

CHURCH AND MY TALENT

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We all have a special place and work to do in church. We aren't added to the church to be spectators or consumers, but to contribute to the growth, health, and strength of the church by serving and using our gift, talents, and abilities.

He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love. (Ephesians 4:16)

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY 'GIFTS AND TALENTS'?

God creates each one of us with unique skills, talents, and abilities. While some talents may be used outside of church (e.g. in employment), and can be used independently of God's anointing (e.g. gifted musicians), they can also be used to build God's house and under the inspiration and instruction of the Holy Spirit. For example:

1. David (1 Samuel 17:34-37)
2. Daniel (Daniel 1:17, 19) – 'call for Daniel' (5:12)
3. Bezalel (Exodus 35:30-35)

Believers also receive spiritual gifts to strengthen and build the church (Romans 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12; 1 Peter 4:10-11). The word 'gift' in these passages is '*chárisma*,': favour, the gift of divine grace, something graciously bestowed.

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. (1 Peter 4:10)

These spiritual gifts are multiple and varied, including: miracles; healing; guidance; different types of tongues; interpretation of tongues; prophecy; teaching; apostles; leadership; serving; encouragement; giving; showing kindness; speaking; wisdom; knowledge; faith; and, distinguishing between the spirits. Note that:

1. A gift is given to each of us (1 Corinthians 12:7)
2. God chooses how gifts are distributed (Heb. 2:4)
3. The gifts are not a measure of our value to God (1 Corinthians 12:4-6)

4. The gifts are to be used (1 Peter 4:10) in an orderly way (1 Corinthians 14:13)
5. The gifts are to serve others (1 Peter 4:10 -11)
6. The gifts are to bring glory to God not ourselves (1 Peter 4:11)

Our gifts and talents, or their expression, are not necessarily an indication of spiritual health or God's favour:

'Not everyone who calls out to me, 'Lord! Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. On judgment day many will say to me, 'Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.' But I will reply, 'I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God's laws.' (Matthew 7:21-23)

- You can have gifts and talents without character (e.g. Samson, Judges 13-16)
- You can have the gifts of the Spirit without the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23)
- You can have gifts and talents without obedience, loyalty, or honour (e.g. Saul, 1 Samuel 13:9-11a)
- You can have gifts and talents without love (1 Corinthians 13:1-3, 8)

HOW DO WE KNOW WHAT OUR TALENTS AND GIFTS ARE?

- By being available and serving where needed and where asked (Ephesians 6:7)
- By bringing any promptings, dreams, or desires to God in prayer (Proverbs 3:6)
- By being faithful in, and with, what God has already given us (Luke 16:10; Zechariah 4:10)
- By being guided by pastors and leaders (Heb. 13:17)
- By letting God open the door if He chooses (and how and when He chooses)

Do you see any truly competent workers? They will serve kings rather than working for ordinary people. (Proverbs 22:29)

A man's gift makes room for him and brings him before great men. (Proverbs 18:16)

- Through the prayerful laying on of hands (may be accompanied by the prophetic) (Romans 11:1; 1 Timothy 4:14)

HOW SHOULD WE USE OUR GIFTS AND TALENTS IN CHURCH?

- As humble servants (Philippians 2:3, 7-8)
- As 'faithful stewards' (1 Peter 4:10)

Do not neglect the spiritual gift received through the prophecy spoken over you when the elders of the church laid their hands on you. Give complete attention to these matters. Throw yourself into your tasks so that everyone will see your progress. (1 Timothy 4:14-15)

- With excellence (Daniel 5:12 – 'excellent spirit')

In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. (Romans 12:6)

All hard work leads to profit. (Proverbs 14:23)

- With a 'spirit of wisdom' (Exodus 27:3; Acts 6:3)
- 'Full of the Spirit' (Acts 6:3)

Fan into flame the spiritual gift God gave you when I laid hands on you. (2 Timothy 1:6)

"Hard work will do almost everything; but in God's service it must not only be hard work, but hot work. The heart must be on fire." — Charles Spurgeon

- With love (1 Corinthians 13; John 13:34-35)
- As those under authority (e.g. Moses and Joshua, Exodus 17:8-16)
- With joy and enthusiasm (Deuteronomy 28:47-48)
- By passing on what we have learnt to another generation (Judges 2:10)
- As those whose work will be tested (1 Cor. 3:10-15) and for which we will give an account (Parable of the three servants, Matthew 25:14-3)

THINGS THAT DO NOT REQUIRE TALENT OR A ROTA:

- Praying for the church, each other, and the city (Ephesians 4:18; Colossians 4:2)
- Devotion to the word (Acts 2:42; 2 Timothy 1:13)
- Cheerfully giving to God and each other (Acts 2:44, 4:32)
- Hospitality (1 Peter 4:9; Acts 2:46)
- A readiness and expectation in worship (Psalm 63:1)
- Bringing people to church (Proverbs 11:30)
- Welcoming new people (1 Thessalonians 3:12)
- Building unity (1 Cor. 12:12; Acts 4:32; John 13:34-35)

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Passion for God's house will consume me. (John 2:17; Psalm 69:9)

A single day in your courts is better than a thousand anywhere else. I would rather be a gatekeeper in the house of my God than live the good life in the homes of the wicked. (Psalm 84:10)

Our skills and talents can lead us to have successful careers – and potentially earn substantial positions, property, or money – but such measures of success are fleeting, fragile and never truly satisfying.

True purpose is found in 'pouring our lives out as an offering' (2 Timothy 4:6) to serve God and His house. Only then do we connect with something that has eternal value and significance.