

Finding Our Place in Ministry

For we are his creative work,
 having been created in Christ Jesus for
 good works that God prepared beforehand
 so we can do them.
 —Ephesians 2:10

From 1 Corinthians 12, Paul explained that every Believer is an integral part of Jesus' one Body. This particular illustration of all Christians being needed and being part of one Body is important. We collectively work together with our service gifts to accomplish service ministries to others and to the world. With this illustration, we know that we are all needed and serve a role in God's plans and purposes and we are entirely interdependent. What an awesome responsibility and privilege.

Note here: these gifted ministries may take much time to start, grow, mature and flourish. Bennardo spoke to this attribute of God well when he wrote, "God's 'slow' is slower than our 'slow.' Like, really slow. Like, 'so slow you can't tell anything's happening' slow."⁷⁸ But all of us have a ministry that we should be doing and working in.

⁷⁸ Tom Bennardo, *The Honest Guide to Church Planting* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Reflective), Kindle Location 1523.

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Every Christian has a place in this life that no one may fill where you are (although others may have the same gift as you do). It's yours; God made it for you. This place doesn't necessarily involve what one does for a living. The place I am writing about is in an equipped place for service to the community of believers. When walking in the ways of God, you fit "there" in the Church. You will never experience more satisfaction than living life in the God-ordained place where you fit. Working where we are gifted brings peace and fulfillment. You were born at such a time to fulfill the plans God has for you.

These diverse gifts working together in a local community are how we function well as a ministering unit. Each gift is important and we use the gifts collectively to meet the spiritual and physical needs of people. As we serve one another, we manifest (reveal or show) the work of the Holy Spirit as we serve others (see 1 Corinthians 12 for a full treatment of this truth). Peter wrote about this service to others: "Just as each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of the varied grace of God" (1 Peter 4:10). Peter taught that every Believer has (past tense) received a gift.

God gives the gift. He decides what's best, and you have been specially equipped. As Christians, we are told to use our gifts "to serve one another." To serve one another, we must be around each other. Notice again that Peter explained that we are to be a "steward" of these gifts (steward means manager). We are entrusted with and required to put to use the gifts God gave us.

Find Your Spiritual Gift

Recently I asked a group of six men, "What is your spiritual gift?" There wasn't a response from any of them. They didn't know their spiritual gift. Some had been saved for over 30 years! I wish I could say that this is uncommon, but it isn't. Most people have trouble naming any spiritual gift listed in the New Testament much less their own. This should not be the case for us.

Below is a list of all the spiritual gifts. The gift names may vary depending on the translation one uses.

New Testament Spiritual Gifts

Rom. 12:6-8	1 Cor. 12:8-10	1 Cor. 12:28-30	Eph. 4:11	1 Peter 4:11
Prophecy	Wisdom	Apostle	Apostles	Speaking
Service	Knowledge	Prophet	Prophets	Serving
Teaching	Faith	Teacher	Evangelists	
Exhortation	Healing	Miracles	Pastors	
Giving	Miracles	Healing	Teachers	
Leadership	Prophecy	Helps		
Mercy	Discernment	Leadership		
	Tongues	Tongues		
	Interpretation			

Every Christian should know what their spiritual gift(s) is so that it may be purposefully acted upon for God's glory. Online assessments may be used (link below), but here are several points of caution:

1. *Don't overly trust in assessments.* They may be a tool God uses to reveal your gift to you but ask God to show you your spiritual gift as you study and pray about the passages that teach about spiritual gifts.
2. We may not see ourselves in ways that are in the most transparent light. Most everyone has sat in a class with a teacher who was thoroughly convinced that they are a teacher, but they are not. There are times that we "want" a particular spiritual gift, but we would all do very well to find the truth of our giftedness. Ask the mature of God's people who know you well what your spiritual gift is.
3. It may take some time to find your spiritual gift(s). If you are a new Believer, you *could take* the assessment, but do not place much weight on it. Often it takes some time for your faith and understanding to develop before even having the ability to comment appropriately about God's gift to you. Therefore, if you are a new believer, please know that you should use extreme caution with any assessment. Know assessments are out there and may be used, but do not place much weight in them at this point.
4. Some just don't exercise their gift with intentionality or at all. A pastor may take 20 hours a week to write a sermon, but the person with the

gift of encouragement may be very passive in using their gift. People with the gift of encouragement need to write encouraging cards and emails and make phone calls and schedule meetings of being purposeful in encouragement.

5. All Christians should look to practice and strengthen all the Christian attributes. For instance, one may not have the *gift of hospitality*, but the Church was instructed to practice hospitality (Romans 12:13b).
6. It may be possible to have more than one gift per person (cf., 1 Corinthians 12:31). The Church is instructed to desire the greater gifts.

Definitions

This section is adapted from Crossroads (church).⁷⁹

Apostle

There are many views on this gift, in part because Jesus' closest followers—the Disciples—were called Apostles. So many in the churches—if not most—have reserved the title and gift of “apostle” for people who saw Jesus with their own eyes. However, Paul told the entire church at Rome that they had the responsibility of “apostleship” (the Greek word *ἀπόστολος*: *apostle* means a messenger, one sent on a mission). We are surely all to be God's messengers to some degree. Generally, it might be best to think of apostle as the God-given strength and ability to start a new ministry from the ground up. Many would substitute the word “missionary” for “apostleship.” Some would describe a person here as have the gift of “apostolic ministry.”

⁷⁹ Crossroads (church), “Spiritual Gift Definitions,” accessed Jan. 24, 2020, <https://s3.amazonaws.com/crossroadscn.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/01144934/Spiritual-Gifts-Descriptions.pdf>. Their website is here: <https://crossroadscn.com>.

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Administration

The spiritual gift of administration is the God-given strength and ability to organize multiple tasks and groups of people to accomplish ministry (Luke 14:28-30; Acts 6:1-7; 1 Corinthians 12:28).

Builder or Craftsman (Referenced in the Old Testament; possibly a skill)

The gift of craftsmanship is the God-given strength and ability to plan, build, and work with your hands in environments to accomplish the building needs of the Church (Exodus 30:22, 31:3-11; 2 Chronicles 34:9-13).

Discernment

The spiritual gift of discernment is the God-given strength and ability to spiritually identify falsehood, improper motives, and the spiritual forces at work in ministry and life (Matthew 16:21-23; Acts 5:1-11, 16:16-18; 1 Corinthians 12:10; 1 John 4:1-6).

Evangelism

The spiritual gift of evangelism is the God-given strength and ability to share the Gospel with unbelievers clearly and methodically, followed by people responding (Acts 8:5-6, 8:26-40, 14:21, 21:8; Ephesians 4:11-14).

Encouragement

The spiritual gift of encouragement is the God-given strength and ability to comfort, strengthen, and urge others to action through written or spoken words. People with this gift often use Biblical passages to encourage others (Acts 14:22; Romans 12:8; 1 Timothy 4:13; Hebrews 10:24-25).

Exhortation

The spiritual gift of exhortation is the God-given strength and ability to give warnings, advice, and make urgent appeals to God's people.

Faith/Miracles

The spiritual gift of faith and/or miracles is the God-given strength and

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ability to believe in God for great things. A person of faith has an exceptional understanding that God may do the miraculous, whether spiritually or physically (Acts 11:22-24; Romans 4:18-21; 1 Corinthians 12:9; Hebrews 11).

Giving

The spiritual gift of giving is the God-given strength and ability to exceptionally give to advance the Kingdom of God on earth (Mark 12:41-44; Romans 12:8; 2 Corinthians 8:1-7, 9:2-7).

Healing

The spiritual gift of healing is the God-given strength and ability to help physically or spiritually injured people.

Helps and Service

The spiritual gift of helps/service is the God-given strength and ability to work in a supportive role for the accomplishment of tasks in Christian ministry with the ability to often see the need before others do (Mark 15:40-41; Acts 9:36; Romans 16:1-2; 1 Corinthians 12:28).

Hospitality

The gift of hospitality is the God-given strength and ability to create warm, welcoming environments for others in homes, public gatherings, and churches (Acts 16:14-15; Romans 12:13, 16:23; Hebrews 13:1-2; 1 Peter 4:9).

Knowledge

The gift of knowledge is the God-given strength and ability to bring truth and understanding to ministry (Acts 5:1-11; 1 Corinthians 12:8; Colossians 2:2-3).

Leadership

The gift of leadership is the God-given strength and ability to influence people at their level while directing, facilitating growth, and focusing them on specific visions of ministry (Romans 12:8; 1 Timothy 3:1-13, 5:17; Hebrews

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13:17).

Mercy

The gift of mercy is the God-given strength and ability to feel empathy and to care for those who are hurting (Matthew 9:35-36; Mark 9:41; Romans 12:8; 1 Thess. 5:14).

Pastor/Shepherd

The gift of pastor/shepherd is the God-given strength and ability to care for the personal needs of others by caring for, nurturing, and spiritually mending people (John 10:1-18; Ephesians 4:11-14; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 1 Peter 5:1-3).

Prophecy

The gift of prophecy is the God-given strength and ability to communicate God's truth in a way that calls people to a right relationship with God (Acts 2:37-40, 7:51-53, 26:24-29; 1 Corinthians 14:1-4; 1 Thessalonians 1:5).

Teaching

The gift of teaching is the God-given strength and ability to study and learn from the Scriptures and then speak truth to others in ways that bring understanding and depth to other Christians (Acts 18:24-28, 20:20-21; 1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11-14).

Tongues/Interpretation

Not having room here, please see <https://www.gotquestions.org/gift-of-tongues.html> for a longer explanation about tongues and interpretation. There are many very different views on this topic.

Wisdom

The gift of wisdom is the God-given strength and ability to understand and to bring clarity and greater understanding to situations and circumstances through the Scriptures (Acts 6:3,10; 1 Corinthians 2:6-13, 12:8).

Don't be a Martha

In the past, I have been guilty of *doing things for Jesus* but not spending time with Jesus. The proverbial to-do-list demands attention. The greatest thing we can do is spend *time with Jesus daily*. Listen to the words of Spurgeon below:

*“Her fault was not that she served: The condition of a servant is commendable in the Christian. “I serve” should be the motto of all the princes of the royal family of Heaven. Nor was it her fault that she had “much serving.” We cannot do too much. Let us do all that we possibly can; let head and heart and hands be engaged in the Master’s service. It was no fault of hers that she was busy preparing a feast for the Master. Happy Martha, to have an opportunity of entertaining so blessed a guest; and happy, too, to have the spirit to throw her whole soul so heartily into the engagement. Her fault was that she grew “distracted with much serving,” so that she forgot Him and only remembered the service. She allowed service to override communion, and so presented one duty stained with the blood of another.”*⁸⁰

Find a Ministry

Are you sacrificing anything for the ministry of the Lord? In other words, do you live a part of your life for serving others outside your family? For many, a church is only there for them; they never really pour back into the lives of others. This is a travesty. As Christians, we don't have a choice, nor should we want one: we must serve others. Unbelievers serve their families (Luke 6). Our love for people must grow to others. We serve others by getting involved with the ministries that the Church is already doing and by starting new ministries as God places the visions and burdens on our hearts.

If you are a new Christian, children's ministry is a great place to start

⁸⁰ “The Place of Service”, Truth for Life from Charles H. Spurgeon, accessed Jan. 24, 2020, <https://info.truthforlife.org/devo-jan24-2020>.

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ministering. By working with children, one may be exposed to opportunities to exercise all of the spiritual gifts. If you are a new Christian, and you are faithful to the ministry, you may be given the opportunity to teach.

Also, as you go through life, practice all the spiritual gifts as you have opportunities. The most important thing—regarding ministry—is to exercise your God-given spiritual gift in ministry! Get started.

Scripture Passage

1 Corinthians 12

Questions

- 1) If you have been saved for more than two years, do you know your spiritual gift?
- 2) If you know your gift, how do you serve others with it?
- 3) Do you serve actively with your gift?

Aim Point

- 1) If you don't know your spiritual gift, ask God to reveal your gift to you while you study the passages listed in the Spiritual Gift chart.
- 2) Ask mature Christians what they think your spiritual gift is.
- 3) Take the assessment. It may prove helpful to you.
- 4) If you are a new Christian, continue to get involved with ministry and serve the Body of Believers. Continue to pray about your spiritual gift and ask God to reveal it to you.