's the rudder for moving ships.** If you and I will get (our ship) moving in obedience, he will steer us into our special giftings. For example, I discovered I had the gift of exhortation and teaching by leading some of my friends to Christ and discipling them in high school. I was literally sitting on the front porch of my childhood home, explaining to a friend how to set up a quiet time, when I first had the thought, "I really enjoy teaching people how to do this." In college, I began to lead small groups of new believers, teaching them how to pray, understand Christian doctrine, and share their faith. Eventually those small groups turned into larger ones. I never really had a "Damascus Road" experience in which God called me to ministry by saying, "Thou hast the gifts of exhortation and teaching." I discovered I had those things simply by obeying the command to make disciples. As I "obeyed" his general commands to all believers, God made his specific will for my life clear. Sometimes, however, the Holy Spirit does reveal a spiritual gift through a special, unexpected, prophetic word, as he did with Timothy: A group of elders laid their hands on Timothy and one of them declared that he would become a great teacher, even though he was young and timid. Evidently this caught Timothy totally by surprise (2 Tim. 1:6). This kind of thing has happened to me at least twice. A pastor I'd just met once told me about a leadership assignment that he believed the Holy Spirit had given to me, one for which I felt totally unprepared. But I've seen the fulfillment of the words he spoke. (Some of the details he gave me were quite specific.) In seminary, our president told me about a calling God had on my life to bring the gospel to Muslims, which again took me a little by surprise. But it also has come to pass.

3. A spiritual gift usually reveals itself in the confluence of what we are passionate about, what we're good at, and the affirmation of others.

I have found the following diagram helpful:

The circle labeled **“ability”** refers to what you are naturally good at; **“affinity”** to what you feel passionate about; and **“affirmation”** to ways people have testified that God has used you. Where all three circles converge is typically an indication of a spiritual gift. Often, spiritual gifts coincide with natural abilities you already have. God takes a natural talent and **“supercharges”** it for his purposes. For example, my gift of exhortation coincides with a natural ability I have for coaching, public speaking, and persuasion. Evidently, Paul was a great thinker and leader before he became a Christian, having been selected to apprentice under the highly respected Jewish leader Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). His special calling as an apostle and teacher coincided with his natural abilities to think and lead and write. There are exceptions, of course. Sometimes, God gives spiritual gifts that have little to do with natural abilities, in part to highlight that power in ministry comes from God, not from our talents. For example, I know a young woman in our church who is terribly shy around people, yet God has given her an unusual ability in evangelism. It makes no sense. But watching how effectively she brings other people to Jesus directs your attention away from her abilities to the God who is using her. On the flip side, I know some great orators who just can’t preach God’s Word effectively, even though they know and understand it well. It kind of baffles me. I also know selfish, materialistic people who, upon their conversion, became the most generous, giving people in our church. (Think Zacchaeus; he went from unscrupulous tax collector to a guy who joyfully gave half his income to the poor!) I know of several great preachers who had terrible stage fright when God called them to preach. As one saying goes, **“Sometimes God calls those he’s gifted; other times he gifts those he’s called!”**...

4. Spiritual giftings arise out of the unique ways God has written our life stories.

God sends each of us through particular experiences to teach us things about himself that he will use in us to reveal to others. Jesus said to Paul on the Damascus Road, for example, **“Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen and will see of me.”** (Acts 26:16) Paul was special, of course. He was an apostle, which means Jesus showed things to Paul that were new and specific — things that would be written down with authority in the book that tells us what God wants us to know, doctrinally speaking, about Jesus. Our insights and experiences will never rise to that level. But God does give us individual experiences (analogous to Paul’s) that enrich our understanding of him and enrich others as we share them. Jesus is like a bazillion-sided diamond. No one person can see and experience the whole thing. So God allows various members of his body to see and experience different dimensions of his beauty, and as we share these things with others in the body, we all end up with a fuller picture of Jesus than any of us could have obtained alone. That’s part of the beauty, by the way, of being in a local, Spirit-filled church. You see so much more of Jesus than you can alone. Paul told us that God had allowed him to go through a great time of pain so that he could **“comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God”** (2 Cor. 1:4). Paul knew that part of God’s purpose in his pain was to show him something about God that he could later use to comfort those who are confronting similar circumstances.

Charles Spurgeon, Britain’s nineteenth-century **“prince of preachers,”** saw his gout and depression — so severe, he said, that at times he could barely move — as specially given to him by God for the benefit of the church. He said, **“I would go into the deeps a hundred times to cheer a downcast spirit, that I might know how to speak a word in season to the weary.”** His pain became the Spirit’s gateway into new insights into Jesus’ beauty, which he could then share with others. Having benefited personally from Spurgeon’s writing on suffering, I am grateful.

My friend Hannah has a driving passion to see the gospel brought to broken women. While she has not experienced the same brokenness many of those women have, she sees how God has written her life story so as to prepare her for this assignment — through the divorce of her parents, through Afghanistan, through her college major, and even through her singleness. God has given her an unusual effectiveness with those women. They trust her. and confide in her. When other girls her age were hanging out at the mall, she was reaching out to girls at the local strip club. Her passion to see broken women reached for Christ is an unmistakable gifting. She chose a place where many troubled women live and went to live and work there.

I know that God has called me to lead a church that specializes in discipling parents to disciple children. My parents stumbled into a church nearly forty years ago, when I was two years old, and because this church was focused on discipling new believers, not merely counting converts, I grew up in the home of two dynamic, growing believers. That made an eternal difference for me, and now through me for my kids. Of all the things our church could focus on, I know God wants us to specialize in equipping parents to disciple their children.

That passion came from how God wrote my life story.

God writes each of our life stories in unique ways so that we can testify about him to others. There's just so much of Jesus to see; no one can contain him all. No one can embody every ministry he desires to perform on earth. This must have been on John's mind when he concluded his Gospel with the words: Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written. (John 21:25) Each of us is a book, written by the Holy Spirit about Jesus, for others to read. What can you learn about how the Spirit of God wants to use you by looking at your life story?

5. The Spirit of God works in our (so-called) secular vocations.

An often-overlooked dimension of the Spirit's guidance is how God uses our "secular vocations" as part of his plan for us in the world. We tend to reduce the Spirit's empowerment to church stuff, things like preaching, leading worship, or taking meals to shut-ins. And those are all great things. The Scripture, however, presents the Spirit at work also in our natural, "secular" giftings, too, using them for his purposes in the world. These vocational abilities are not the same thing as charismata, but are still ways the Spirit works in and through us. In fact, the very word "vocation" comes from the Latin word voca, which means "to call." Our vocational abilities are part of our calling. So if we want to know his specific plan for us, we should think about "secular" skills too. In Exodus 31, for example, we find a brief description of two very important, although largely unknown, Old Testament characters named Bezalel and Oholiab. These two artists, one filled with the Spirit of God and another appointed by God as a helper, showed that fullness by the excellent way they made artistic designs, cut stones, and worked with wood (Ex. 31:1 – 5). (For even more detail see his excellent book [Jesus, Continued...: Why the Spirit Inside You is Better than Jesus Beside You](#))

Related Resource:

- [How to Discover Your Spiritual Gifts - Brandon Cox](#)

On Christmas morning, the children in a family do not usually all receive the same gifts. One gets a football, one a puzzle, another receives a dollhouse, and another a table game. Yet, although each child does not receive the same gifts as the others, the parents intend the gifts to be enjoyed by all the children as they use them together. The same is true of the gifts God gives his children. We do not all have the same gift, but we are all to use our gift for the good of all in God's family.

A modern army is fitted with a strategic mix of various weapons to maximize its effectiveness in fulfilling its purpose. Some soldiers receive a rifle and some are given pistols or ride in a tank armed with a cannon and machine guns. Others operate missiles, jet fighters, bombers, or ships. To win the war, it takes the unified effects of all these weapons, operated by the shared efforts of all the variously equipped soldiers. God, as the wise Commander-in-Chief in our spiritual warfare, has likewise given to each of his children in the body of Christ spiritual gifts so that they can work together to be effective in fulfilling his will. And, as in a physical war, if Christian "soldiers" work together and use their gifts, the task of the church on earth will be accomplished.

A young schoolboy was trying out for a part in the school play. His mother knew that he had set his heart on it, though she was afraid he would not be chosen. On the day the parts were awarded, she drove to school to pick him up. The young lad rushed up to her, eyes shining with pride and excitement. Then he said some words to her that should remain a lesson to us all: "I have been chosen to clap and cheer." In the same way, God has lovingly chosen each of us for different and special tasks.

When Niccolo Paganini willed his finely crafted and lovingly used violin to the city of Genoa, he demanded that it never be played again. It was a gift designated for preservation, but not destined for service. On the other hand, when the resurrected Christ willed his spiritual gifts to the children of God, he commanded that they be used. They were gifts not designated for preservation, but destined for service.

Imagine how a parent would feel if on Christmas Day when the gifts for their children were handed out, the children just took them, said "Thank you," and laid them aside with no attempt to open the gifts, not even to find out what they were! Imagine how the Lord must feel when he has given gifts to us that he intends for us to use, and yet we never take the trouble to find out what they are, never put them to work, and then excuse ourselves from serving the church by saying that we can't do anything!

The mountain does not speak ill of the river just because it is high and mighty. Nor does the river scorn the mountain just because it

moves swiftly and gracefully. They both are great in their own way.

When a speck of dust blows into an eye, instinctively the eye is rubbed with a finger. There is no debate with the finger about whether to help the eye. Later, after pulling down the lid, causing the eye to water, the speck is washed out. In a short time the eye is back to normal. But without the hand, including its specially functioning fingers, the irritant would have remained. Each member in the body of Christ is equally important. We all need each other.

Imagine the Master Carpenter's tools holding a conference: Brother Hammer presides, but several suggest he leave the meeting because he is too noisy. Brother Hammer replies, "If I have to leave this shop, Brother Screw must go also. You have to turn him around again and again to get him to accomplish anything." Brother Screw then speaks up. "If you wish, I'll leave. But Brother Plane must leave, too. All his work is on the surface. His efforts have no depth." To this, Brother Plane responds, "Brother Rule will also have to withdraw, for he is always measuring folks as though he were the only one who is right." Brother Rule then complains about Brother Sandpaper: "He ought to leave, too, because he's so rough and always rubbing people the wrong way." And so goes the discord. In the midst of all this discussion, in walks the Carpenter of Nazareth. He has arrived to start his day's work. Putting on his apron, he goes to the bench to make a pulpit from which to proclaim the gospel. He uses Brothers Hammer, Screw, Plane, Rule, Sandpaper, and all the other tools. After the day's work, when the pulpit is finished, Brother Saw arises and remarks, "Brethren, I observe that all of us are workers together with the Lord."

A man broke his left arm. One night when he couldn't sleep, he imagined a dialogue between his right and left hands. Right Hand said, "Left Hand, you are not missed. Everybody's glad it was you that was broken and not me. You are not very important."

Left Hand asked, "How are you superior?"

Right Hand replied, "Why, my owner cannot write a letter without me."

Left Hand: "But who holds the paper on which he writes?"

Right Hand: "Who swings the hammer?"

Left Hand: "Who holds the nail?"

Right Hand: "Who guides the plane when the carpenter smooths a board?"

Left Hand: "Who steadies the board?"

Right Hand: "When our owner walks down the street and lifts his hat to greet someone, which of us does it?"

Left Hand: "Who holds the briefcase while he does it?" Then he continued, "Let me ask you a question. When our owner shaved yesterday, you held the razor, but his face is cut because I wasn't there to help. Also, our owner's watch has stopped. Why? You may do the winding, but if I'm not there to hold it, the watch won't get wound. You can't take money out of his wallet to pay for something because I'm not there to hold it. The master can do very few things without me."

So, too, does each of us have a place of service for the Lord. None is greater—just different.

One snowy morning at 5:00 a.m., a missionary candidate rang the bell at a missionary examiner's home. Ushered into the office, he sat three hours past his appointment time waiting for his interview. At 8:00 A.M. a retired missionary appeared and began his questioning. "Can you spell?"

Rather mystified, the candidate answered, "Yes, sir."

All right, spell "baker."

"B-A-K-E-R."

"Fine. Now, do you know anything about numbers?" the examiner continued.

"Yes, sir, something."

"Please add two plus two."

"Four," replied the candidate.

"That's fine," said the examiner. "I believe you have passed. I'll tell the board tomorrow."

At the board meeting, the examiner reported on the interview. "He has all the qualifications for a fine missionary. First, I tested him on self-denial, making him arrive at my home at five in the morning. He left a warm bed on a snowy morning without any complaint. Second, I tested him on promptness. He arrived on time. Third, I examined him on patience. I made him wait three hours to see me. Fourth, I tested him on temper. He failed to show any anger or aggravation. Fifth, I tried his humility by asking him questions that a seven-year-old child could answer, and he showed no indignation. So you see, I believe the candidate meets the requirements. He will make the fine missionary we need."

Spirit-given abilities are needed, but Spirit-produced fruit is more significant.

Dr. H. A. Ironside often spoke of the pathetic situation of those who felt they had the gift of preaching but complained that no one had the gift of listening.

1 Corinthians 13:8-10 - The important criterion in determining whether or not a particular spiritual gift will endure is its purpose. The purpose of a mercury vapor light is to illuminate the highway at night. When the sun rises, the highway becomes illuminated by a greater and more perfect light. The mercury vapor light then goes out because it has served its purpose. In a similar way, spiritual gifts—whether knowledge, prophecy, or tongues—will cease to function when a state of perfect spiritual maturity is attained. Their "light" will no longer be required then.

Ephesians 4:11 - The need for diversity as the basis of unity in the body of Christ is well illustrated by a jigsaw puzzle. All the parts of the puzzle are of equal importance to the completed puzzle, and without all of the parts the puzzle would be incomplete. However, when building the puzzle, one looks first for the four corner pieces that are foundational to the completion of the rest of the puzzle. So, too, the four gifts mentioned in Ephesians 4:11 are foundational to the completion of the mature body of Christ. When the jigsaw is finished, the four corner pieces are of no more value than the rest of the pieces.

Many churches have a Beau Geste view of spiritual gifts. In that movie, the Arabs were attacking a Legionnaire fort where only four Legionnaires were left alive. The Arabs were not aware of this, but if they were to realize it, the fort would fall for sure. Therefore, the Legionnaires devised a plan to disguise their weak condition. They set up the bodies of their dead comrades along the wall of the fort and ran back and forth, firing off the guns of their dead friends. From the outside, it all looked very convincing—but on the inside, there were only four men. Likewise, in many of our churches, we have two or three or four "professionals" who run around and shoot off the guns of the spiritually inactive congregation. Outwardly the church looks like it is alive and well—but inwardly there are only a very few people doing the work of the whole body.

(Preceding are from an excellent resource for sermon illustrations - [1500 Illustrations for Biblical Preaching \(Over 1500 sermon illustrations arranged by topic and indexed exhaustively- Michael P. Green\)](#))

Research

- 29% of all adults - and 40% of Baby Buster adults - have never heard of spiritual gifts
- 69% have heard of spiritual gifts but do not know what their spiritual gift is
- 1% of adults and 9% of senior pastors claim they have the gift of evangelism
- 1% of adults and 6% of senior pastors claim they have the gift of leadership
- the most common gift claimed by church-goers is the gift of teaching (5%)
- the most common items mentioned as spiritual gifts which are not biblical gifts are love, kindness, relationships, singing, and listening
- 7% say they have spoken in tongues
- 13% have heard of the gift of tongues but say it is not operative today

Barna Research Group, Ltd., Oxnard, CA (10,000 Sermon Illustrations)

MY LIFE HAS BEEN CROSSED by men who have the gift of giving. Maybe yours has also. When I was at Dallas Seminary, God used a man in my life and in the lives of ten other fellows at the school at that time. Howard Kane chose to underwrite our tuition. Absolutely unsolicited. Each time tuition came due, there was a check in the mail.

I remember one time he came to Dallas and got all eleven of us together and said, "I want us to take a drive downtown." After a sandwich, he took us several blocks away to a men's store. Inside he suited us up in new suits, new sport coats, one fellow after another. He sat there and just beamed! He was happier than we were! He wasn't wealthy, but there was something inside of him (it's called a spiritual gift) that was not satisfied until there was an outlet for that gift. -- Chuck Swindoll

SPIRITUAL GIFTS - CHOSEN TO CLAP AND CHEER

ROMANS 12:3–8; 1 CORINTHIANS 12:1–31; EPHESIANS 4:11–16

Encouragement; Ministry; Purpose; Service; Spiritual Gifts; Support

Jamie Scott tried out for the play at his elementary school. He had his heart set on being one of the main characters, but his mother feared he would not be chosen. On the day the parts were awarded to the children, Jamie's mother and a friend went to pick him up, just in case he was terribly disappointed.

When Jamie saw his mother, he rushed up to her, his eyes shining with pride and excitement, and said, "Guess what, Mom. I've been chosen to clap and cheer."

Citation: Anonymous from the Internet; submitted by Brad Estep; St. Petersburg, Florida

Summarizing Spiritual Fruit

1. is given to all believers;
2. produces spiritual character;
3. is singular (fruit is singular, meaning one's character is a unit);
4. is permanent (1 Cor. 13:8–10); and
5. grows internally.

To summarize spiritual gifts, note the contrast to the previous five points.

Spiritual gifts:

1. are given to specific believers;
2. produce spiritual service;
3. are plural (Flynn lists nineteen, Wagner, twenty-seven);
4. will cease; and
5. operate externally.

Jerry Falwell, Elmer Towns, *Stepping out on Faith*, p. 142

When I stand before God at the end of my life, I would hope that I would not have a single bit of talent left and could say, "I used everything you gave me." -- Unknown

Fruitfulness - According to National Wildlife, each week people in the United States generate four million tons of trash. During the holiday season between Thanksgiving and Christmas, though, we throw out even more—five million tons per week—and a high percentage of that trash is simply wasteful. For example, if each person in America throws away just one bite of Thanksgiving turkey, that comes out to 8.1 million pounds of edible turkey in the trash can. If each person throws away one tablespoon of stuffing, 16.1 million pounds of edible stuffing is wasted. And then, of course, there's all that wrapping paper. The average U.S. consumer gift-wraps twenty packages during the holidays. If each person wrapped just three of those packages with recycled wrap, the amount of paper saved would cover 45,000 football fields. New Year celebrations add to the trash heap. After the Times Square New Year's Eve celebration, for example, the New York sanitation department cleans up forty-two tons of extra garbage. Environmentalists aren't the only ones bothered by the waste of valuable resources. God, too, hates waste. He doesn't want to see valuable resources he bestows on individuals—such as spiritual gifts, time, money, ability, and vitality—lost and unused. The Lord commands that we bear fruit in this life.

Cooperation - CBS radio newsman Charles Osgood told the story of two ladies who lived in a convalescent center. Each had suffered an incapacitating stroke. Margaret's stroke left her left side restricted, while Ruth's stroke damaged her right side. Both of these ladies were accomplished pianists but had given up hope of ever playing again. The director of the center sat them down at a piano and encouraged them to play solo pieces together. They did, and a beautiful friendship developed. What a picture of the church's needing to work together! What one member cannot do alone, perhaps two or more could do together—in harmony.

Body of Christ - In *Witnesses of a Third Way: A Fresh Look at Evangelism*, Robert Neff's chapter includes this story about visiting a church service: It was one of those mornings when the tenor didn't get out of bed on the right side.... As I listened to his faltering

voice, I looked around. People were pulling out hymnals to locate the hymn being sung by the soloist. By the second verse, the congregation had joined the soloist in the hymn. By the third verse, the tenor was beginning to find the range. By the fourth verse, it was beautiful. And on the fifth verse the congregation was absolutely silent, and the tenor sang the most beautiful solo of his life. That is life in the body of Christ, enabling one another to sing the tune Christ has given us.

Body of Christ - In March of 1981, President Ronald Reagan was shot by John Hinckley, Jr., and was hospitalized for several weeks. Although Reagan was the nation's chief executive, his hospitalization had little impact on the nation's activity. Government continued on. On the other hand, suppose the garbage collectors in this country went on strike, as they did in Philadelphia. That city was not only in a literal mess, the pile of decaying trash quickly became a health hazard. A three-week nationwide strike would paralyze the country. Who is more important—the President or a garbage collector? In the body of Christ, seemingly insignificant ones are urgently needed. As Paul reminds us, "The head cannot say to the feet, 'I don't need you!' On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable" (1 Cor. 12:21–22).

Ministry - In a Forbes article about Harry Quadracci and the Quad/Graphics printing company, Phyllis Berman writes about the kind of employees the company hires. *A good many people whom society would dismiss as losers have been given a chance at Quad/Graphics, and they are grateful. "We hire people who have no education and little direction," Quadracci explains. "They are the kind of people who look at their shoes when they apply for a job. They join the firm not for its high wages—starting salaries on the floor are only about \$7.50 an hour—but because we offer them a chance to make something out of themselves."* Like this businessman, God delights in calling workers who look at their shoes when they apply for the job. God gives great responsibility to people whom the world thinks little of.

(Craig Brian Larson - 750 engaging illustrations for preachers, teachers & writers)

Spiritual Gifts- Paul compares the possessors of spiritual gifts to members of the human body because as the members of our body are none of our doing or deserving, neither are the spiritual gifts we possess. They are God's gifts entrusted to us for a purpose. If that purpose isn't fulfilled, His gifts are wasted. What's the use of having an eye or a hand that doesn't serve the entire body? A test of the genuineness of any gift is whether it benefits the body of Christ as a whole, or only the possessor. Does it tend to unite the body or to divide it? Does it make members who are different from us feel estranged or fellow members with us of one and the same body?

Use or Lose - The Lord has given to each one of us at least one gift, and probably many more than that. The most important thing in life is to find what gifts we have; secondly, to recognize that they are from God; thirdly, to be faithful and dependable in using them. **Anything that is not used doesn't develop. A pianist said, "You know, I must practice every day. If I don't practice one day I know the difference. If I don't practice two days, those who hear me know the difference."**

Where Are God's Best Gifts? - Earthly thrones are generally built with steps up to them; the remarkable thing about the thrones of the eternal kingdom is that the steps are all down to them. We must descend if we would reign, stoop if we would rise. Some think that God put His best gifts on a high shelf for them to reach up to them. It does not take long, however, for a Christian to realize that the best gifts are in the lower shelves, that the babes may get them also. - AMG Bible Illustrations

The Fab Five - In the early 1990s, the University of Michigan boasted what many commentators believed to be the top five basketball players in the country. This quintet was quickly dubbed the "Fab Five," and talk of four successive NCAA championships dominated the sports section of newspapers. History, however, proved otherwise. While superstars in their own right, they never meshed as a team. None of the "Fab Five" ever won one championship. The apostle Paul faced a similar situation in the city of Corinth. The church he started there was deeply divided by strife and jealousy. Those blessed with certain spiritual gifts felt superior to those whose gifts seemed more "average." Others acted in blatant disregard to those around them, oblivious to the effect their words and actions had on others. That's why Paul wrote his letter to the Corinthians. He calls them back to loving God with their whole hearts, and strengthening and supporting their neighbors as themselves. He drills his point home by using an analogy for the church: we are the body of Christ. **There is no "I" in the word "body!"**—Borst, Steven B. Men in the Church, (Concordia, 1998), quoted in Men of Integrity, Vol. 3, No. 3, p. 59.

You Can't Beat The Price

As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. -1Peter 4:10-note

Would you wait in line for 13-cents-a-gallon gasoline? Many drivers in Massachusetts did. More than 100 cars lined up along Route 12 a couple of hours before one gas station opened. The owner had advertised his gasoline at a price that was almost an outright

gift. He said he was trying to give his customers a break.

In 1 Peter 4, the apostle wrote about another kind of gift that shows the generosity of the giver. It is the **manifest grace of God**" (1Peter 4:10-note). Grace is undeserved favor--the free kindness that comes from the Lord. We experience His grace not only as the favor of His forgiveness but also as the energy and ability He gives to help us live the way He wants us to.

Accepting and using this spiritual gift has some far-reaching effects. It brings blessing to us and to others. But above all, it honors the name and kindness of the Giver. Peter urged his readers to use and express God's grace by being watchful in their prayers, showing love, being hospitable, and ministering through the spoken word (1Pe 4:7, 8, 9-note, 1Pe 4:10, 11-not).

Gasoline for 13 cents a gallon--that's almost a giveaway! But the grace God gives us to serve Him is absolutely free! It surpasses anything this world has to offer--and it's ours for the asking. --M R De Haan II

God freely gives His grace to all

Who on His Word rely,

For they have learned the secret of

His infinite supply.

--DJD

The only limit to God's grace is the limit we put on it.

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GREAT ILLUSTRATION - WHEN A "KEY" PLAYER FAILS TO FULFILL ITS FUNCTION - The following story by an unknown author gives an interesting illustration of how one believer not exercising their gift in the Body can affect the message produced by the entire Body.

A Brokxn Kxy

Evxn though my typxwritxr is an old modxl, it works quitx wxll xxcxpt for onx of the kxys.

I havx many timxs wishxd that is workxd pxrxfxtly.

It is trux that thxrx arx forty-onx kxys that function wxll xnough, but just onx kxy not working makxs thx diffxrxncx.

Somxtimxs it sxxms to mx that our church is somxthing likx my typxwritxr -- not all thx kxy pxoplx arx working propxrlly.

As onx of thxm, you may say to yoursxlf, "Wxll, I am only onx pxrson, I don't makx or brxak thx church."

But it doxs makx a big diffxrxncx, bxcasx a church, to bx xffctivx, nxxds thx activx participation of xvxry pxrson.

So, thx nxxt timx your xfforts arx not nxxdxd vxry much, rxmxxbxx my typxwritxr and say to yoursxlf, "I am a kxy pxrson in thx congrxgation and I am nxxdxd vxry much."

This is what happxns to thx wholx church, and multiply this by many timxs -- thx whole thing just doxs not makx sxnsx!

"Belovxd don't bx like a broken kxy."

You must utilize your spiritual gift.

The local body of Christ where you worship needs you
and cannot be the same without you!

Do you really believe that?

SPIRITUAL GIFTS - CANCER is one of the debilitating diseases of our day. You know what cancer is? Cells that don't want to go with the program. They are deviant cells that have their own agenda. Now, this would be just fine ... if they would leave your body. The problem with cancer is that these deviant cells still want to hang out in you. They don't want to go anywhere. They just want to be independent. Cancer cells still want blood, they still want to eat, and they still want oxygen because they want to grow. Not only do they want to grow, they also want to spread and metastasize. So in other words, they want to siphon off the body, but they don't

want to contribute to it. And ultimately, unless addressed radically, the whole body is in trouble, because what they want are the benefits. Cancer exists in the church today too. There are cells of people that want the benefits of being in the body without the contributions. They want the sermons, they want the songs, they want the ministry to them, they want the toys for their kids, they want the foods for their pantry, and they want the counseling for their problem. They want all the things that the body is designed to give, but they don't want to be part of the body. They just want to hang out in it.

POWER - SOMETIMES Christians look at other Christians and say, "Boy, I wish I could be as spiritual as they are." But don't you understand? You have the same identity that they do. So if they are progressing and you are regressing, it is because they are living in light of who they are and you are not. In my house, I have a toaster, a can opener, a microwave, and a refrigerator. They are all different appliances, but they all work from the same power source. When I plug them in, the refrigerator refrigerates. When I plug the microwave in, the microwave does the microwaving. When I plug the toaster in, the toaster does the toasting, and when I plug the can opener in, the can opener does its can opening. Each appliance, though different, lives up to its manufactured specifications because each appliance is receiving the same power source. Even though I am different from you and you are different from me, all of us have the equal potential of living up to God's manufacturer's specifications. You can be what God saved you to be and I can be what God saved me to be because the same electrical current is available to all God's kids. It's available to all who belong to Christ. So there are no special kids in the kingdom. God has the design for you but you must know who you are in Him. -- Tony Evans' book of illustrations:

SPIRITUAL GIFTS - The subject of gifts is always controversial. The pulpit committee of a certain church was seeking a pastor who could preach, administer, engage in visitation, and inspire the youth. Someone suggested this standard of judgment. If the prospect had one gift, the church would continue at about the same size. Should the candidate have two of the above-mentioned gifts, the church would grow. If he had three of the four gifts, the church might expect to become the largest in town. If he had all four gifts, suggested the adviser, do not touch him with a ten-foot pole. He is a freak. This humorous little story hides a significant truth. Many church people expect their pastor to be a "jack-of-all-trades" and a master of them all.

One of the most provocative writers on the subject of gifts was the late David Watson. Shortly before his untimely death he wrote, *I Believe in the Church* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1978). In introducing the subject of gifts, David Watson quoted Dr. Donald Coggan, the Archbishop of Canterbury, who said: "Why is it that the Pentecostal churches are growing at such a phenomenal rate? Is it possible that they have gifts of the Spirit which we have not?"

In another connection David Watson quoted an enthusiastic German pastor, Arnold Bittlinger. He defined spiritual gifts in this pointed phrase: A spiritual gift is "a gratuitous manifestation of the Holy Spirit, working in and through, but going beyond, the believer's natural ability for the common good of the people of God."

David Watson, who enjoyed a thriving pastoral ministry in York, England, suggested three inevitable results if spiritual gifts are employed within a church. First, inferiority and superiority complexes are banished from the church. If one is simply exercising a God-given grace gift, he has nothing of which to be proud or to be ashamed.

Second, Christians should earnestly desire spiritual gifts. A sensitive pastor or leader will seek out spiritual gifts. Then he will suit service to develop and expand those gifts. The end result will be a stronger church fellowship.

Third, we must use the gifts which are available. If we do not, we reduce people to cogs in a wheel. As a keen lay preacher once told me, "Pastor, if I cannot use my gift, I become a dumb priest." (He reflected the priesthood of all believers [1 Peter 2:9; Ex. 19:5-61].)

According to Michael Harper, another Anglican: "No amount of theological training can bestow charisma on a person. It is the sole gift of God." (Wayne A Detzler - {New Testament Words in Today's Language})

Spectatorities - A well-known coach was once asked, "How much does college football contribute to the national physical-fitness picture?"

"Nothing," the coach replied abruptly.

"Why not?" the startled interviewer asked.

"Well," said the coach, "the way I see it, you have 22 men down on the field desperately needing a rest and 40,000 people in the stands, desperately needing some exercise."

A similar situation exists in many churches today. When you compare the members who actively participate, you often find a rather pathetic situation. It's not unusual to have a small group of diligent Christian workers struggling "down on the field" while others in

the congregation are acting like spectators, "sitting on the sidelines, eating hot dogs and popcorn."

God's strategy for the accomplishment of His program is not like a sports event. It does not call for the job to be done only by the "professionals." In the game of life, all believers have their own positions and spiritual gifts that they must exercise "for the profit of all" (1 Cor. 12:7).

My friend, if you've been sitting in the stands, you're badly needed down on the field! -- M R De Haan II

God calls into action today
All those who are children of light;
Whatever our hand finds to do,
Let's do it with all of our might.
- Hess

Christians should be on the frontlines, not the sidelines.

Use What You Have

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them. --Romans 12:6

A group of animals decided to improve their general welfare by starting a school. The curriculum included swimming, running, climbing, and flying. The duck, an excellent swimmer, was deficient in other areas, so he majored in climbing and flying, much to the detriment of his swimming. The rabbit, a superior runner, was forced to spend so much time in other classes that he soon lost much of his famed speed. The squirrel, who had been rated "A" as a climber, dropped to a "C" because his instructors spent hours trying to teach him to fly. And the eagle could no longer soar to the treetops because he had to learn how to swim. **What happened to this group of animals portrays what often occurs in our churches.**

Romans 12:1-8 teaches that we are all given certain spiritual gifts. But some of us serve in so many areas that our tasks are not done well. As a result, the whole church suffers.

If God made you a teacher--be a teacher. Study diligently and do your best. If He's given you the gift of mercy, serve cheerfully and don't expect others to do what you do. Accept your spiritual gifts. Cultivate your capabilities. Stop comparing. Enjoy being you. Yes, use what you have! --R W De Haan

Be not always wanting

Some other work to do,

But cheerfully perform the task

That Christ has given you. --Anon.

Do what you can, where you are, with what you have. --Moody

Do Your Best!

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them. —Romans 12:6

When Leonardo da Vinci was still a pupil, his elderly, well-known teacher asked him to finish a painting he had begun. Young da Vinci stood in such awe of his master's skill that at first he respectfully declined. But his teacher would accept no excuse. He simply said, "Do your best."

Trembling, da Vinci took his brush and began. With each stroke, his hand grew more steady as the genius within him awoke. Soon he was so caught up in his work that he forgot his timidity. When the painting was finished, the frail and weak master was carried into the studio to see it. Embracing his student, he exclaimed, "My son, I paint no more!"

Every Christian has unique God-given abilities. Some believers, however, feel inferior because they don't have as much talent as others. But we mustn't think that way. God doesn't hold us accountable for what we *don't* have. He wants us to discover and develop the skills we *do* have.

Of course, we can't all be a Leonardo da Vinci. But we don't have to be. The apostle Paul said, "It is required in stewards that one be found faithful" (1Corinthians 4:2). That means doing our best and leaving the results with God. Who knows, we may just surprise

ourselves! —R W De Haan

Give of your best to the Master,

Give Him first place in your heart;

Give Him first place in your service,

Consecrate every part. —Grose

The greatest ability is dependability.

No Nobodies

Those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. —1Corinthians 12:22

A visitor was being shown around a leper colony in India. At noon a gong sounded for the midday meal. People came from all parts of the compound to the dining hall. All at once peals of laughter filled the air. Two young men, one riding on the other's back, were pretending to be a horse and a rider and were having loads of fun.

As the visitor watched, he was told that the man who carried his friend was blind, and the man being carried was lame. The one who couldn't see used his feet; the one who couldn't walk used his eyes. Together they helped each other, and they found great joy in doing it.

Imagine a church like that—each member using his or her strength to make up for another's weakness. That's what should be happening in every congregation of believers. Paul likened spiritual gifts to various parts of the human body. Eyes see. Ears hear. Hands work. Feet move the body forward. All are essential. And when each fulfills its function, the whole body benefits. All of us have weaknesses, but we also have strengths. We are all different, but God has given each of us at least one spiritual gift to use for the good of the church. We need one another. In Christ's body there are no nobodies. —Dennis De Haan

*God can take a lowly vessel,
Shape it with His mighty hand,
Fill it with a matchless treasure,
Make it serve a purpose grand. —Bosch*

There is no such thing as insignificant service for Christ.

The Right Fit

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them. —Romans 12:6

According to a study of 350,000 people, four out of five have jobs that don't match their abilities. The survey also suggests that the most commonly used guidelines for hiring, like education and experience, are of little value in predicting how well an applicant will do in a particular position. What makes a person either fit or unfit for a job are the inner aptitudes for certain types of work.

The right kind of spiritual giftedness is also essential to our effectiveness in the Lord's work. Secondary factors such as talent and experience have their place. But God, through the Holy Spirit, supernaturally endows every Christian with unique spiritual gifts to serve His church (Romans 12:3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8; 1Corinthians 12:1-31). We function best and accomplish the most for the Lord when we do what we've been spiritually gifted to do. It's fruitless and frustrating to try to be something we are not.

God wants each of us to discover and confirm our spiritual gifts. Some of us might feel uncomfortable talking about our strengths, but these are not abilities we can take credit for. The Creator Himself has put these spiritual gifts within us to benefit others and to fulfill His purposes. Having discovered our spiritual gifts, let's offer them back to God and build up His church by doing the right job. —M R De Haan II

*God gives each Christian special gifts
So the church can function well;
And if we all will do our part,
Then its members will excel. —Sper*

Many people make a grave mistake by burying their gifts.

Bricklayers and Violinists

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them. --Romans 12:6

A concert violinist had a brother who was a bricklayer. One day a woman began talking to the bricklayer about how wonderful it was for him to be in the same family as the noted musician. But then, not wanting to insult the bricklayer, she added, "Of course, we don't all have the same talents, and even in the same family some just seem to have more ability than others."

The bricklayer replied, "You're telling me! That violinist brother of mine doesn't know a thing about laying bricks. And if he wasn't able to make some money playing that fiddle of his, he couldn't hire a guy with know-how like mine to build his house. If he had to build a house himself, he'd be ruined."

If you want to build a house, don't look up "violinist" in the yellow pages. And if you need someone to play the violin in an orchestra, don't hire a bricklayer. No two of us are exactly alike, and no one possesses every gift. In that way, houses get built and music gets played.

In the church, God has gifted us in different ways too. Our responsibility is to exercise the spiritual gifts that He has given us. When we do, we build each other up in the faith, and there is harmony in the body of Christ. --H W Robinson

It matters not what others do,

It is my task to see

My life is patterned in the mold

The Lord has planned for me. --Beers

There are no unimportant members in the body of Christ.

Do Your Own Thing!

As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. --1Peter 4:10

In the 60s and 70s, much was heard about the right of individuals to "do their own thing." People were encouraged to be themselves, to get to know themselves, and to express themselves.

Of course a Christian should never pursue an unhealthy individualism that glorifies self and ignores God. But when we remember our responsibility to others and acknowledge our dependence on the Lord, He can use our distinctive skills and spiritual gifts for His glory. In Romans 12, believers are reminded that while they are part of one body, they all have different God-given abilities. Every child of God is obligated to recognize his particular talents and to use them in His service.

In a commercial airliner, the pilot, co-pilot, mechanics, engineers, and flight attendants all have different responsibilities. What jeopardy the passengers would be in if each crew member neglected his duties for another role! In much the same way, serious harm can come to a church if its members clamor for the position of another. Don't settle for less than God's best by coveting a position you may not be suited for. Recognize the spiritual gift God has given you and "do your own thing." And do it well! --R W De Haan

It matters not what others do;

It is my task to see

My life is patterned to the mold

The Lord has planned for me. --Anon.

Your place is where you can do

the most good for God.

Be Like A Bee

God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. --1 Corinthians 12:18

The honeybee has one of the most highly developed social structures in the animal kingdom. At the heart of the hive, which may

house as many as 80,000 bees, is the queen. Without her, the colony has no future. But the 80,000 don't just sit around watching their queen. Each bee has a specialized duty to fulfill.

The forager bees encounter the perils of the outside world to collect food. The guard bees protect the hive entrance from intruders. The undertakers are responsible for removing dead bodies from the hive. The water collectors bring in moisture to regulate humidity. The plasterers make a kind of cement to repair the hive. And the fanners station themselves at the entrance and fan the scent outward to signal the location of the colony to lost or disoriented bees. The scout bees keep the hive alerted to opportunities and dangers of the outside world. The variety and specialization of the worker bees seem endless.

In a similar way, the Lord has given special, spiritual gifts and tasks to all the people in His church. No one has been called merely to sit around. Everyone can do something. The work of the church will not get done unless all of us do what God has called us to do. --
M R De Haan II

Christ builds His church and makes it strong

By using you and me,

And if we all will do our part

The world His love will see. --Sper

The church works best when we see ourselves as participants, not spectators.

Foot-And-Mouth-Disease

We dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. —2Corinthians 10:12

Foot-and-mouth disease is highly contagious among cloven-hoofed animals. Blisters form around the mouth, and the feet become extremely painful. The animals will not eat or drink, and they lose weight rapidly. Fortunately, preventive measures have made this infection virtually nonexistent in the US today.

A spiritual kind of foot-and-mouth disease continues in epidemic proportions in the church. In 1 Corinthians 12, believers are likened to the members of a body. This kind of foot-and-mouth disease breaks out when those who belong to the body of Christ, the church, begin comparing themselves among themselves (v.12). A "foot" may become dissatisfied with its inability to express itself like the "mouth." And the "mouth" may feel inadequate because it can't move about and bear the weight of the body. Such Christians lose their spiritual appetite and become ineffective in serving the Lord.

God's children have been sovereignly designed and placed in the body of Christ for specific purposes. Each of us is vital to the well-being of the whole. And when we fulfill our role, there will be harmony, and our Savior will receive the glory. Let's put an end to foot-and-mouth disease in the church. —M R De Haan II

Christ gives each member of His church

His special gifts to use;

He sovereignly distributes them—

We do not pick and choose. —Sper

For a healthier church, exercise your spiritual gifts.

Don't Just Sit There

The manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all. --1 Corinthians 12:7

A well-known coach was once asked, "How much does college football contribute to the national physical-fitness picture?"

"Nothing," the coach replied abruptly.

"Why not?" the startled interviewer asked.

"Well," said the coach, "the way I see it, you have 22 men down on the field desperately needing a rest and 40,000 people in the stands desperately needing some exercise."

A similar situation exists in many churches today. When you compare the members who merely attend with those who actively

participate, you often find a rather pathetic situation. It's not unusual to have a small group of diligent Christian workers struggling "down on the field" while others in the congregation are acting like spectators, "sitting on the sidelines, eating hot dogs and popcorn."

God's strategy for the accomplishment of His program is not like a sports event. It does not call for the job to be done only by the "professionals." In the game of life, all believers have their own positions and spiritual gifts that they must exercise "for the profit of all" (1Co 12:7).

My friend, if you've been sitting in the stands, you're badly needed down on the field! --M R De Haan II

God calls into action today

All those who are children of light;

Whatever our hand finds to do,

Let's do it with all of our might. --Hess

Christians should be on the frontlines, not the sidelines.

Use Your Spiritual Gift!

Do not neglect the gift that is in you. --1Timothy 4:14

God never gives a person a task without also providing him with what's necessary to perform the responsibility.

W. W. Dawley, referring to this truth, says, "God gave Moses a rod, David a sling, Samson the jawbone of a donkey, Shamgar an oxgoad, Esther the beauty of person, Deborah the talent for poetry, Dorcas a needle, and Apollos an eloquent tongue--and to each the ability to use that spiritual gift. In so doing, every one of them did most effective works for the Lord."

Our heavenly Father has given at least one spiritual gift to each of us as believers, and He provides all we need to carry out our individual responsibilities (1Cor. 12:6, 7). We are all essential in the body of Christ (1Co 12:14-27). Acknowledging these truths is not only a source of comfort and encouragement, but it is also a sobering reality, for it places before us an important obligation. God's spiritual gifts to us must not be squandered! They must be fully used, because someday "each of us shall give account of himself to God" (Ro 14:12).

What has the Lord given you? Are you using your spiritual gift for His glory and the blessing of others? Don't waste your spiritual gift! Use it! --R W De Haan

Lord God, I humbly ask of You

The strength to do Your will;

I give to You my talents now

Your purpose to fulfill. --Bierema

God's call to a task includes His strength to complete it.

Part Of The Crew

The effective working by which every part does its share causes growth of the body. --Ephesians 4:16

Have you ever watched a pit crew in action at an auto race? I had the opportunity to be in the pit area during a race, and I was impressed. In less time than it takes for most of us to put our seatbelt on and adjust the mirror, the crew had changed four tires, filled the gas tank, washed the windshield, given the driver a drink, and made vital adjustments to the car. It happens so quickly and efficiently because each crew member knows his job and does it right.

Speaking at a chapel service before the race, chaplain Max Helton said to the drivers and their crews, "Imagine all the people it takes to put on a race. What if they all wanted to drive? It would be chaos." It's the same with the crew. If everyone wanted to change tires and no one wanted to fill the gas tank, the car wouldn't have a very long ride. Likewise, in the body of Christ we all have been equipped with different skills to do certain tasks (Eph. 4:7-16). We can't all be pastors or teachers. Some of us have to "change the tires" and "wash the windshield." And each job is as important as the other.

For the body of Christ to fulfill its purpose, we each need to concentrate on our part and do it the best we can. --J D Branon

God builds His church and makes it strong
By using you and me;
And if we all will do our part,
The world Christ's love will see.
--Sper

Teamwork divides the effort and multiplies the effect

Broken Toes, Broken World

You are the body of Christ, and members individually. . --1Corinthians 12:27

Twice in my life I've broken one of my little toes by colliding with furniture. Ouch! For days I limped painfully, my body protecting its tiny injured member. My body was doing exactly what it was designed to do. It supported and sympathized with the part of me that was hurting. Gradually my toe healed, resuming its thankless task.

Although I'll never again take my toes for granted, I sometimes take for granted certain members of the church. Paul taught that the church is the body of Christ (1Cor. 12:12-27), not merely like the body of Christ. Each member has God-given abilities to support and sympathize with other members.

If Christ's church is to function the way God designed it, there are three things we dare not do: (1) Refuse to fellowship with others. (2) Let fear and lack of love cause us to withhold our spiritual gifts from others. (3) Disregard or oppose the spiritual gifts of others through pride and envy. Instead, we need to be actively using our spiritual gifts to the benefit of fellow members of Christ's body. Only when we experience both the giving and receiving of Christ's healing love for broken members will we be ready to reach out to a broken world. --J E Yoder

*We're all dependent on the strength
We draw from one another,
For we're connected by the love
That comes from God our Father.*
--Sper

A healthy church is the best witness to a hurting world.

We Need One Another

The manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all. --1 Corinthians 12:7

The Peterson ranch in Wyoming is framed by mile after mile of fencing. Not only is the entire spread fenced in, Clyde Peterson has it subdivided with barbed-wire so he can move the cattle from section to section. A single grazing spot may be bordered by as many as 600 fence posts. Each cedar post is important. If one is knocked down, the entire herd can escape over the fallen section.

The same principle holds true in other areas of life. If one machine breaks down, the whole assembly line grinds to a halt. If one screw drops out of a carburetor, the car runs erratically. If a single microchip fails, an entire computer system may malfunction.

A local church is no different. Every worker is vital: the Sunday school teacher, the organist, the sound-system operator, the nursery worker, the greeter. If one slacks off, the entire effort suffers.

Are you feeling unimportant--as if you're just one more fencepost in a long row? Does it seem that what you're doing is hardly worth the effort? Remember what the apostle Paul wrote: No matter what your capacity, if you are working for the Lord, it is "for the profit of all" (1Cor. 12:7).

As one single fencepost is crucial to the rancher, you too are important to God--and to the rest of us! --D C Egner

*We need each other as we serve the Lord,
With all the workers equal to their tasks,
No matter if the jobs are large or small,
For faithfulness is all the Savior asks.*
--Hess

Even the smallest work done for Christ has great value.

A Piece Of The Puzzle

November 13, 2013 — by David C. McCasland

Read: 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. —1 Corinthians 12:18

At her birthday celebration, the honored guest turned the tables by giving everyone at the party a gift. Kriste gave each of us a personal note expressing what we mean to her, along with encouraging words about the person God made us to be. Enclosed with every note was one piece of a jigsaw puzzle as a reminder that each of us is unique and important in God's plan.

That experience helped me to read 1 Corinthians 12 with new eyes. Paul compared the church—the body of Christ—to a human body. Just as our physical bodies have hands, feet, eyes, and ears, all are part of a unified body. No follower of Christ can claim independence from the body, nor can one part tell another that it is not needed (vv.12-17). "God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased" (v.18).

It's easy to feel less important than others whose gifts are different and perhaps more visible than ours. The Lord, however, wants us to see ourselves as He does—uniquely created and highly valued by Him.

You are one piece of a picture that is not complete without you. God has gifted you to be an important part of the body of Christ to bring Him honor.

Lord, help me not to compare myself with others
in Your family. May I seek instead to be the person
You've made me to be, and help me to use what
You've given me to bless others today.

Your life is God's gift to you; make it your gift to God.

Corine

August 3, 2013 — by Anne Cetas

Read: 1 Peter 4:7-11

Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. —1 Peter 4:9

A group of us were helping to put together packets of material at an Our Daily Bread event in Orlando last winter when Corine greeted us. It was mid-morning, and she was sure we must be hungry and thirsty. I told her we were "fine," and she replied, "I know you're fine, but you need something to eat." A few minutes later she came back with cold water and snacks.

Throughout the 2 days we were there, Corine came by to check on us, bring us food or water, and take away our trash. On one occasion, I thanked her and said, "You have the gift of hospitality, don't you, Corine!" She looked down and replied, "I don't know. But you write the devotional articles, and I'll clean up. And God will be glorified."

Corine's desire is to bring God glory by helping people. She definitely has the gift of hospitality and practices it well. God has graced each of His children with skills and abilities so that He can minister to others through us. You can find those gifts listed in Romans 12:4-13, 1 Corinthians 12:27-31, Ephesians 4:7-12, and 1 Peter 4:9-11.

The Lord has gifted us "that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever" (1 Peter 4:11).

All Christians have been gifted
By grace from God above,
Equipped to build and strengthen
The church in faith and love. —Fitzhugh

You are one of a kind— designed to glorify God as only you can.

Let's Stick Together

June 27, 2013 — by Joe Stowell

Read: 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

For in fact the body is not one member but many. —1 Corinthians 12:14

Most regions of the world are familiar with the amazing phenomenon of snow. Snowflakes are beautiful, uniquely crafted ice crystals. Individual snowflakes are fragile, and they quickly melt if they land on your hand. Yet, en masse they create a force to be reckoned with. They can shut down major cities while creating beautiful landscapes of snow-laden trees whose pictures decorate calendars and become the subject of artwork. They provide pleasure on the ski slopes and joy for children as they make snowmen and ammunition for snowball fights. All because they stick together.

So it is with those of us who follow Christ. Each of us has been uniquely gifted with the capacity to make a contribution to the work of Christ. We were never intended to live in isolation but to work together to become a great force for God and the advance of His cause. As Paul reminds us, the body of Christ “is not one member but many” (1 Cor. 12:14). All of us are to use our gifts to serve one another so that together we can make a significant difference in our world.

Put your giftedness to work, joyfully cooperate with the giftedness of those around you, and let the wind of the Spirit use you for His glory!

Lord, teach us to use our strengths in cooperation with
the strengths of others. Help us to serve as one so that
we might know the joy of the power of our togetherness
for Your name's sake and the advance of Your kingdom.

We can accomplish more together than we can alone.

To God Be The Glory

June 15, 2013 — by Julie Ackerman Link

Read: 1 Chronicles 25:1-8

Chenaniah, leader of the Levites, was instructor in charge of the music, because he was skillful. —1 Chronicles 15:22

When Jason was asked to sing at a church he was visiting, he was delighted to participate even though he wasn't asked until a few minutes before the service started. He chose a familiar hymn, “To God Be the Glory,” because it was a song that was especially meaningful to him. He practiced it a few times in the church basement and sang it without accompaniment in the church service.

Several weeks later, Jason learned that some people in the church didn't appreciate his ministry. They thought he was showing off. Because they did not know him, they wrongly assumed that he was singing to impress them, not to honor the Lord.

From the Old Testament we learn that God appointed people with skill to be involved in temple worship. From construction workers to worship leaders—people were chosen based on their skill (1 Chron. 15:22; 25:1,7).

The Lord gave each of us different talents and spiritual gifts to be used for His glory (Col. 3:23-24). When we serve with that purpose, not to lift up ourselves, we don't need to be concerned with what others think. God gave His very best to us—His Son Jesus—and we honor Him by giving our best to Him.

The Master needs what you have to offer,
No matter if you think it's small;
His work on earth is done through His children,
So give Him your best, give your all. —Hess

We are at our best when we serve God from our hearts.

Wise Words

June 3, 2013 — by Dennis Fisher

Read: Ecclesiastes 12:6-14

The words of the wise are like goads, and the words of scholars are like well-driven nails, given by one Shepherd. —Ecclesiastes 12:11

Now in my sixties, I reflect back on wise spiritual leaders who had a positive impact on my life. In Bible school, God used my Old Testament professor to make the Word come alive. My Greek teacher relentlessly employed high standards to goad my study of the New Testament. And the senior pastor in my first pastoral ministry shepherded me in building vital ministries to help others grow spiritually. Each of these teachers encouraged me in different ways.

King Solomon wisely observed some ways that spiritual leaders can help us grow: “The words of the wise are like goads, and the words of scholars are like well-driven nails, given by one Shepherd” (Eccl. 12:11). Some teachers prod us; others build solid spiritual structures into our lives. Still others, as caring shepherds, are there with a listening ear when we hurt.

The Good Shepherd has given leaders a variety of gifts: exhorting, developing, and shepherding. Whether we’re a leader or a learner, though, He desires that we maintain humble hearts and a love for others. What a privilege to be led and used by our Shepherd to encourage others in their walk with Him.

Give us the wisdom we need, Lord, to encourage
others in their spiritual walk. We know we need Your
Spirit’s power to do that. Use the gifts You have
given us to help others along on their journey.

May our words reflect the heart of God and His wisdom.

Gifted To Serve

February 17, 2013 — by C. P. Hia

Read: Romans 12:3-13

There are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. —1 Corinthians 12:6

It occurred to me one day that my right foot does all the pedal work when I’m driving my automatic transmission car. It alone works the accelerator and the brake. The left foot is idle. What happens if I decide that to be equitable, my left foot ought to replace my right foot half the time when I am driving? If you have never done so, please don’t try it!

If we don’t require such equality of the members of our own body, why is it that we sometimes expect it of people in the church? That seems to be an issue that the first-century church at Rome faced. Some were thinking more highly of themselves than they ought (Romans 12:3) just because they were doing some things others were not doing. But Paul reminds us that “all members do not have the same function” (Romans 12:4). We’ve been gifted according to God’s grace (Romans 12:6). He gave us those gifts to serve others, not ourselves (Romans 12:6-13). Our service is to be marked by diligence and fervor, for we are serving the Lord, not man (Romans 12:11).

So, let’s not look over our shoulders to see what others are doing or not doing. Look at how God may be able to use you in His kingdom today. He has gifted you just as He has pleased (Romans 12:3).

Lord, lead me today as You see best. Use the gifts You
have given me to encourage others on their journey.
Help me not to compare myself with others
but to be content with who You have made me to be.

**We can’t all play the same part in God’s band of service,
but we should all play in harmony.**

You’re Necessary

January 18, 2013 — by Marvin Williams

Read: 1 Corinthians 12:14-26

But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it. —1 Corinthians 12:24

The story has been told about a conductor who was rehearsing his orchestra. The organ was giving a beautiful melody, the drums

were thundering, the trumpets were blaring, and the violins were singing beautifully. But the conductor noticed something missing—the piccolo. The piccolo player had gotten distracted and hoped his instrument wouldn't be missed. The conductor reminded him: "Each one of us is necessary."

This was essentially the same message Paul communicated to the Corinthian believers in his first letter to them (12:4-7). Every Christian plays an important role in the body of Christ. Paul gave a list of gifts of the Spirit and compared their use to the functioning of the various parts of the human body for the good of the whole (vv.8-10). The Corinthian believers may have had different cultural backgrounds, gifts, and personalities, but they were filled with the same Spirit and belonged to the same body of Christ. Paul made special mention of the parts of the body that were weak and obscure, and taught that all believers play a necessary and significant role. No one part was more necessary than any other.

Remember, Jesus has given you a significant part to play and will use you to build up His people.

The church, a living body, containing all the parts—
It lives, it moves, it functions, and touches many hearts;
When each part is committed to do the Savior's will,
His members are united, His purpose they fulfill. —Fitzhugh

**As a member of the body of Christ,
you are a necessary part of the whole.**

Unused Gears

October 19, 2012 — by Julie Ackerman Link

Read: Titus 3:1-8

Be ready for every good work. —Titus 3:1

My first bike had one gear. Whether I was going fast or slow, uphill or downhill, that gear did everything. My next bike had three gears: one for level surfaces, one for going uphill, and one for going downhill. My third bike had ten gears, allowing me an even broader range of choices. Even though my last bike had several gears to choose from, I didn't use all of them every time I rode. Some were best suited for starting and climbing, others were reserved for gaining speed, and others were best for a leisurely pace. But the thing about gears is this: Even though I wasn't using all of them at the time, it didn't mean I would never need them.

The same can be true in regard to our spiritual gifts and abilities. During times when I feel I am not being used to do certain things I once did, instead of feeling useless and unappreciated I thank God for the "gear" I'm currently able to use. Just because a skill is not needed right now doesn't mean it never will be.

Our spiritual gifts are needed in different ways at different times. Needs and circumstances change in unforeseeable and unpredictable ways. The apostle Paul reminded Titus, "Be ready for every good work" (Titus 3:1). May that be true of us as well.

Heavenly Father, I need to remember that
what I do is up to You, but how I do it is up
to me. Whether I am busy or still, may I be
peaceable, gentle, humble, kind, and loving.

Keep your tools ready—God will find work for you.

Sharing Space

March 25, 2012 — by Anne Cetas

Read: 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

Those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. —1 Corinthians 12:22

The number of people who run a business out of their homes is in the millions. But some have found that working alone can be a little too lonely. To give these lonely ones a community, "co-working" spaces have been designed. Large facilities are rented out where people working by themselves can share space with others. They have their own work area but can exchange ideas with fellow independent workers. It's for those who feel they can work better together than they do alone.

Sometimes Christians think they work better alone. But we are meant to work together with others in the church. Every Christian has

been placed into “the body of Christ” (1 Cor. 12:27). And the Lord desires that we take part in fellowship with a local community of believers—using our spiritual gifts and working together in His service.

Yet for various reasons, some aren’t able to join in. Because of health issues, they may be shut in at home or may not know how to fit in at church. Yet they are a needed part of the body (vv.22-25). That’s when others can meet their need for togetherness. Let’s do our part so that others may feel they’re an integral part of the community of faith. We work better together than alone.

Thinking It Over

What can you do to help others feel a part of your church

community? Visit, pray with them, read Scripture together,

drop a note, or invite them to join you in serving others.

Fellowship builds us up and binds us together.

A Perfect Fit

January 11, 2012 — by Cindy Hess Kasper

Read: Ephesians 2:1-10

Those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. —Titus 3:8

“What kind of skill set do you bring?” That question, posed in a job interview, was intended to determine if my friend would be a good fit for a position. My friend quickly did a mental review of his skills and talents, hoping to emphasize the unique characteristics he possessed that would contribute to the success of the company.

What if we already had the perfect set of skills required to accomplish what God wants us to do? Well—as a matter of fact—we do! The spiritual gifts we possess, along with our experiences, training, natural talents, and a submissive heart make up a unique individual who has the skills needed for the “good works” that God has “prepared beforehand” (Eph. 2:10). If God has something He wants to accomplish and that you feel He is calling you to do, He will provide what you need to complete the task. Or, as one paraphrase emphasizes, God wants us “to join Him in the work He does, the good work He has gotten ready for us to do” (Eph. 2:10 The Message). The one thing He requires of us is that we “be found faithful” (1 Cor. 4:2).

Have you found a place in God’s service where you can be used of Him? Let’s “do good” and “be rich in good works” (1 Tim. 6:18).

Think not that you are limited
Because of what you cannot do,
But think instead of all you have—
The talents God has given you.
—D. De Haan

Spiritual gifts are meant to be used, not admired.

A Supporting Role

December 15, 2011 — by David C. McCasland

Read: Romans 12:9-21

Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another. —Romans 12:10

After the American TV personality Ed McMahon died in 2009, one newspaper headline read, “When it came to being the No. 2 man, he was No. 1.” Best known for his 30-year tenure as Johnny Carson’s late-night sidekick, McMahon excelled at helping Carson succeed in the spotlight. While most entertainers strive for top billing, McMahon was content with a supporting role.

When the apostle Paul gave instructions about how to exercise our gifts as members of the body of Christ (Rom. 12:3-8), he affirmed the value of supporting roles. He began by saying that we should have a realistic opinion of ourselves (v.3), and he concluded with a call to genuine, unselfish love: “Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another” (v.10). Or, as J. B. Phillips translates it, “a willingness to let the other man have the credit.”

Our gifts and abilities come to us by God’s grace and are to be used by faith (vv.3,6) in love and service for Christ—not for personal

recognition.

May God grant us the ability to embrace with enthusiasm the supporting roles to which He calls us. The ultimate goal is His glory and not our own.

The church, a living body, containing all the parts—
It lives, it moves, it functions, and touches many hearts;
When each part is committed to do the Savior's will,
His members are united, His purpose they fulfill.
—Fitzhugh

The church works best when we see ourselves as participants, not as spectators.

The Wooden Rule

October 16, 2011 — by Cindy Hess Kasper

Read: 1 Corinthians 12:14-26

The body is not one member but many. —1 Corinthians 12:14

Legendary UCLA basketball coach John Wooden had an interesting rule for his teams. Whenever a player scored, he was to acknowledge the person on the team who had assisted. When he was coaching high school, one of his players asked, "Coach, won't that take up too much time?" Wooden replied, "I'm not asking you to run over there and give him a big hug. A nod will do."

To achieve victory on the basketball court, Wooden saw the importance of teaching his players that they were a team—not "just a bunch of independent operators." Each person contributed to the success of everyone else.

That reminds me of the way the body of Christ should work. According to 1 Corinthians 12:19-20, each of us is a separate part of one body. "If they were all one member, where would the body be? But . . . there are many members, yet one body." Is the success of a pastor, a Bible study, or a church program based solely on one person's accomplishments? How many people contribute to the smooth operation of a church, a Christian organization, a family?

Coach Wooden's rule and 1 Corinthians 12 are both rooted in the principle of seeing our need for one another. Let's use our gifts within the body of Christ to build up, strengthen, and help to carry out God's purposes (vv.1-11).

All Christians have been gifted
By grace from God above,
Equipped to build and strengthen
The church in faith and love.
—Fitzhugh

There are no unimportant people in the body of Christ.

The Forgotten God

October 11, 2011 — by Marvin Williams

Read: 1 Corinthians 2:6-16

No one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. —1 Corinthians 2:11

Bible in a Year:

Isaiah 37-38; Colossians 3

When we quote The Apostles' Creed, we say, "I believe in the Holy Spirit." Author J. B. Phillips said, "Every time we say [this] we mean that we believe that [the Spirit] is a living God able and willing to enter human personality and change it."

Sometimes we forget that the Holy Spirit is not an impersonal force. The Bible describes Him as God. He possesses the attributes of God: He is present everywhere (Ps. 139:7-8), He knows all things (1 Cor. 2:10-11), and He has infinite power (Luke 1:35). He also does things that only God can do: create (Gen. 1:2) and give life (Rom. 8:2). He is equal in every way with the other Persons of the Trinity—the Father and the Son.

The Holy Spirit is a Person who engages in personal ways with us. He grieves when we sin (Eph. 4:30). He teaches us (1 Cor. 2:13), prays for us (Rom. 8:26), guides us (John 16:13), gives us spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:11), and assures us of salvation (Rom. 8:16).

The Holy Spirit indwells us if we have received forgiveness of sin through Jesus. He desires to transform us so that we become more and more like Jesus. Let's cooperate with the Spirit by reading God's Word and relying on His power to obey what we learn.

God's guidance and help that we need day to day
Is given to all who believe;
The Spirit has sealed us—He's God's guarantee
Of power that we can receive.
—Branon

**The Christian who neglects the Holy Spirit
is like a lamp that's not plugged in.**

The Mighty Toe

May 13, 2011 — by Bill Crowder

Read: 1 Corinthians 12:14-26

If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? —1 Corinthians 12:15

Recently, I heard of a sport that challenges my imagination—I can't comprehend why anyone would play it. It's called "Toe Wrestling." Every year, people from across the globe gather in England for the world championships. Competitors sit on the ground facing each other and then lock the big toe of the other's bare foot. The object is to pin the opponent's foot in a manner similar to the way an arm wrestler pins a competitor's wrist. It sounds strange to me.

In a way, this unusual competition gives honor to a part of the body that's largely ignored—until we drop something on it. Our toes and feet are vital parts of our anatomy, yet we pay little attention to them unless they hurt.

Perhaps that's why Paul used the foot to remind us that there are no unimportant parts in the body of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 12:15, he said, "If the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,' is it therefore not of the body?" The only correct answer: "Of course it's part of the body."

Paul wants us to realize that each person in the body of Christ is important. Even if you think of yourself as the most overlooked and ignored member of the body of Christ, you have value. And you can honor God like a true champion by using your unique skills for God's glory.

God builds His church with different stones,
He makes each one belong;
All shapes and sizes fit in place
To make the structure strong.
—Sper

The Lord uses small tools to perform large tasks.

Virtuoso

March 2, 2011 — by Dennis Fisher

Read: 1 Corinthians 10:31–11:1

Therefore, . . . whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. —1 Corinthians 10:31

A major US newspaper has called Christopher Parkening "the leading guitar virtuoso of our day, combining profound musical insight with complete technical mastery of his instrument." There was a time, however, when Parkening gave up playing the guitar professionally. At the height of his career as a classical guitarist, he retired at age 30, bought a ranch in Montana, and spent his days fly-fishing. But early retirement did not bring him the satisfaction he had hoped for.

Then during a visit to California, he was invited to a church where he heard a clear presentation of the gospel. Of this he wrote:

"That night I lay awake, broken over my sins. . . . I had lived very selfishly and it had not made me happy. . . . It was then that I asked Jesus Christ to come into my life, to be my Lord and Savior. For the first time, I remember telling Him, 'Whatever You want me to do with my life, Lord, I'll do it.'"

One of Parkening's favorite verses is 1 Corinthians 10:31, "Therefore, . . . whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." He has taken up the guitar again, but this time with the motivation to glorify God.

Each of us has been given gifts; and when we use them for God's glory, they bring satisfaction and joy.

The gifts we offer to the Lord
Are by His standards measured;
Our sacrifice and lives of praise—
Such gifts are highly treasured.
—Sper

We were created to give God the glory.

A Bouquet Of Praise — by Anne Cetas

Read: 1 Peter 4:7-11

. . . that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. —1 Peter 4:11

Corrie ten Boom (1892–1983) was a World War II concentration camp survivor and Christian who became a popular speaker around the world. Thousands attended her meetings as she talked about how she had learned to forgive her captors just as Christ had forgiven her sins.

After each meeting, people surrounded her and heaped accolades on her for her godly qualities and thanked her for encouraging them in their walk with the Lord. Corrie said she would then return to her hotel room, get down on her knees, and present those compliments in thanks to God. She called it giving God "a bouquet of praise."

The Lord has given each of us gifts to use to minister to one another (1 Peter 4:10) so that "in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever" (v.11). We have nothing to offer others that we have not first received from the Lord (1 Cor. 4:7), so the glory does belong to Him.

To learn humility, perhaps we could follow Corrie's example. If we receive a compliment for something we've said or done, let's privately give a bouquet of praise to God for the glory He alone deserves.

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
Almighty, victorious—Thy great name we praise.
—Smith

Praise is the fairest blossom which springs from the soul.

Zebras and Wildebeests

December 12, 2010 — by Julie Ackerman Link

Read: 1 Corinthians 12:14-26

There should be no schism in the body, but . . . the members should have the same care for one another. —1 Corinthians 12:25

After our plane landed on the gravel airstrip, Jay and I climbed out and entered the world of Masai Mara in Kenya. A Masai tribesman named Sammy met us and loaded our baggage into a Land Rover. Then we headed toward the camp where we would spend the next 2 days.

Stopping so we could watch the zebras and wildebeests migrating from Masai Mara to Serengeti, Sammy explained that the two massive herds travel together because the zebras have good eyesight but a poor sense of smell, and the wildebeests have bad eyesight but a good sense of smell. By traveling together, both are less vulnerable to predators. This was our first lesson from God's revelation in creation, which Kenya has in abundance.

Just as God makes animals with different strengths and weaknesses, He makes people the same way. God made us to be dependent not only on Him but also on one another. The apostle Paul elaborated on this idea in his letter to the church in Corinth. As members of the body of Christ, we all have different gifts and abilities (1 Cor. 12:12-31).

The church is healthy only when we work together, look out for each other, and use our strengths to benefit one another.

Help us, Lord, to work together
With the gifts that You bestow;
Give us unity of purpose
As we serve You here below.
—Sper

We can go a lot further together than we can alone.

God's Signature

December 3, 2010 — by Cindy Hess Kasper

Read: Genesis 1:27-31

God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. —Genesis 1:31

Displayed on the wall of my friends' lake house is a collection of pictures. Each one of the photos is of a sunset, taken from their deck during various seasons. While each is strikingly beautiful—no two are identical. When I look at them, it reminds me of what another friend once called a sunset—"God's beautiful signature at the end of a day."

God writes His signature on each sunset and on each of His unique children as well. I never grow tired of discovering how every person I meet is so delightfully different. God is infinitely creative, and the variety in our personalities, senses of humor, abilities, and preferences in music and sports are all handcrafted by Him.

In the body of Christ, we see how a diversity of spiritual gifts still have a common bond and can work together for God's purposes to bring Him glory. In 1 Corinthians 12:4-6, we read, "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all."

God's signature that is so evident in nature is also present in His people. Let's celebrate the differences that make each of His children unique.

In Jesus Christ we all are equal,
For God's Spirit makes us one;
As we give each other honor,
We give glory to His Son.
—Fitzhugh

The signature of God is seen on His creation.

The Right People — by Bill Crowder

Read: 1 Corinthians 12:7-18

God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. —1 Corinthians 12:18

The film *Miracle* tells the true story of the 1980 US Olympic ice hockey team as it marches to an improbable gold medal. At the outset of the story, coach Herb Brooks is shown selecting the players for his team. When he gives assistant coach Craig Patrick a list of names he has chosen, Craig says in surprise, "You're missing some of the best players." Brooks responds, "I'm not looking for the best players, Craig—just the right ones."

Brooks knew that individual talent would take the team only so far. A willingness to fit into his style of selfless play would be far more important than talent. Clearly, team success, not individual glory, was the priority.

The biblical call to service has a similar emphasis. In God's purposes, each believer does his or her part, but the results are team-oriented. After explaining the wide differences in the spiritual gifts of believers, Paul says, "the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all" (1 Cor. 12:7). When we use the skills God gives us, His purposes are accomplished, and He gets the

glory. In God's service, it's not about being the best, the most talented, or the most gifted. It's about being the right people—the ones God "set . . . in the body" (v.18)—joining together to serve the same team.

Christ builds His church with different stones
And makes each one secure;
All shapes and sizes fit in place
To make His church endure.
—Anon.

There are no unimportant people in the body of Christ.

Unseen Workers — by Julie Ackerman Link

Read: Romans 12:1-10

We have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function. —Romans 12:4

As I was giving myself a manicure, I started feeling sorry for my right hand. It does the most work, but my left hand gets the most attention. My right hand applies nail polish smoothly to my left-hand nails, but my left hand, lacking skill and coordination, does not return the favor. The polish on my right hand is always smeared and messy. One hand does the better work, but the other hand gets all the attention and honor.

As I worked on my fingernails, my thoughts turned toward something much more important—the people in my church, many of whom are highly skilled at tasks that make others look good. These hardworking folks, however, seldom get noticed, because their work puts the attention on someone else. It seems unfair that those who do such good work get little appreciation.

Truly servant-minded believers, though, don't see it that way. They give preference to others (Rom. 12:10) because they know that God sees what others do not—and that He will reward those whose work is unseen by others (Matt. 6:4,6,18; 1 Cor. 12:24).

Is someone else reaping the benefit of your hard work? Be encouraged. God rewards those who work "invisibly" to make Christ visible to the world.

The service that we do for God
May go unpraised by men;
But when we stand before the Lord,
He will reward us then.
—Sper

No service for Christ goes unnoticed by Him.

THE ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT By David C. Egner

"Though I have all faith ...but have not love, I am nothing." - 1 Corinthians 13:2

A third-grade science teacher asked one of her students to describe salt. "Well, um, it's....," he started, then stopped. He tried again. "Salt is, you know, it's...." Finally he said, "Salt is what makes French fries taste bad when you don't sprinkle it on." Many foods are like that -- incomplete without a key ingredient. Imagine pizza without cheese, strudel without apples, a banana split without bananas.

The Christian life also has an essential element: love. Paul emphasized its value as he wrote his letter to the Corinthians. Right in the middle of a section about spiritual gifts, he paused to say that even if we have gifts of service, speech, and self-sacrifice but don't have love, we are nothing (1 Cor. 13:1-3). We've missed the "more excellent way" (1Cor 12:31). A follower of Jesus should love his family, his friends, his fellow believers, those who don't know Christ, and even his enemies (Lk. 6:27-31). A true Christian is known by his love.

Doctrinal purity is important. Faith is a magnificent quality, as are actions of obedient service to the Lord. But without love, we're about as bland as French fries without salt.

Ask God to help you grow in love until it flows from your heart to others. That's the essential ingredient.

Lord, grant me a loving heart,

A will to give and share,
A whispered prayer upon my lips
To show I really care.
-- Brandt

As Christ's love grows in us His love flows through us.

The spiritual gifts and natural talents we use in serving Christ are given by the Lord for the good of His church. When we believe this, we have no room for envy. - Dennis Egener

The Gift No One Wants - The Tests of Criticism (Leviticus 19:15-18) - After a church service in which the minister had preached about spiritual gifts, he was greeted at the door by a woman who said, "Pastor, I believe I have the gift of criticism."

He responded, "Do you remember the person in Jesus' parable who had the one talent? Do you recall what he did with it?"

"Yes," replied the woman, "he went out and buried it" (see Matthew 25:18).

With a smile, the pastor suggested, "Go, and do likewise!"

If criticism is not given lovingly and with an honest desire to help, it can be cruel and destructive. The words of Leviticus 19:17, "You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him," are preceded by warnings against spreading slander and nursing hatred.

You can determine when you should criticize and when you shouldn't by asking yourself three questions:

Am I motivated by a desire to help the other person?

Am I planning to face him honestly, but gently?

Am I doing this for the Lord, or because I enjoy being critical?

If your goal is to help, if your motives are loving, and if your desire is to please God, then go ahead and criticize. If you can't pass these tests, keep quiet.

We're building up or tearing down
In everything we do;
Are we in the construction gang
Or on the wrecking crew?
-Anon.

He has the right to criticize who has the heart to help.

-Abraham Lincoln

SPIRITUAL GIFT QUOTATIONS

- The things that count most cannot be counted. Anon.
- All Christ's gifts are like Himself, spiritual and heavenly. Thomas Brooks
- All know that the gift of healing was not perpetual... The anointers of this day are no more ministers of the grace of which James speaks than the player who acted Agamemnon on the stage was a king. John Calvin
- All the gifts and power which men seem to possess are in the hands of God, so that he can, at any instant... deprive them of the wisdom which he has given them. John Calvin
- If we are proud of our talents we betray our lack of gratitude to God. John Calvin
- If we listen to the instruction of Scripture we must remember that our talents are not of our own making, but free gifts of God. John Calvin
- There is none so poor in the church of Christ who may not impart to us something of value. John Calvin

- Whatever ability a faithful Christian may possess, he ought to possess it for his fellow believers, and he ought to make his own interest subservient to the wellbeing of the church in all sincerity. John Calvin
- Spiritual gifts are not toys with which to play; they are tools of the Spirit with which to do the Lord's work effectively. G. Raymond Carlson
- To claim credit for the Lord's gifts to us or to undervalue our particular charisma is in either case to lose sight of the essential nature of any gift. Herbert M. Carson
- Spiritual gifts are no proof of spirituality. Samuel Chadwick
- It is dangerously easy to fix our hearts on the blessing rather than the Blessor. Ronald Dunn
- Salvation is promised to those who have the graces of the Spirit, but not to those who have merely the extraordinary gifts. Many have these last, and yet go to hell. Jonathan Edwards
- There is a great deal of unmapped country within us. George Eliot
- You cannot have the gifts of Christ apart from the government of Christ. A. Lindsay Glegg
- Grace is too much neglected where gifts are too highly prized. William Gurnall
- Pride of gifts robs us of God's blessing in the use of them. William Gurnall
- A drop of grace is worth a sea of gifts. William Jenkyn
- The best gifts are those which benefit the whole body. You don't find many people asking for the gift of liberality. Harry Kilbride
- To consider the charismata as intended merely to adorn and benefit the person endowed would be just as absurd as to say, 'I light the fire to warm not the room but the stove.' Abraham Kuyper
- We cannot get Christ's gifts without himself. Alexander Maclaren
- Gifts are but dead graces, but graces are living gifts. Christopher Nesse
- All through the New Testament, when God's work in human lives is spoken of, the ethical takes priority over the charismatic. J. I. Packer
- The most significant gifts in the church's life in every era are ordinarily natural abilities sanctified. J. I. Packer
- To place ourselves in range of God's choicest gifts, we have to walk with God, work with God, lean on God, cling to God, come to have the sense and feel of God, refer all things to God. Cornelius Plantinga
- It is very hard to behold our own gifts without pride, and the gifts of others without envy. Vavasor Powell
- Men forget that gifts without grace save no one's soul, and are the characteristics of Satan himself. J. C. Ryle
- We are all talented people. Anything whereby we may glorify God is a talent. J. C. Ryle

REFERENCE: The preceding quotes are from John Blanchard's highly recommended book available in paper and digital - [The Complete Gathered Gold- A Treasury of Quotations for Christians- John Blanchard](#)

The following illustrations/quotations on Spiritual Gifts are from [Sermon Illustrations](#)

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Several years ago, two students graduated from the Chicago-Kent College of Law. The highest ranking student in the class was a blind man named Overton and, when he received his honor, he insisted that half the credit should go to his friend, Kasprzyzak. They had met one another in school when the armless Mr. Kasprzyzak had guided the blind Mr. Overton down a flight of stairs. This acquaintance ripened into friendship and a beautiful example of interdependence. The blind man carried the books which the armless man read aloud in their common study, and thus the individual deficiency of each was compensated for by the other. After their graduation, they planned to practice law together. **Gary Inrig, Life in His Body.**

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The great violinist, Nicolo Paganini, willed his marvelous violin to Genoa -- the city of his birth -- but only on condition that the instrument never be played upon. It was an unfortunate condition, for it is a peculiarity of wood that as long as it is used and handled, it shows little wear. As soon as it is discarded, it begins to decay. The exquisite, mellow-toned violin has become worm-eaten in its beautiful case, valueless except as a relic. The moldering instrument is a reminder that a life withdrawn from all service to others loses its meaning. **Bits & Pieces, June 25, 1992.**

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The Detroit News carried a humorous little story about Bill Cosby's aged mother that illustrates how useless gifts are unless they are used. She had been raised in poverty, and the family had very little money as Bill was growing up. As a result, she never had modern conveniences and had gotten accustomed to doing things the hard way. When the children were old enough to get jobs, they often gave their mother appliances as Christmas gifts to make her life easier. But she wouldn't use them. Bill especially remembered that after a while his mother had two or three toasters. But she left them in their boxes and put them on top of the refrigerator. At breakfast she would still do the toast in the oven. If the boys protested, she would say, "Leave them on the

refrigerator. I'm used to doing it the old way." **Our Daily Bread, March 4, 1990.**

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Commentary and Devotional - Definitions from Dr. Earl Radmacher and Gordon McMinn Teaching gifts.

- Prophecy: setting before people the Word and wisdom of God persuasively.
- Encouragement: drawing alongside to comfort, encourage, rebuke, and lead someone into insight toward action.
- Teaching: laying down in a systematic order the complete truth of a doctrine and applying it incisively to life.
- The message of wisdom: Locating formerly unknown principles as well as combining known principles of God's Word and communicating them to fresh situations.
- The message of knowledge: Arranging the facts of Scripture, categorizing these into principles, and communicating them to repeated or familiar situations.
- Service Gifts. Contributing: Giving most liberally and beyond all human expectation. Mercy: Being sensitive or empathetic to people who are in affliction or misery and lifting internal burdens with cheerfulness.
- Helps: Seeing tasks and doing them for or with someone in order to lift external burdens.
- Distinguishing spirits: Detecting a genuine or spurious motive by distinguishing the spirit-source behind any person's speech or act.
- Evangelism: Communicating the gospel with power and persuasiveness as well as equipping the saints for evangelism.
- Leadership Gifts. Leadership (executive ability): Standing before people and inspiring followers by leading them aggressively but with care.
- Administration (legislative ability): Standing behind people to collect data, set policy, and develop plans which will guide a course of action with wisdom.
- Faith: Seeing through any problem to the Ultimate Resource.

What about the so-called sign gifts, such as healing and speaking in tongues, referred to in today's text? To us, Hebrews 2:4 suggests that they were intended to be confirming signs for the Apostles, and ceased with them. Others feel they are still for today, but if so, one thing is clear: they are given sovereignly by the Spirit for specific purposes and are the exception, not the rule. - **Today in the Word, July, 1990, p. 19.**

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We are right to say that spiritual gifts come from the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:4-11). However we go on to think of them in terms either of giftedness (human ability to do things skillfully and well) or of supernatural novelty (power to speak in tongues, to heal, to receive messages straight from God to give to others, or whatever). We have not formed the habit of defining gifts in terms of Christ, the head of the body, and his present work from heaven in our midst. In this we are unscriptural.

Paul makes it clear that spiritual gifts are given in Christ; they are enrichments from Christ. 1 Corinthians 12 assumes the Christ-oriented perspective that 1 Corinthians 1:4-7 established. It is vital that we should see this, or we shall be confusing natural with spiritual gifts to the end of our days.

Nowhere does Paul or any other New Testament writer define a spiritual gift to us. But Paul's assertion that the use of gifts edifies (1 Cor. 14:3-5, 12, 17,26; Eph. 4:12), shows what his idea of gift was.

For Paul it is only through Christ, in Christ, and by learning of and responding to Christ, that anyone is ever edified. So spiritual gifts must be defined in terms of Christ as actualized powers of expressing, celebrating, displaying, and thus communicating Christ in one way or another, either by word or deed.

James Packer, Your Father Loves You, Harold Shaw Publishers, 1986, Page December 9.

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...a spiritual gift is spiritual in character (pneumatikon), sovereignly given by God the Holy Spirit (charismata), to others (diakonia), in the power of God (energeema), with an evident manifestation of the Holy Spirit through the Christian as he serves God (phanerosis).

To summarize spiritual fruit, it: (1) is given to all believers; (2) produces spiritual character; (3) is singular (fruit is singular, meaning one's character is a unit); (4) is permanent (1 Cor. 13:8-10); and (5) grows internally. To summarize spiritual gifts, note the contrast to the previous five points. Spiritual gifts: (1) are given to specific believers; (2) produce spiritual service; (3) are plural (Flynn lists nineteen, Wagner, twenty-seven); (4) will cease; and (5) operate externally. **Jerry Falwell, Elmer Towns, Stepping out on Faith, p. 127.**