

Chapter 15

IDENTIFYING AND DEVELOPING YOUR GIFTS 6

<p>SERIOUS AND RESPONSIBLE STEWARDSHIP OF OUR GIFTS WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD WE LIVE IN.</p>
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I. Having good, mature role models and even being a role model ourselves is so important in our lives as Christians, in the life of the church, and in the developing of our spiritual gifts. We find that we are role models to those around us. Our choice is will we be good role models or less effective role models. (1 Corinthians 11:1)

A. Our past experiences in the home have affected all of us from one extent to another. What was our personal experience? Did we have Godly role models? We can each recognize the lack we have experienced and look to God for help, forgiveness, and right attitudes on our part. We then need to be careful that we do not allow the lack of Godly role models in our past to stop our growth now.

What are we now doing in our own homes? Building Christian character in our children is not an instant thing. It does not just happen because they go to Church. What is our attitude and life at home where they live? Children will copy and imitate us. We are an example to those with whom we live. Again our choice is will we be a good or a less than effective role model. Our example for role modeling will also affect our roommates, siblings, and even work mates.

B. In the church (or the Christian community) we should be able to look for and see many good role models. We may see such role models by reading good biographies of Christian people, especially those who have something working in their lives that we want or those who exhibit our giftings in a positive way. (2 Timothy 3:10-14; 1 Corinthians 11:1)

There may also be people in the current Christian world that we admire who are making a difference in the world. One caution in looking at these people is to be careful not to just look for the flash and glitter, the big crowds; but for stability and effectiveness.

We can also be aware of those in our local church. Again, we need to be aware of not just those that have a vocal ministry, but we should look at our own gifts and find someone that is functioning in those gifts effectively and get close to them. Talk with them and perhaps see if we can work with them and observe them. What is our own example in our local church and to those around us; especially to the young people and children?

II. Developing our spiritual gifts is to be a continuing renewal. We personally will need to make the effort to renew ourselves and stay usable. Paul encouraged Timothy to fan into flame the gift of God in his life. When the flame dies down in our own lives because of the busyness of daily life, or the routine of things, or even losing sight of the vision of who we are in God and that our gifts are important to the Body of Christ, we will need to fan into flames the gifts in our own lives. (1 Timothy 1:18-19; 2 Timothy 1:5-7)

III. It will take a decision or an act of our will to do this. Many times it can be good to share with

a trusted friend and to pray together. Let them be honest with you as you look at some of the reasons the flame may have died down. Are you too busy with too many things and thus drained? Do you need to reorganize and prioritize things in your life? Recall what God has said to you and done for you personally. Accept encouragement and reassurance that you have gifts and a place in God's economy.

- IV. Developing our gifts is also a life investment. Invest means to spend or devote for future advantage or benefit. As we look at developing our gifts we need to start as we mean to go on.

**We have only one life, it will soon be past,
What's done for Christ is all that will last.**

- A. We need to learn how to invest in the lives of other people. Jesus said that we are to make disciples of those that come to Him. A disciple is basically a learner; a learner of the ways of God. There is a need for this to be practiced more diligently in the church today. We need to make a commitment to discipleship. (2 Timothy 2:2)
- B. We, of course, need to invest in ourselves with the reading of the Bible and with prayer. Also a commitment to involvement in the activities of the church and other programs will help us to grow in our gifts. This will not always be easy. It will many times be quite hard work. Partly this will be because we will be working with people; people with different backgrounds, upbringing, cultures, education, priorities, family circumstances. This can cause us to grow in grace and maturity. (Proverbs 27:17)

We also need to learn to be steadfast in times of pressures and hard or difficult times in our lives. (1 Timothy 4:11-16; 2 Timothy 2:3-6)

1. Another good investment in our own lives is to begin to clear out the clutter that might be hindering us from the development of our spiritual gifts. Anything that gets in the way of putting God and His purpose for my life first might be considered clutter. Some of the clutter we might need to look at may be unhelpful and unhealthy friendships and interests. Wrong attitudes and wrong activities can also be the clutter that will hinder the development of our gifts. (Galatians 5:1; 1 Timothy 6:11; 2 Timothy 2:4, 20-21)
2. Christianity and the development and use of our gifts takes "stick-to-itiveness" or perseverance. It is a lifetime commitment we are making. (Colossians 1:11-12; 1 Timothy 4:15-16)
 - a. We need to live our Christian life and develop our gifts with a balanced attitude. Praying as if developing our gifts is all up to God and working as if it is all up to us. There is a definite balance between "God-confident" and self-confident. We are created in God's image and God has chosen us. He has given us gifts, abilities, talents, but He has also given us a free will and choice. We can and do choose to follow God and to use the gifts He has graciously given us. We say, "I can" or "I will" or we say, "If God doesn't move me, I can't or I won't." We are not competent in ourselves, but He has made us competent. It is His power working in us; but we still do the work. (John 15:16; 2 Corinthians 3:4; Ephesians 3:20; 2 Thessalonians 3:4)

- b. God-confident says, "God will have to do it all." Self-confident says, "I will have to do it all." The balance is that we go and do in the strength that God has given us and He will go with us; be with us in the things that we do. (Ephesians 3:16, 20; 2 Corinthians 12:9; Philippians 4:13; 1 Timothy 1:12; Judges 6:11-16)
3. Finally, relax and trust God. We need to be careful not to put ourselves under undue pressure, but look for the joy and fulfillment of developing and using the gifts that God has given us. Jesus has gone before us in serving and doing; He understands and beyond that He has the power to help us when we become discouraged and weary. (2 Timothy 2:8-10)

We may at times have some self-doubt and even despair as we learn to develop and use our gifts. Some causes of self-doubt and despair can be criticism or even a sense of disapproval or a lack of confidence on our part. Part of growing and learning is facing our limitations. We all have to face sometime the fact that we cannot do it all, or perhaps we cannot do some things as well as someone else. Lack of job satisfaction can also cause discouragement; especially with the caring gifts as there are not the more tangible evidences of progress, no balance sheet figures, no finished project, etc. Past failures can also cause us to have self-doubt. We cannot allow these past failures to hang as a weight around our neck. A mistake just means someone was trying to do something. Try again. Repent of any wrongdoing, ask God for wisdom, and then move ahead.

- C. Invest in Christ; declare who He is. Acknowledge His place in our lives and that He reigns supreme and is truly our Lord as well as our Savior.
 1. *Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us; if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.* (2 Timothy 2:11-13)
 2. *Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven.* (Matthew 10:32-33)

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

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1. What are the things we need to be investing our time and energy in as we develop our spiritual gifts? List some of the ways you can do this effectively:
 - a. Invest in others:
 - b. Invest in yourself:
 - c. Invest in Christ:
2. Paul said, "Follow me, as I follow Christ." Is it possible for us to behave in such a manner

today so that we can have the same confidence as Paul? What are some keys to being a good example to others?