

JANUARY-MARCH 1997

CQ

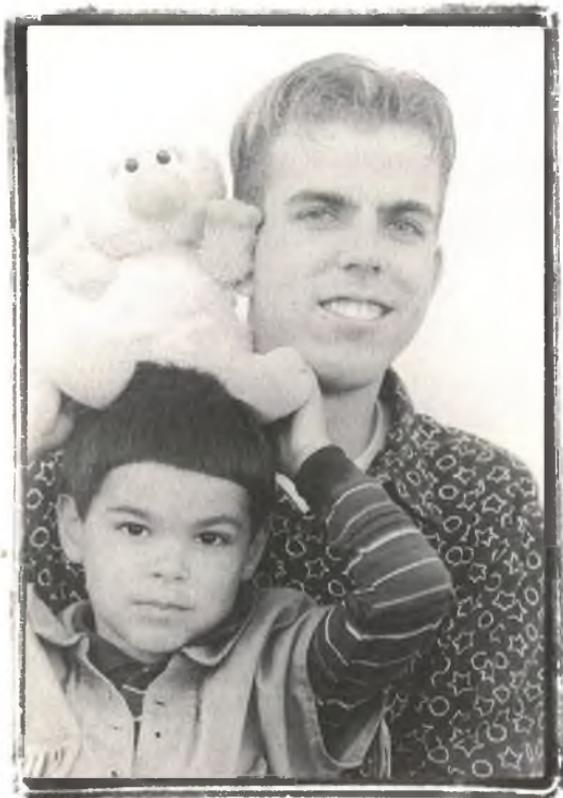
COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY

SPIRITUAL GIFTS:

What's
on
your
list?



A PUC This Guy Became a Big Brother



How can you get involved at PUC?

THE HOMELESS PROJECT— feeding the homeless at People's Park
BIG BROTHER/BIG SISTER — “adopting” a child
LIGHTHOUSE— serving in a variety of local community outreach opportunities
PRISON MINISTRIES— providing church services for prison inmates
STUDENT MISSIONS AND TASKFORCE— volunteering a year to serve
STUDENT ASSOCIATION— leading out in social, religious, and philosophical endeavors
STUDENT SENATE— involvement in student government
CROSSWAYS— participating in the student-run church service
PRAYER GROUPS— praying and supporting each other

When Matthew Payne came to PUC he got involved with lots of stuff—the Dramatic Arts Society, Student Senate, veepers and the Sabbath morning service called Crossways. But unknown to many people he started spending time with kids who were identified by teachers as needing positive role models.

Through Children's Ministries he started working in the Big Brother/Big Sister program.

“Children need as many positive role models in their lives as possible. I feel college students are more than capable to fit the role model that many children in today's society need.”

So Matt “adopted” a kid through the Children's Ministry and spent time with him, letting him know someone really cares.

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SPIRITUAL GIFTS: WHAT'S ON YOUR LIST?

JANUARY - MARCH 1997

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CQ is written by Seventh-day Adventist young adults and their friends around the world.

Editorial Office: Sabbath School/Personal Ministries Department, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904, U.S.A.

Place orders with: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., P.O. Box 5353, Nampa, ID 83653-5353, U.S.A.

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CQ (ISSN 0744-2939). Volume 20, No. 1. Published quarterly by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904, U.S.A. and printed by Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1350 North Kings Road, Nampa, ID 83697, U.S.A. Place orders with Pacific Press Pub. Assn., P.O. Box 5353, Nampa, ID 83653-5353, U.S.A. One-year subscription in U.S.A., \$13.25; single copy, \$5.95. One-year subscription in countries outside U.S.A., \$16.25; single copy, \$5.95. All prices at U.S.A. exchange. Periodicals postage paid at Nampa, ID 83687.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *CQ*, P.O. Box 5353, Nampa, ID 83653-5353, U.S.A. Send editorial inquiries to *CQ*, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904, U.S.A. Send circulation inquiries to Pacific Press Publishing Association, P.O. Box 5353, Nampa, ID 83653-5353, U.S.A. When a change of address is desired, please send both old and new addresses.

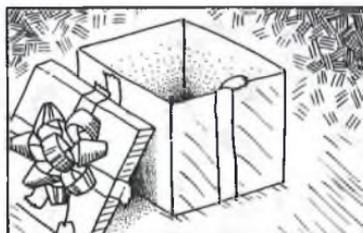
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Welcome to *CQ*'s World!

The following pages represent the creative energy of a truly international group of Adventist young adults. The map above indicates the locations of the writing groups that have participated in *CQ*'s writing program for this quarter.

In producing this unique Sabbath School lesson quarterly, more than 300 individuals contribute to *CQ* each year. The wide variety—and occasional repetition—of the content reflects the great diversity of its contributors around the world as they respond individually to the subject under study.

Worldwide circulation of *CQ* is about 59,000. It is published in the English, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, and Finnish languages.

Ever think about writing a Sabbath School Quarterly?

Why not! Each year 300 young adults from around the world participate in the *Collegiate Quarterly* writing program. CQ gives Seventh-day Adventist young people aged 18 to 35 a unique opportunity to grow spiritually, to share the benefits of their Bible study, to exchange ideas, and to contribute to the mission of the church.

You are the most important ingredient in our CQ formula because you can be the answer to our greatest need—the need for caring, committed contributing authors. If you think you'd like to participate in the writing of a lesson—and get paid for it—write us today:

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CQ
COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY

This Quarter's Illustrator



Born February 23, 1975, Chrystique Y. Neibauer grew up in Wisconsin. She graduated from Western Wisconsin Technical College in La Crosse, Wisconsin, in 1995, with an associate degree in applied science/commercial art. She is currently working for Wincraft, a company in Winona, Minnesota, as a graphic designer of collectible items for professional and collegiate sports teams. Her hobbies include music, juggling, and sports.

Getting the Most Out of *CQ*

Facts You Should Know

CQ is based on the conviction that the Word of God offers transforming power and that group study is one important way to tap into that power. *CQ*'s purpose is to provide Seventh-day Adventist young adults with a resource for devotional study on mutual topics, which can then be discussed each week in Sabbath School. Many who use the adult lesson quarterly find that because *CQ* deals with the same topics, it enriches lesson study and discussion as a supplemental aid.

Pointers for Study

1. Through prayer, open your mind to the Holy Spirit's guidance as you study.

2. The Bible passage on which each week's lesson is based appears in bold type in the "Logos" pages (Monday's portion of the lesson). Read this entire passage to give yourself an overview of the lesson.

3. The Bible passage for the week is divided into sections on the "Logos" pages (Monday's portion of the lesson). When studying this section, carefully reread Bible passages indicated in bold headings before reading the comments beneath the heading.

4. Read remaining sections for the week with the perspective you have gained from your own study of the biblical passage.

5. Keep in mind the purposes of each section of the quarterly:

"Introduction" (Sunday) is designed to stimulate your interest and focus your thinking on the week's theme.

"Logos" (Monday), as described above, is a guide for direct study of the Bible passage for the week.

"Testimony" (Tuesday) presents Ellen White's perspective on the lesson theme.

"Evidence" (Wednesday) approaches issues raised by the lesson from a historical, scientific, philosophical, or theological perspective.

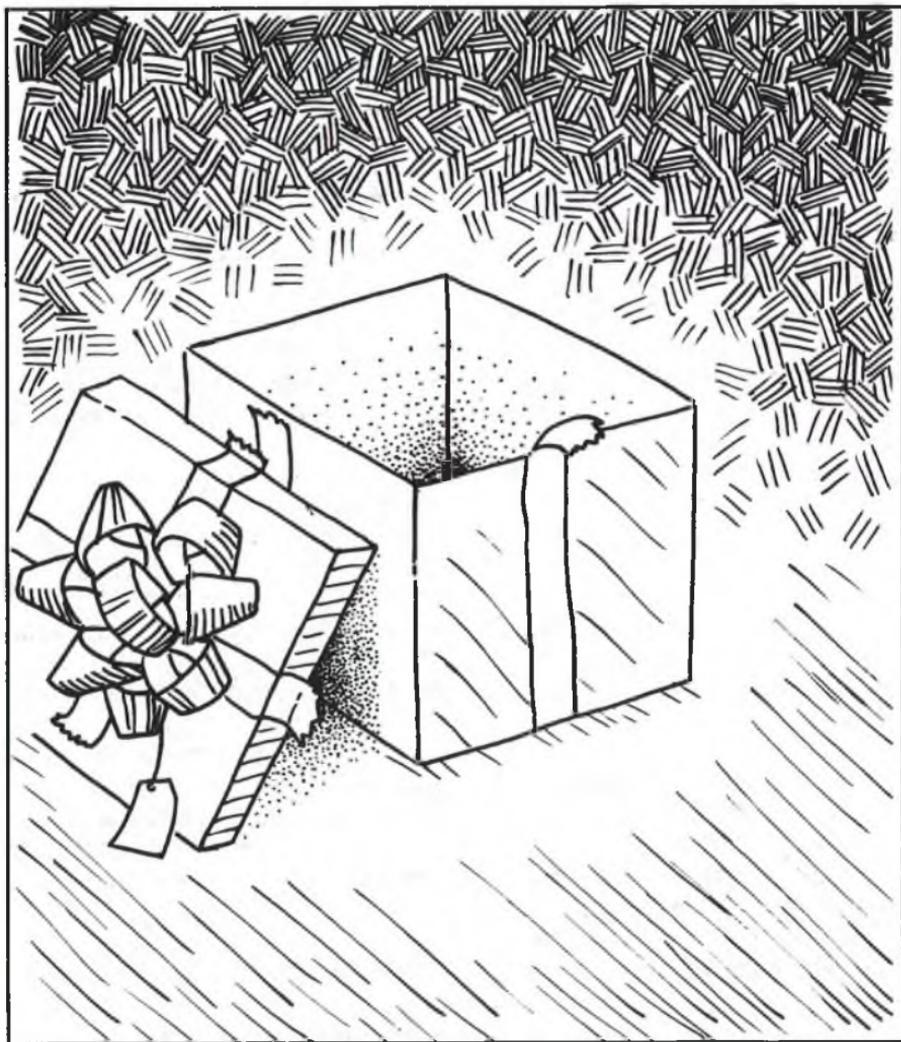
"How-To" (Thursday) discusses what the abstractions in the lesson mean for day-to-day living.

"Opinion" (Friday), a personal viewpoint on the lesson, is meant to encourage further thought and discussion.

CQ and the Church

CQ is the General Conference-approved lesson quarterly for the collegiate/young-adult age group. It upholds the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. *However, its contents should not be regarded as official pronouncements of the church.*

EVERY DAY IS CHRISTMAS DAY



“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms” (1 Pet. 4:10, NIV).

It's Yours to Use

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Matt. 7:7-11

Anniversaries, birthdays, and Christmastime are usually special occasions for us. The splendor of the day is usually heightened by the giving of gifts to and/or from us. Though the giver may regard his gesture as just a small token of appreciation, it registers as more than just that to us. The fact that someone thought about us gives us a special feeling.

If mere humans can touch our lives in such a tangible and practical way, shouldn't we be totally overwhelmed when we acknowledge all the gifts God has bestowed on us? As far as He is concerned, every day is Christmas day.

Though we err, we are still very precious to Him. Nothing will change His feelings toward us. He is more than willing to open heaven's storehouse and flood us with His rich blessings. Let's accept God's gifts, whatever they may be, and use them for the betterment of our lives and the lives of others.

TALENTS

God gave each of us talents, talents we should use.

He gave them out to everyone—He did not pick and choose.

The gift assigned to each of us may never be the same,

But we should use whatever He gave to glorify His name.

Let's not say "We can't" without even trying,

For the power of the Lord we would be denying.

Let us show our gratitude for what He did for us

By using our talents without putting up a fuss.

Let's not mar our blessing with mediocrity.

Didn't Jesus do His best just for you and me?

Let's follow His example; let's help our fellow man,

Performing at our best when we know we can.

If you are not convinced that now is the time to act,

I must now remind you of one crucial fact:

God took His time to bless us with this great gift,

And we'll have to tell Him what we have done with it.

By Clem Hackett, a graduate accounting student at Howard University, Washington, D.C.

God's Gifts

LOGOS

1 Pet. 4:10, 11; Matt. 25:14-30; 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Rom. 12:1-8

Qualifying for Spiritual Gifts (1 Pet. 4:10, 11)

I will never forget the day Grandmother died. She slipped away one quiet Sunday evening while the family was having dinner. It was not the fact that she died suddenly that caused the excruciating pain our family experienced, but the fact that she died when an inexperienced doctor misunderstood her symptoms and made the wrong diagnosis.

Many medical, economic, marital, mental, and spiritual crises could have been lessened or prevented if adequately trained and prepared personnel had been in control. In 1 Peter 4:10 and 11, Peter made it clear that each person must use his or her gifts faithfully. Gifts should be used according to the ability God gave to the gifted.

God took time to bestow specific gifts on individuals according to their abilities and preparedness. He knows better than any of us the disadvantages and danger of ill-prepared Christians. Ill-preparedness will hurt believers and hinder the effective spread of the gospel.

How to Be Better Qualified (Matt. 25:14-30)

Just as one qualifies for a job or position in this life, there is a need to be qualified for spiritual gifts even though we cannot earn them. Matthew 25:14 states that the master called his servants and gave them portions of his goods according to their abilities. This implies that these individuals were qualified, because they were his servants (they belonged to him) and possessed the capability to handle what was given to them. Matthew 25:14-30 summarizes a number of points on how we can be better prepared for our gifts.

1. Our lives must belong to God, and then He will entrust His goods to us (verse 14). It is important to note that the master gave goods to his servants; likewise, they are given to the believers.

2. We must possess some abilities that God can use (verse 15).

3. We must be willing to use what we have in accordance with the Master's will (verses 16-18).

4. Gifts bring with them responsibility and accountability (verses 19-23).

5. It is inexcusable to hide, bury, or refuse to use that which we have (verses 24-29).

6. Unproductive Christians will not inherit eternal life (verse 30).

Within these passages are two important points worthy of meditation for all believing and practicing Christians: (1) to be ready for God's free gift, we need to make ourselves available to Him; and (2) we should be willing to give unconditional service. Until these points are accepted, we are far from being prepared for God's work.

Purposes of Spiritual Gifts (1 Cor. 12:12-27)

God does not give us gifts for our benefit or self-glorification; however, if we use them in the right way under the Spirit's guidance, we can't help experiencing some benefits and gain some glorification, for God is not selfish. God is in the

saving business. He is saving souls from sin. All that He does is centered on this one important fact. The giving of spiritual gifts has souls as its motive and purpose. "Spiritual gifts are specific abilities given to Christians by the Holy Spirit so we can serve others in nurture and/or outreach." What conclusion can we therefore come to? The facts are:

1. God is in the saving business.
2. Redemption of humankind is at the center of all God's actions.
3. One of God's actions is the giving of spiritual gifts.
4. The giving of spiritual gifts is therefore motivated by the redemptive plan.

It can be concluded then that spiritual gifts must be used for helping the redemption process. The fact must be reinforced again and again that God is concerned mainly about saving souls. It is only as we cooperate with Him and serve our fellow humanity that we can truly build the character that is Christlike.

Whatever gift we have is for the saving of souls (including our own) and the building of Christlike characters. This is why Paul admonished us to make our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God (Rom. 12:1). How can our bodies be living sacrifices? It is when we use them in cooperation with God for

God knows better than any of us the disadvantages and danger of ill-prepared Christians.

service to humanity in the redemptive process. It is when we are transformed by giving our all to Christ, when we use our gifts for the building up of Christ's body (Rom. 12:2-8). It is only when we offer our entire being in service and worship to the Lord that our bodies become living sacrifices.

Applications

1. As Christians, we are individuals in God's family. Each person is an important member and is no less or more valuable than the next person.
2. As social beings, we are interconnected and depend on one another for comfort, support, and relationships. No member is independent of the other. Whenever one hurts, all experience it. Whenever one member rejoices, all should rejoice. Together we can achieve much more than if we were by ourselves.
3. Church members are to be subjected to the will of Christ in all things, even as all the various parts of the body are directed by the will of the head.

REACT

1. How can I be certain what gifts God has given me?
2. How do my spiritual gifts fit into God's plan for His church?
3. What are the advantages of possessing spiritual gifts?
4. Explain how your spiritual gifts have impacted your life and the lives of those around you.
5. Why is it so important to use your spiritual gifts?
6. How will my spiritual gifts uplift the members of my community?

* R. C. Naden, *Your Spiritual Gifts*, p. 43.

By Kenneth A. Anderson, a substitute teacher at Takoma Academy, Takoma Park, Maryland.

The One Talent

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Matt. 25:18

In the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30), we understand that the man leaving on this long journey represents Christ, who has gone back to heaven as our Redeemer. It is also clear that the servants represent us and that the master's goods are talents given by Christ through the Holy Spirit. These talents are to be used to spread the gospel and to bring glory to God. Some talents are more easily identifiable, such as speaking, playing an instrument, or singing. But some feel that only if they had a certain talent could God use them, that their talents are too small, or that they don't have any talents at all. Jesus spoke directly to these concerns through our text for today.

"It was the one with the smallest gift who left his talent unimproved. In this is given a warning to all who feel that the smallness of their endowments excuses them from service for Christ. . . . The Lord in His distribution of gifts is testing character. The man who neglected to improve his talent proved himself an unfaithful servant. Had he received five talents, he would have buried them as he buried the one."¹

"To every man God has given 'according to his several ability.' The talents are

While they are waiting for some great work, life passes away, its purposes unfulfilled.

not apportioned capriciously. He who has ability to use five talents receives five. He who can improve but two, receives two. He who can wisely use only one, receives one. None need lament that they have not received larger gifts; for He who has apportioned to every man is equally honored by the improvement of each trust, whether it be great or small."²

"But many Christians are waiting for some great work to be brought to them. . . . Day by day they let slip opportunities for showing their faithfulness to God. While they are waiting for some great work, life passes away, its purposes unfulfilled, its work unaccomplished."³

"Those who have not a large endowment of gifts need not become discouraged. Let them use what they have, faithfully guarding every weak point in their characters, seeking by divine grace to make it strong. Into every action of life we are to weave faithfulness and loyalty, cultivating the attributes that will enable us to accomplish the work."⁴

1. *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 355.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 328.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 360.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 358.

By Ian Barrow, senior biomedical-engineering (premed) student at the University of Maryland at College Park.

No, You Go Ahead!

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Rom. 12:10

The entire weekend anniversary celebration was a time of happiness. As they greeted one another, they spoke of a time 10 years before, during the construction of their church.

“You put that wall up.”

“We sang at this spot.”

“You two met and were married in this place.”

None of them seemed concerned or occupied with himself. They remembered a time when they, of different backgrounds, speech, and architectural talents, had come together in faith to build a house of worship to honor God. What impressed me most about this community was its gift of selfless service, or servanthood.

When one thinks of a servant, the concept is almost always negative. The image of oppression, suppression, and brutality quickly enter the mind. As children of God, we are, however, called to be servants. John 12:26 tells us if we are following Christ, we must serve Him. How can we become acceptable servants of God? “The thing essential for successful work is a knowledge of Christ; for this knowl-

What impressed me most about this community was its gift of selfless service.

edge will give sound principles of right, impart a noble, unselfish spirit, like that of our Saviour whom we profess to serve.”¹

Our daily lives should reflect that of Jesus, one of self-denial. Although our “Human nature is ever struggling . . . he who learns of Christ is emptied of self, of pride, of love of supremacy, and there is silence in the soul.”² Just imagine if Jesus were a selfish servant? What if He had said, “I created you creatures, now bow”?

REACT

1. Why is the gift of unselfish service important in your church?
2. How can we control our prideful human nature and become servants to all?

1. *Messages to Young People*, p. 230.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 162.

Don't Short-change Yourself

HOW-TO

Key Text: 1 Cor. 12:4-6

When we think of the people in the Bible (the good ones, that is), sometimes we picture them as willing to do anything at any time in any place for the Lord. Supervolunteers, superleaders, superpeople, they seem to be endowed with marvelous talents and spiritual gifts that fit right into the Lord's work. The fact that their stories are in the Bible seems to prove that they were not like us regular, everyday people. It is easy to think of these people as legends, whose faith and works are impossible for us to match.

In thinking like this, we not only shortchange ourselves, but we also underestimate the power of God. The people in the Bible were just like us. Because we don't believe we can ever measure up, we cheat ourselves of the confidence God has in us and the confidence He wants us to have in ourselves. We don't credit the Lord with the power to use our talents—however meager and hidden—in wonderful ways.

First Timothy 4:14, 1 Corinthians 12:4-6, and 2 Timothy 1:6 are just three texts in which God acknowledges our spiritual gifts and asks us to allow Him into our

It is easy to think of these people as legends, whose faith and works are impossible for us to match.

lives so He can use those talents. Matthew 28:19, 20, the gospel commission, is the center of our church's mission. What talents are needed to fulfill the challenge issued in this commission? Leadership, "fellowship" (yes, that takes talent), creativity, interpersonal skills, music, speech, organization—the list is endless.

Now we see that God not only asked us to use our talents, He has shown His confidence in our ability to use them. Here are some practical ways to help us gain and keep that confidence necessary to our using our spiritual gifts:

1. Start out small. Ask God to give you opportunities to use your spiritual gifts. Then, when a friend asks your advice on something, or you are asked to pray to close a meeting, or you see an invitation to join a choir, don't just dismiss the chance. Ask God to bless your efforts, and do it!

2. Maintain a spirit of willingness. First Chronicles 28:9 speaks of serving God with "wholehearted devotion and . . . a willing mind" (NIV). A willing spirit means you will be looking for opportunities to use those spiritual gifts, and they *will* come your way!

3. Encourage others. You are not the only one trying out new spiritual gifts. Others are just as new to this or have been working on this just as you are, and could use the encouragement. This will usually gain you encouragement in return.

By Leanne Johnson, senior business/prelaw major at Columbia Union College, Takoma Park, Maryland.

Use or Lose

OPINION

Key Texts: Matt. 25:24-30; 1 Cor. 12:4-12

I remember some of the group assignments in which I participated in school. After the group was chosen, we would gather together, and the work would be shared among us. Sections were mostly assigned (not always equally) according to one's perceived ability or specialty. Everyone's input was required, and everyone was considered important. Teamwork was also emphasized. Though we had different parts, we got the job done together.

We do not all possess the same gift, but our gifts are given to us by the same Spirit to aid us in our Christian assignment. Our assignment can be found in Matthew 28:19, 20 and Acts 1:8. We have different functions, but it is up to us to get the work done together. This assignment is for everyone. The work of the Lord is not a spectator sport; we don't merely stand on the sidelines and cheer others. We are the team. The names of some of the players are apostles, prophets, leaders, linguists, teachers, healers, friends—you and me.

Various spiritual gifts are listed in the lesson this week. These gifts are specific and are given to us so we can serve others. They are for the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, and the edifying of the body of Christ. They assist both

We leave the work to someone else whom we consider to be more experienced.

those in and those out of the church.

At times, we are tempted to believe that our efforts are too insignificant to make a difference, so we leave the work to someone else whom we consider to be more experienced. We must be careful when we do this. We do not want to end up like the servant who hid his talent in the ground. He was afraid to invest it. It is important for us to identify our talents. It is more important for us to use them. Remember that that slothful servant had his talent taken away from him, and he was severely reprimanded.

On the other hand, we must give God the glory when He shows us avenues in which to use our talents. We must not think that we are more special than others because we take part in what we consider to be the more important functions of the church. Our gifts should be used in humility.

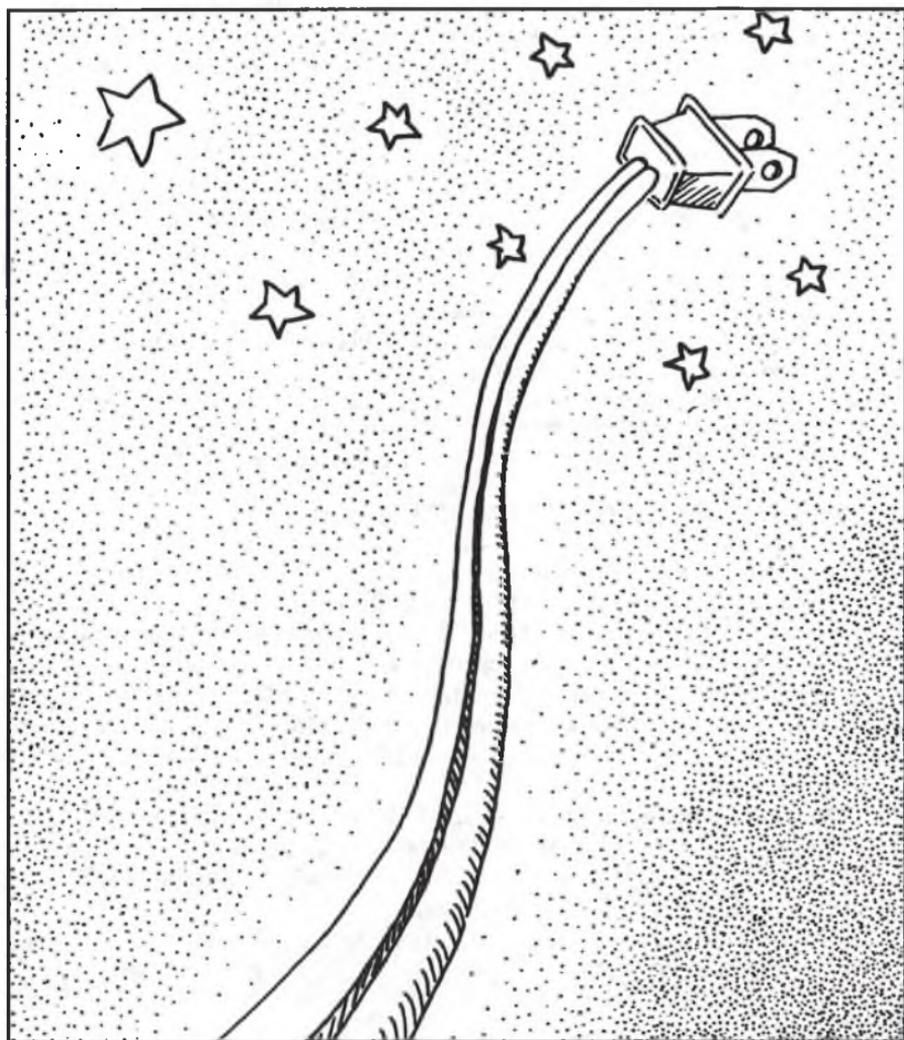
Let's rededicate our lives to the Lord and use the talents He has blessed us with to His name's honor and glory.

REACT

1. How should we approach someone who believes that he or she is not needed in church functions, since someone else is more experienced?
2. Is there a difference between spiritual gifts and natural abilities?

By Clem Hackett, a graduate accounting student at Howard University, Washington, D.C.

DIRECT CONNECTION TO THE SOURCE



“If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” (Luke 11:13, NIV).

The Holy Spirit and Effective Witnessing

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Matt. 28:19, 20

Scripture tells us we are to take part in the work of salvation. Matthew 28:19, 20 is a solemn call to go and teach. However, Jesus hastens to add: "Lo," an exhortation to pay attention, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (verse 20). Immediately we sense the interplay of human effort combined with God's power. In trying to assess the degree of interplay between the human and the divine in our witnessing endeavor, I recall a comment once made by J. Wharton. He said it isn't our task to be responsible for another's spirituality.

Christians may feel they are able to compel others to decide for Jesus by using skills learned in the classroom or from a 10-steps-of-persuasion manual. It is important to remember that as much as it is necessary to use our talents in complementing the work of God, conviction and conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit. For example, many may become teachers, yet few are bestowed with the spiritual gift that makes the real difference.

Success in our mission of drawing people to God depends on our willingness to yield our lives totally to the will of the Holy Spirit. We must therefore be willing

Prayer is the invitation for the Holy Spirit to come into our lives.

to commit our methods to God on a daily basis so the gift of the Holy Spirit may effectively work through us as we speak to those who are in need of the Saviour. This gift can be implanted only as we seek to know Jesus and consecrate our lives to Him in prayer. Prayer is the invitation for the Holy Spirit to come into our lives. Only those who dare to invite Him can be equipped with spiritual gifts.

Several years ago, when I first came into the church, I attempted to do witnessing on my own. Excited about my newly found belief, I wanted everyone to know of it and to accept it. I gladly forfeited friends and condemned others whose lives I felt were not in harmony with God. As a result of not being exposed to the gift of the Holy Spirit, I witnessed the loss of many friends. Others, who were taken in by my persuasion, slowly drifted away from the church. When we do understand that spiritual gifts are imparted to us, then we will have a better understanding of what it means to work with and witness for Jesus.

The solemn calling is still to go and teach. However, Jesus still hastens to add an exhortation to pay attention. Fellow laborers, I encourage you to listen to the Holy Spirit, not run ahead of Him.

By Jean Cader, a graduate student in history at London (England) University.

The Holy Spirit Is Yours

LOGOS

Acts 1:1-26; 2:1, 2; 13:2-4; Ps. 68:28-35; John 16

The Gift of the Holy Spirit is yours. He is the all-inclusive gift of God.

The book of Acts opens with an evangelistic explosion. Doctor Luke, who wrote and sent this marvelous account of the Holy Spirit's work to his friend Theophilus, makes it clear that the Holy Spirit launched, guided, and empowered the church of the apostles. Luke points out that the manifestation of the Holy Spirit is the Father's desire for His church (Acts 1:4, 8). The coming of the Holy Spirit with power was a promise made long before (Joel 2; Acts 2:1-4, 14-21). Without this gift the task of fulfilling the gospel commission would be impossible.

Whenever we speak of the gift of the Holy Spirit, we do not have in mind that phase of the Spirit's work that concerns the conversion of the messenger, but rather the empowering of the messenger. This special manifestation of the Holy Spirit enables the messenger to perform effectively, in harmony with the standards of heaven. At this performance level, Jesus becomes the focus of what is being conveyed to the listener. When I first became a Seventh-day Adventist, one of the first teachings that appealed to me was that one day the church will experience a double portion of Pentecost, the latter rain. Can you begin to imagine what such power would mean to our evangelistic effectiveness as a church?

Generally, it seems that we are still looking for a future manifestation of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Ellen White counsels: "The descent of the Holy Spirit upon the church is looked forward to as in the future; but it is the privilege of the church to have it now." Then she implores us to "seek for it, pray for it, believe for it." She adds, "We must have it, and Heaven is waiting to bestow it." Do we really believe that heaven is waiting to give this special gift to us right now?

Jesus says: "If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Luke 11:13, NIV). Here Jesus contrasts earthly parenting with the heavenly, stating that the heavenly Father, because of His total love for us, is more equipped to give us what we need.

Three basic elements constitute a gift: the giver, the gift, and the receiver. It is possible that the gift could be available for years and nobody claim it. In England millions of people lose out by not claiming Social Security benefits or tax due to them from the Inland Revenue. The problem is that many are not aware that they are entitled to these benefits, and some who are aware just cannot be bothered with all the paperwork. There is always some condition the receiver must fulfill before the gift is granted. The same is true with the Holy Spirit. For a group as diverse as the disciples, oneness in prayer was a prerequisite for the receipt of this essential gift, the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:14).

Function of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit equipped timid disciples with power, making them fearless witnesses (Acts 1:8), bold preachers (4:1-3), decision-makers to determine where the gospel should be preached at a given time (16:6-10), and instant linguists: "each one heard them speaking in his own language" (2:6, NIV).

Sometimes we get caught up in debates over whether the gift was the ability to speak earthly languages or indeed an unknown utterance. As far as Acts 2 is concerned, it was earthly languages that were used. But whether it was known or unknown languages, the essence of Acts 2 is: everyone heard the gospel in his own language. The Holy Spirit does not merely come with gifts from heaven; He comes with the correct gifts, the most effective gifts, to help the inhabitants of earth.

The Holy Spirit gives the bearer of the gospel message the ability to present Jesus in a personal way. This often creates interest: “Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language?” (verses 7, 8). The questions suggest that something supernatural had transpired. Galileans—common, everyday fishermen—waxed eloquent in unfamiliar languages? God is not interested in sending only a message. His desire is that His message is personal and relevant. He seeks nothing less than an intimate relationship with whomever will listen. Will you?

The Holy Spirit is heaven’s helper to whoever will go and be Jesus’ witness in

The book of Acts opens with an evangelistic explosion.

the church and the world. The promise is for you, just as it was for those believers on the day of Pentecost: “You will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off” (verses 38, 39). Let’s claim this gift today!

**Evangelism*, p. 701.

By Michael Simpson, a graduate student in pastoral ministry at Newbold College, Bracknell, Berkshire, England.

A Condition *Sine Qua Non*

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Matt. 5:6

“Only when the truth is accompanied to the heart by the Spirit will it quicken the conscience or transform the life. One might be able to present the letter of the Word of God. He might be familiar with all its commands and promises; but unless the Holy Spirit sets home the truth, no souls will fall on the Rock and be broken. No amount of education, no advantages, however great, can make one a channel of light without the co-operation of the Spirit of God. The sowing of the gospel seed will not be a success unless the seed is quickened into life by the dew of heaven. Before one book of the New Testament was written, before one gospel sermon had been preached after Christ’s ascension, the Holy Spirit came upon the praying apostles. Then the testimony of their enemies was, ‘Ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine.’ Acts 5:28.”¹

“There are many who believe and profess to claim the Lord’s promise; they

We cannot use the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is to use us.

talk *about* Christ and *about* the Holy Spirit, yet receive no benefit. They do not surrender the soul to be guided and controlled by the divine agencies. We cannot use the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is to use us. Through the Spirit, God works in His people ‘to will and to do of His good pleasure.’ Phil. 2:13. But many will not submit to this. They want to manage themselves. This is why they do not receive the heavenly gift. Only to those who wait humbly upon God, who watch for His guidance and grace, is the Spirit given. The power of God awaits their demand and reception. This promised blessing, claimed by faith, brings all other blessings in its train. It is given according to the riches of the grace of Christ, and He is ready to supply every soul according to the capacity to receive.”²

REACT

1. Identify some distinctive features of the results produced by the gift of the Spirit, and compare them with the results produced exclusively by human talents and efforts.

2. Explain the following quotation in your own words: “The sowing of the gospel seed will not be a success unless the seed is quickened into life by the dew of heaven.”³

1. *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 671, 672.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 672.

3. *Ibid.*

Counselor Supreme

EVIDENCE

Key Text: John 16:7, 33

“But I tell you the truth.” This is reassuring. There should be no doubt about what is said. “Unless I go away the Counselor will not come to you.” Ah, so that is what it is all about. The Counselor is good for me. Well, I am in a world where problems and trouble abound. I guess I need a counselor. But can He meet my needs?

In 1985 the British Association of Counseling adopted the following definition of counseling: “People become engaged in counseling when a person, occupying regular or temporarily the role of ‘counselor,’ offers or agrees explicitly to offer time, attention, and respect to another person or persons temporarily in the role of ‘client.’ The task of counseling is to give the client an opportunity to explore, discover and clarify ways of living more resourcefully and towards greater well-being.”

The human counselor offers time, attention, and respect on a *temporary* basis so clients may sort out their problems as they reenter the road of well-being. But each counselor is a specialist, using predominantly one method: psychoanalysis,

The heavenly Counselor will spend time with you and give you all the attention you need.

in which the emphasis is on the function of the unconscious; humanistic, in which the conscious experience is emphasized; or behavioral, in which the emphasis is on actual behavior.

A counselor majoring in any of these methods could be: anti-Christian, non-Christian, Christianized (uses the Bible but has no experience of conversion), secular, Christian, or integrated Christian (integrates best principles of psychology with those of Scripture). Which, if any, will the Counselor of John 16 be? He will speak the truth to all people. He is an expert in all fields. He will guide all willing people into all truth (verse 12). He will bring glory to God (verse 14).

The heavenly Counselor will spend time with you, give you all the attention you need, respect you with no reservations. He is both counselor and comforter. His service to you is a gift. Free. He confirms His long-term commitment to your eternal well-being when He says: “And surely [I am telling you the truth] I am with you always [His involvement is not temporary], to the very end of the age” (Matt. 28:20). No one human counselor can be all things to all people. The Holy Spirit is divine. He knows about all the troubles in the world and the difficulties you may be encountering. If we ask Him to be our counselor, He will guide you and me into all truth and give us peace of mind.

By Albert A. C. Waite, principal lecturer in science at Newbold College, Bracknell, Berkshire, England.

How Can I Be Sure?

HOW-TO

Key Text: 1 Cor. 12:7

Jesus left His disciples with the promise to send them a comforter, the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was not only to comfort the disciples but also to equip and empower them for service. A promise to the disciples is a promise to us. Does this mean that everyone has been given the gift of the Holy Spirit?

Amanda has a problem. She apparently has no special skills or gifts that she can positively identify. Yes, she is a Christian, yet it somehow seems that none of the gifts outlined in 1 Corinthians 12 has been given to her! Didn't Christ promise to give the Holy Spirit to His followers?

Many Christians seem to identify with Amanda. They doubt their potential to make major contributions to the life and work of the church. Giftlessness is often cited as the cause. Amanda's problem is a misunderstanding of what the Holy Spirit as a spiritual gift is about.

Christ has promised the gift of the Holy Spirit to every believer, yet He also advises believers to pray for this gift. To assume that the gift of the Holy Spirit is always overtly demonstrated is quite misleading. Each of us can react differently

Keep on asking for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

to the Holy Spirit yet still be effective in what we do.

Help, however, is at hand for those who share Amanda's experience. Apply the following principles, and watch for the results!

1. Recognize that your problem is not a lack of spiritual gifts, but a lack of *awareness* as to how the Holy Spirit has equipped you for service. Ask God to reveal to you the ways in which the Holy Spirit is best able to use you in His service.

2. Keep on asking for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The constant influence of the Holy Spirit will revive and energize you in your quest for spiritual growth, and your work within the church and community will deepen.

3. Believe that the Holy Spirit has given you gifts and talents that are essential to your well being, professional growth, and the positive influence of those with whom you come in contact. You can attest to the power of God in your music and your art. Your hospitality might be just what that visitor needs in order to believe that life is worth living after all.

4. Allow the Holy Spirit to work through you. Commit your affairs prayerfully day by day to His guidance, and watch for the results! Amanda will know she has gifts and that the Holy Spirit is in control of her life, for "The God of Israel gives power and strength to his people" (Ps. 68:35, NIV).

By Maxine Davis, a senior in biblical and pastoral studies at Newbold College, Bracknell, Berkshire, England.

Our Best Present

OPINION

Key Text: Acts 1:8

What is the best present you have ever received for your birthday or Christmas? Maybe it was a football or roller skates or a bike. I received my favorite present when I was only 3 years old. It was a teddy bear. I spent so many hours with that bear. I loved it so much that I never let it out of my sight. I was always dressing it or taking it for walks, and it always slept with me during the night. It was and still is a real friend.

You know, God has given us an even better present than a teddy bear. That present is the Holy Spirit. It is a free gift, if we just ask. In *The Acts of the Apostles*, Ellen White refers to the Holy Spirit as our "Comforter." The Holy Spirit provides the same sort of comfort that my teddy bear used to give me.

Having the Holy Spirit in our lives is not something that will happen automatically. We have to ask God to give Him to us. We have to agree to want the Holy Spirit in our lives. He might not come suddenly as He did for the disciples (Acts 2:1-4), but through a growing relationship with Jesus, we can have the comfort of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit provides the same sort of comfort that my teddy bear used to give me.

If we have the Holy Spirit in our lives, we can accomplish so much more. Just as our key text says, we will receive power. Take a look at the book of Acts. It is full of the work that the Holy Spirit accomplished in the early church. Many times the Holy Spirit was there healing people, like the beggar at the gate beautiful of the temple in Jerusalem. He made Peter understand a dream about unclean animals—that the good news about Jesus was for the Gentiles as well as the Jews. He was with the disciples whenever they were challenged about what they believed. If we were in as close a communion with the Holy Spirit as they were then, what an active and lively church we would have today.

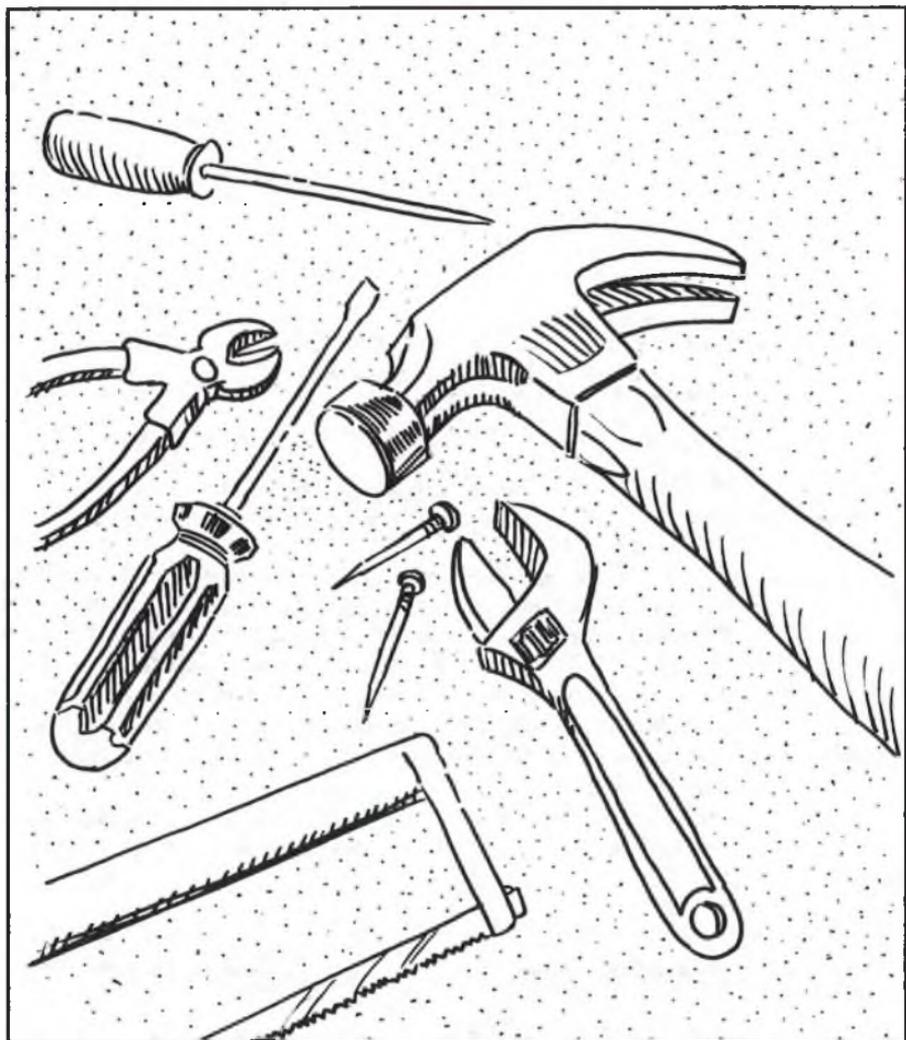
I challenge you to become receptive to the Holy Spirit so you can feel His presence in your life and experience His effectiveness in the lives of those around you.

REACT

1. How can you rearrange your schedule so the Holy Spirit can become your comforter?
2. Assess your talents, and see whether the Holy Spirit can use them for God, so we can have a more active and lively church today.
3. In what ways can the Holy Spirit help meet your everyday needs?

By Kaylene Eastwood, a senior accounting major at Newbold College, Bracknell, Berkshire, England.

OUR COLLECTIVE POTENTIAL



“The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body” (1 Cor. 12:12, 13, NIV).

The Rabbi's Gift

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: 1 Cor. 12:12, 13

As I was contemplating spiritual gifts and the church, I read a story that brought new meaning. I have adapted and condensed this story from the prologue of Scott Peck's book *The Different Drum*.

There once was a monastery that had fallen on bad times. Years of persecution and changing attitudes had just about finished it off. All that was left of a once-thriving monastic order were the abbot and four monks, all over 70.

In the woods surrounding the monastery was the hermitage of an old rabbi from a nearby town. One day as the abbot was agonizing over the demise of his order, he decided to visit the rabbi to see whether he might have some helpful advice. The old rabbi welcomed the abbot. He understood. Very few people attended his synagogue anymore. They talked and shared and wept together. As the abbot was leaving, the rabbi said, "I am sorry. I have no advice to give. The only thing I can tell you is that the messiah is one of you."

The abbot told the other monks about his visit and the words of the rabbi. Each of them wondered, "Who could be the messiah?" Could it be the abbot? Yes, probably. He has been our leader for a long time. Or, maybe brother Thomas. He

"The only thing I can tell you is that the messiah is one of you."

is a holy man. It would not be brother Elred. He is a thorn in the side, but he is always right. Certainly not brother Phillip, yet he is always there when you need him. It couldn't be me. I'm just an ordinary person. But what if it is?

As the monks considered one another's personal value, they began to treat one another with more respect. The monastery was occasionally visited by people looking for a place to pray or have a picnic. As the monks' respect for one another grew, visitors sensed the growing attitude of respect. They felt good. They invited friends to join them on their visits. Their friends invited other friends.

One day a young man who was visiting asked whether he could join the monks. Then others came, wanting to join. And in this way, the monastery became a thriving order again, thanks to the rabbi's comment.*

As the monks began to see the potential in one another and in themselves, they each became a messiah (saving their order from extinction). What might happen in the church when we begin to recognize our potential because of the spiritual gifts given to each of us by the Holy Spirit?

*M. Scott Peck, M.D., *The Different Drum* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987), pp. 13-15.

By David A. Parkhurst, pastor of the Arlington and Cedarhome (Washington) Seventh-day Adventist churches.

Tools for Evangelism

LOGOS

1 Kings 10; Exod. 18:13-27; Eze. 1; 1 Tim. 3; Eph. 4:1-16

My roommate's pastor-father came home late one evening from a smoking-cessation program to find the two of us huddled by an open window choking on our first (and last!) cigarette.

His careful, understanding handling of the situation (study 1 Timothy 3) has followed me through the years as a true example of love in action and Christianity beginning at home.

Cal knew Chuck as someone who pulled not-so-funny practical jokes on his co-workers and who could turn the air blue with his vocabulary. Chuck contracted cancer, and Cal's compassion and willingness to pray and share God's Living Word (Matt. 5:43-48) forever changed Chuck's life. Cancer won this battle, but God won the war for Chuck's heart.

Shelly and Sheri power-walk in the mornings. Shelly is a Christian of another denomination with questions about death, hell, the resurrection, and whether Christ's return (the rapture, as she puts it) is pre-, mid-, or post-tribulation.

Sheri, a Seventh-day Adventist Christian, looks forward to their walks and conversations, asking for wisdom from God that is "first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy" (James 3:17, NASB).

Gina has a hard time talking face to face with neighbors and friends, but she is eager to share the good news of salvation. One day she sees a program on Three Angels' Broadcasting Network by Irene from Needles, California. Irene relates an experience of her sister-in-law leaving Bible-study-enrollment cards on a table at the post office and praying, "Lord, let this bear fruit."

"I can do that!" Gina exclaims and sends for coded cards so that lessons will be sent to her for grading and encouraging remarks.

Mary, another shy and quiet person, finds fulfilling outreach in letter writing and sending cards to missing Sabbath School members.

Joe and Kathy drive home late at night from a church board meeting. Enthusiastic, animated conversation keeps sleepiness at bay. They are on the planning committee for a coming evangelistic crusade. Joe will help with the music, and Kathy will greet guests and keep records. Both will be on the visitation teams and are making mental lists of friends to invite.

Sara writes stories for *Our Little Friend*, *Primary Treasure*, and *Guide*. She is active in Vacation Bible School and Children's Story Hour. Sara enlists the young people in her church to help make sock puppets and produce the programs and skits.

The Jollys (and other Adventist Frontier families) have taken quite seriously Jesus' commission to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation" (Mark 16:15, NIV). At the time of this writing, they are returning to Mongolia after a furlough and the birth of their first child. In July 1995 the first baptized member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in that country is introduced at the General Conference session in Utrecht, The Netherlands.

All the people above have a strong spirit and a desire to share the gospel with

others. Each individual has allowed the Holy Spirit to use him or her in different ways to reach different people.

Who is more important? A wealthy, elderly gentleman, physically unable to work, who gives all the funds needed to build a church in an impoverished area. A penniless but strong, young building contractor who volunteers his time to build the structure.

What is more important to the body, the hands or the feet?

As the head of the church, Christ has commissioned each of us as His disciples to respond to the gifts of His Spirit in the church to instruct and encourage as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers to equip the church members for the work of service to build up the body of Christ, so that we become one in faith and continue to grow in knowledge of the Son of God. See Ephesians 4:11-13.

Remember to pray first and foremost (not just as a last resort) for God's work. Be a prayer warrior. Join the 6:15 Holy Spirit prayer watch, and see the difference in yourself, your family, and your church.

Give of your means. There are many areas to choose from. Ask God to direct your giving (besides tithe) to such needs as your local church, world missions, evangelism, ADRA, or sponsor a child through International Children's Care. Then pray each day for your financial project.

Give your time. Don't be afraid to meet and become acquainted with people

Gina has a hard time talking face to face with neighbors and friends.

in your community. Volunteer at a school, hospital, or other area of service.

In Old Testament times, God situated the Israelites at the crossroads of the world. Some succeeded (see 1 Kings 10), but most of Israel failed in their mission to the world to the point that it was Pilate who proclaimed to the world; "Jesus, King of the Jews," in three languages nailed to His cross.

Today, in our time, the marching orders are "Go." Read Matthew 28:19, 20; Luke 24:49, and Acts 1:5-8.

Whether you "go" down the hall of your own home to reach a brother or sister, mother or father, husband or wife, son or daughter, or "go" to the ends of the earth to areas never reached before with the gospel, is up to the Holy Spirit's gifts to you and how you respond to Jesus.

REACT

1. Is there someone who needs Jesus whom I may be overlooking with whom I come in contact every day?

2. Explain how each type of ministry can work more effectively for different individuals as they ask to be led by the Holy Spirit.

*All names have been changed except those of Irene and the Jollys.

By bonny Dee Parmele, a freelance writer from Darrington, Washington.

United We Stand

TESTIMONY

Key Text: 1 Cor. 12:4-12

“During His ministry, Jesus had kept constantly before the disciples the fact that they were to be one with Him in His work for the recovery of the world from the slavery of sin. . . . The last lesson He gave His followers was that they held in trust for the world the glad tidings of salvation.”¹

In the early church, “each was to make a wise use of the talents entrusted to him. Some were endowed by the Holy Spirit with special gifts—‘first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.” 1 Corinthians 12:28. But all these classes of workers were to labor in harmony.”²

“There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are varieties of service, but the same Lord. There are many forms of work, but all of them, in all men, are the work of the same God. In each of us the Spirit is manifested in one particular way, for some useful purpose. One man, through the Spirit, has the gift of wise speech, while another, by the power of the same Spirit, can put the deepest knowledge into words. Another, by the same Spirit, is granted faith; another, by the one Spirit, gifts of healing, and another miraculous powers; another has the gift

“‘God is not the author of confusion, but of peace.’”

of prophecy, and another ability to distinguish true spirits from false; yet another has the gift of ecstatic utterance of different kinds, and another the ability to interpret it. But all these gifts are the work of one and the same Spirit, distributing them separately to each individual at will. For Christ is like a single body with its many limbs and organs, which . . . together make up one body” (1 Cor. 12:4-12, NEB).

“‘God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.’ 1 Corinthians 14:33. He requires that order and system be observed in the conduct of church affairs today, no less than in the days of old. He desires His work to be carried forward with thoroughness and exactness, so that He may place upon it the seal of His approval. Christian is to be united with Christian, church with church, the human instrumentality cooperating with the divine, every agency subordinate to the Holy Spirit, and all combined in giving to the world the good tidings of the grace of God.”³

REACT

How are you using your spiritual gifts?

1. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 32.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 92.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 96.

By Renee Stanger, a cosmetologist from Marysville, Washington.

A Well-Oiled Church

EVIDENCE

Key Text: John 16:33

Abuse! No doubt about it. All the signs were there. Any professional diagnosis would confirm that fact. The ugly buildup of oil sludge in the valve cover and the worn components were evidence an engine had been neglected. Only 60,000 miles and already the top end of the engine was being replaced. Only a week earlier, I had checked the valves on a well-maintained Volvo engine that had gone 230,000 miles, and the parts were like new.

A car's engine is an assortment of parts assembled to move in harmony to produce horsepower. When even one part does not function properly . . .

As a farm kid in Australia, I once pulled the distributor from the engine of an old Holden. Having cleaned it, I ignorantly spun the shaft before replacing it. Almost an hour later, after trying numerous positions for the cots, the engine purred once again, although this time at a much-increased decibel level. The incorrect timing of the engine had caused it to backfire, and the exhaust had disintegrated. Experience can sometimes be an expensive teacher!

Someone once differentiated between experience and wisdom in the follow-

The ugly buildup of sludge in the valve cover was evidence an engine had been neglected.

ing way: Experience is learning by doing; whereas, wisdom is learning from the mistakes of others.

Hanging on the wall of a garage, above the mechanic's workbench, was an oil pan with a hole in the side about three inches in diameter: a nonconforming connecting rod had taken a detour. The bold-lettered sign below read: "We recommend you change your oil every 3,000 miles."

It has been said that when testing a new Rolls Royce engine, the mechanics would take a penny and balance it on its edge atop the radiator cap. If the engine vibrated sufficiently to cause it to fall, more tuning and adjustments were necessary.

Sometimes "The Mechanic" needs to disassemble the whole engine to work on individual components. At other times a tuneup is required. Often a simple cleaning or additional fluids will put the engine back in good working order.

Start each day with the prayer "Tune me, Lord. Give me the power of the Holy Spirit today."

REACT

1. Are you willing to allow "The Master Mechanic" to fine tune you individually and also as a part of the body of Christ? This will require change!
2. What adjustments (changes) does He need to make in you to help the church be more effective, personal, friendly, and evangelistic?

By David Rowe, an educator from Marysville, Washington.

What's My Gift?

HOW-TO

Key Text: James 1:5

Before Jesus left the earth, He counseled His disciples to remain in Jerusalem and “wait for the promise of the Father” (Acts 1:4). “And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room. . . . These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication” (verses 13, 14). Read Acts 2:1-18. If we are sincere in our prayers, truly seeking God’s will, asking Him for the Holy Spirit, He will surely keep His promise (James 1:5). When the disciples prayed for the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, there was such an outpouring of the Spirit that “there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41).

Some feel, because they do not have the gift of music, teaching, or preaching, that they do not have a gift. “Since the Spirit distributes the gifts according as He sees fit, no gift is to be despised or belittled. No member of the church has a right to arrogance because of a particular appointment or function, nor should anyone feel inferior because of an assignment to a humble position.”¹

When my friend was baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church, she

No member of the church has a right to arrogance because of a particular appointment or function.

wanted to do something for the Lord. After looking around at the different offices of the church, she felt as if she had very little to offer. Being shy, she wouldn’t get up front, even before a small group. In fact, it made her feel sick thinking about it. She eventually helped out in the cradle-roll class, but felt that there must be more she could do. A few years ago, she was asked to serve with me in Community Services. She found that she loved talking to the people who came for help, and they loved her. She also enjoyed doing all the client cards, the quarterly reports to the conference, and the miscellaneous secretarial jobs—jobs that I have no gift for. She has found a gift and invested it in the Lord. She has been a great blessing to all of us in Community Services and her church, and I know the Lord has greatly blessed her.

“Spiritual gifts are not rewards for a job well done, they are tools to do the job well.”²

REACT

1. Since God gives these gifts to build up His church, how may we expect confirmation of *our* gift?
2. What must we do to make sure that our gift is used for the glory of God and not for ourselves?

1. *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .*, p. 208.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 212.

By Diane Lester Ball, the owner of a carpet-cleaning service in Arlington, Washington.

Don't Hide Your Gifts in Your Closet

OPINION

Key Text: Matt. 25:15, 25

From time to time I see what appears to me to be a need in my local church, something that isn't being done or an opportunity that may be missed. You can probably think of one or two things in your church that need some attention. Local-church leaders try to match the needs they are aware of with those who seem to have what the task requires. Try not to be too shocked when the pastor, church board, or nominating committee comes to you with the message "We would like you to . . ." adding, "We have prayed about it and believe you would do a good job."

When that happens to me, my mind immediately starts proliferating reasons that someone else should take on this responsibility. It has happened more than once. Perhaps it has happened to you, as well. What do you do when your church asks you to help in a new capacity?

Our Father in heaven is really into gift-giving. He is always eager to give His children whatever is best for them. Jesus told a parable about a man who gave money to his servants. He gave "to each according to his ability" (Matt. 25:15, RSV). We must not respond as the slothful servant did. Even though the servant

Our Father in heaven is really into gift-giving.

had sufficient ability, he was afraid. He doubted his master's confidence. The servant was condemned because he had not used what had been entrusted to him. "Appropriate duties are assigned by Heaven to each member of the church on earth, and all are to find their happiness in the happiness of those whom they help and bless."

I challenge you to use the gifts God has already given you. Cheerfully accept and use any new gifts the Lord would like to give to you. Perhaps the Lord has made you aware of a need in your church because He wants *you* to fill that need. The storehouse of heaven can supply whatever gifts you may need "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God" (Eph. 4:12, 13).

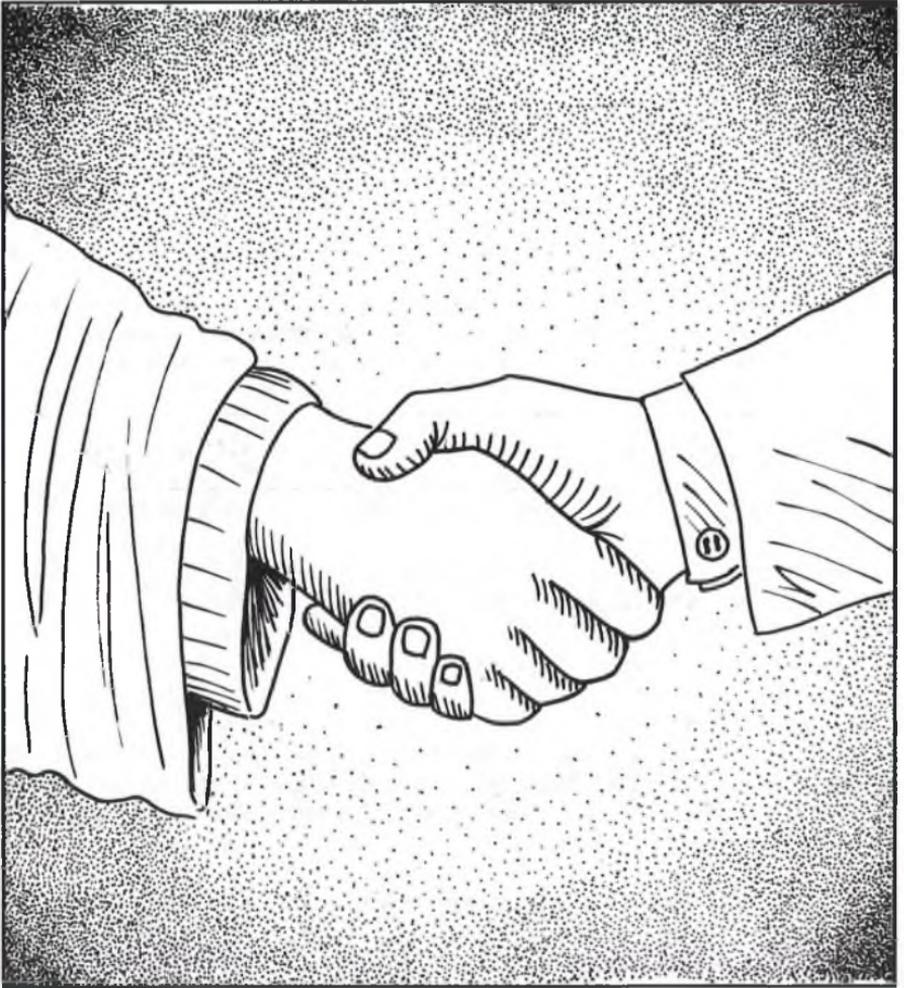
REACT

1. Why was the slothful servant afraid to use the ability his master saw in him?
2. What will happen to our church if we choose to neglect to recognize, develop, or exercise our gifts?
3. What gift is absolutely the most important gift to our church? (Read 1 Corinthians 13.)

**Our High Calling, p. 164.*

By Herb Hainey, a consultant engineer living in Arlington, Washington.

THEN AND NOW



“And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions” (Joel 2:28, NIV).

The Diversity of Gifts

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: 1 Cor. 12:4-6

“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men” (1 Cor. 12:4-6, NIV).

“In all the Lord’s arrangements, there is nothing more beautiful than His plan of giving to men and women a diversity of gifts. The church is His garden, adorned with a variety of trees, plants, and flowers. He does not expect the hyssop to assume the proportions of the cedar, nor the olive to reach the height of the stately palm. Many have received but a limited religious and intellectual training, but God has a work for this class to do if they will labor in humility, trusting in Him.”¹

One individual may have the gift of public speaking; another the gift of song; another may have the gift of sincere and fervent prayer; another the gift of hospitality; and yet another the gift of listening. And each gift is to be used as a tool in God’s hands, to be used to reflect the fullness of God. Gifts given to us by God are of great value, now more than ever. God has chosen a work for us to do, and as we

The church is . . . [the Lord’s] garden, adorned with a variety of trees, plants, and flowers.

accept our chosen place and work together, the world will know that we are His disciples.

“God has different ways of working, and He has different workmen to whom He entrusts varied gifts.”²

Let us not selfishly take these gifts and give nothing in return to the Lord, but let us partake in self-denial and invest our talents for the good of others. With proper use of our gifts, we can each aid in the furthering of God’s work. In doing so, we acknowledge our God, the Giver of gifts, and bring glory and honor to His name.

1. *Evangelism*, pp. 98, 99.

2. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 144.

By Margo Caswell, senior social-work major, Atlantic Union College, South Lancaster, Massachusetts.

All the Gifts—All the Time—All God's People

LOGOS

Joel 2:28-32; 1 Cor. 1:6, 7; 1 Thess. 5:19-21; Matt. 24:24

"And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions" (Joel 2:28, NIV).

From its inception, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has accepted the view that spiritual gifts are functional in any age. Since 1980, we have included in Fundamental Belief No. 16 all the spiritual gifts as applicable to the life of the church today. But Adventists question the authenticity of some gifts in contemporary denominations, especially speaking in tongues and faith healing.

What are the biblical texts that support our denomination's teaching on spiritual gifts? What are the scriptural counsels regarding spiritual gifts and their value in today's context?

Joel 2:28-32

These gifts were to be given "afterward," that is, *after* the physical blessings mentioned in the preceding verses. The image of pouring out leads to the metaphors of the early and latter rain and harvest images. Joel quotes God here as promising the fulfillment of Moses' prayer/wish (Num. 11:29) that all the Lord's people might be prophets by the influence of the Spirit. Joel's reference to "all people" (or "all flesh") modified as it is by the following possessives, "your sons and your daughters," shows that it means all Israel.

"Previously, the spirit of prophecy had been limited to a chosen few, but under this new dispensation God's revelation will come to both male and female, to both old and young, and even to the servant class." Peter's use of Joel's prophecy in his Pentecostal sermon goes an important step further, extending this promise of the Spirit even to non-Israelite believers (Acts 2:39). That Gentile believers could receive God's spiritual gifts in like measure to Jewish Christians was a lesson that Peter—and his fellow believers—were slow to learn; it took Peter additional revelation and the striking experience with Cornelius before he could grasp the broad scope of God's gift-giving (Acts 10 and 11).

It is also clear that the final fulfillment of these verses in Joel reaches to a time clearly beyond Peter's application to the first century. Although Peter quoted verses 30 and 31, he made no application of them to his day. These heavenly portents are harbingers of judgment not only in the Old Testament but also in the New (Mark 13:24; Rev. 6:12), and "before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord" reminds us of Malachi's (4:5) predictions of what eventually developed into New Testament eschatology (see also Mark 13:7, 8).

Peter did quote the final phrase from Joel: "Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:21, NRSV). Peter used Joel here as an appeal for faith and spiritual salvation. Paul used Joel's phrase in Romans 10:13, where he applied the faith salvation principle to all people in all ages, even though Joel's outlook limited the promise to Israelites on the day of the Lord. So we see Peter (and Paul, too,) interpreting Old Testament Scripture under the influence of the Spirit to broaden and enlarge upon God's Old Testament promise, an enlarge-

ment that includes within its bounds all those who respond to the gospel's call, whether literal or spiritual Israel.

1 Corinthians 1:6, 7

While Paul in this letter will eventually criticize this new group of believers in Corinth for their boasted knowledge (1:18–2:5; 8:1-3) and their speaking in tongues (chapters 12–14), for the time being, Paul clearly admits that they “do not lack any spiritual gift” (1 Cor. 1:7, NIV). These gifts had served to confirm the testimony of Christ in their lives. But, notice that Paul adds the phrase “as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.” He clearly intends to enlarge the teaching about spiritual gifts beyond their use simply as confirmation of conversion and reception of the Holy Spirit.

1 Thessalonians 5:19-21

By the time Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, such caution had crept into the evaluation of spiritual gifts that Paul offers injunctions intended to open up hearts and minds to the continuing value and usefulness of all the gifts. The time had clearly not yet come that some or all of the gifts were no longer needed. Admonished to “quench not the Spirit” (verse 19, KJV), believers must have been drawn back to the scene of Pentecost's tongues of fire. Believers were to “test everything.”

See also the 1 Thessalonians 2:2 caution against being misled by a spirit of a

The final fulfillment of these verses in Joel reaches to a time clearly beyond the first century.

prophet; and in 1 Corinthians 12:10, notice how the gift of “prophecy” and “discerning of spirits” (KJV) are placed together, as are the gifts of speaking in tongues with the “interpretation of tongues” (cf. also 1 John 4:10). Once believers have tested and proved all spiritual gifts, they are to “hold on to the good” (1 Thess. 5:21, NIV; cf. Phil. 1:9, 10; “discern what is best”).

Matthew 24:24

Adventist emphasis on this text has led many to be in need of Paul's admonition to the Thessalonians as noted above. For although this text sounds a cautionary tone—every crisis breeds counterfeit leaders—it is by implication a breathtaking testimony to Jesus' securing power to save. “If it were possible” (verse 24, KJV) boldly proclaims that Christ's sure salvation cannot be shaken even by great signs or wonders. Matthew here returns to this theme of verse 5: false Christs will come and deceive many. Three such false messiahs are noted in Acts: Theudas (5:36), Judas of Galilee (5:37), and “the Egyptian” (21:38).

But Matthew clearly speaks to our era, as well; this warning is not just for ancient history. Many a modern movement has tried to steal the Christian name. But no false messiah/Christ can bring forth the fruits of the Spirit's giving.

* *The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 6, p. 752.

By Richard Trott, chaplain at Atlantic Union College, South Lancaster, Massachusetts.

Resting in Christ

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Ps. 37:7

After a lightning-quick devotional during which your mind raced ahead to the day's events, you jump into your car. You press the accelerator to the floor; you can't afford to be late again. At the busiest intersection in town, someone pulls out in front of you who thinks the speed limit is 5 m.p.h. And you scream out in frustration, "@#\$\$%!"

A flood of guilt comes washing over you. Of course you've given your heart to Christ. You're supposed to be a new creature now. You frown as once again you question the sincerity of your conversion. Since you were a child you've heard, "By their fruits ye shall know them." How can you possibly be a child of God, a new creature, when nothing about you is Christlike? How can you be sure a transformation is taking place when none of the gifts of the Spirit is present in your life?

"Many have an idea that they must do some part of the work alone. They have trusted in Christ for forgiveness of sin, but now they seek by their own efforts to live aright. But every such effort must fail. . . . Our growth in grace, our joy, our usefulness—all depend upon our union with Christ. It is by communion with Him,

Someone pulls out in front of you who thinks the speed limit is 5 m.p.h.

daily, hourly—by abiding in Him—that we are to grow in grace. He is not only the author, but the finisher of our faith. It is Christ first and last and always."*

Do not examine your life looking for evidence of new gifts that will prove the quality of your relationship with Jesus. Do not screw your eyes shut and try to reach deep within you to find some hidden treasure that you can produce before the Lord. Yes, I know you wish to please Him, to give Him only the best. But He doesn't ask only for the best: He asks for it *all*.

Place yourself each morning at His feet. All of you. Your bad temper, your impatience, your lack of love, your lack of spiritual gifts.

"Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him" (Ps. 37:7). His clock runs differently from ours, and He sees more than our sinful eyes can even imagine. Rest in the Lord. He will bring forth fruit in abundance when you are ready. But you must learn the meaning of resting in Him.

REACT

1. How can you abide in Christ?
2. In practical, everyday terms, what is meant by the expression "Rest in the Lord" (Ps. 37:7)?

**Steps to Christ*, p. 69.

By Cecilia Leger, a senior English major at Atlantic Union College, South Lancaster, Massachusetts.

Of All Shapes and Sizes

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Joel 2:29

An inner-city kindergartner sees kids around her fight, curse, and bring things to school only grownups should have. She is saddened and begins to tell her friends about the wonderful things Jesus has done for her. Spiritual gifts come to people of all shapes and sizes, young or old, short or tall. This latter-day outpouring of the Spirit is a testimony of God's power and love for His people.

On the day of Pentecost, Peter spoke to the crowd: "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy" (Acts 2:17, 18, NIV). The day of the Lord will be accompanied by an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on young and old alike, showing "wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below" (verse 19).

An outpouring of the Holy Spirit expected to happen at the end times was happening *right then!* As Ellen White points out, "The baptism of the Holy Ghost as

Spiritual gifts come to people of all shapes and sizes, young or old, short or tall.

on the day of Pentecost will lead to a revival of true religion and to the performance of many wonderful works."¹ It can happen *right now* too!

Today, we need the outpouring of spiritual gifts. The Word of God gives us a way to evaluate these gifts: "To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn" (Isa. 8:20, NIV).

Since 1980, the church has included in No. 16 of the "fundamental beliefs" all the spiritual gifts: "When members employ these spiritual gifts as faithful stewards of God's varied grace, the church is protected from the destructive influence of false doctrine, grows with a growth that is from God, and is built up in faith and love."²

These spiritual gifts are the final steps in the completion of God's grace on our souls, for we are to be transformed into the likeness of our Saviour Jesus Christ. These gifts represent more than just the end times; they represent Christ's undeniable love and understanding, which He gives us.

REACT

Why do some people reject the spiritual gifts of God when they are supposed to be a blessing?

1. *Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 57.

2. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*, 1995, p. 7.

By Jaslin L. Cruz, a senior business-administration major at Atlantic Union College, South Lancaster, Massachusetts.

“Test Everything”

HOW-TO

Key Text: 1 Thess. 5:19-21

The same God who imparted spiritual gifts to His early church is willing and waiting to do the same with His remnant people today. He never changes; the same gifts given to the early church are available today. The body of believers should never doubt the power and the mystery in which God works. Nothing is more beautiful than the power of the Holy Spirit working in the heart of a willing soul.

In 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 we can read about the diversity of gifts given to the body of Christ. As Seventh-day Adventists, we tend to feel more comfortable with certain spiritual gifts than others. For example, the gifts of wisdom, knowledge, and faith (verses 8-10) are gifts approved by the laity, but the gifts of miracles, healings, and tongues make many feel uneasy. Many television miracle workers and healers have been exposed as frauds. And a growing number of denominations are speaking in unknown tongues and claiming this as proof of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The good news is that God’s work will not be hindered by practices abused by those who are deceived and those who deceive. God has given His church spiritual gifts for the upbuilding of His body.

The Bible says, “Nothing is impossible with God” (Luke 1:37, NIV). Will not

Has God retired from the miraculous? Does He not still heal the sick?

God pour out the gift of tongues to a missionary in a foreign field as He did to the disciples on the day of Pentecost? Has God retired from the miraculous? Does He not still heal the sick? Will He not give His Spirit to those who obey Him? (Acts 5:32).

More important, are we willing to respond to the manifestation of God’s Spirit in our daily lives? Have we ever shrunk from allowing the Holy Spirit to use us? Maybe we were too frightened to teach the Sabbath School class or we passed up the opportunity to work with the homeless or elderly. We *must* remember that God’s promises are sure. He never forgets His children who love Him.

We must keep the fire for God burning in our hearts. The joy and passion to serve the One who died for us is the most exhilarating and pleasurable experience known. “Do not put out the Spirit’s fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good” (1 Thess. 5:19-21).

REACT

1. How would you react to another Christian who professes the gift of tongues?
2. Are the spiritual gifts being practiced in our churches? If not, what can we do?

By Daniel Sierra, junior theology major at Atlantic Union College, South Lancaster, Massachusetts.

Hierarchical Gifts?

OPINION

Key Text: Joel 2:28

I have always wondered about spiritual gifts and their implications for our church. For instance, in the early Christian church, the manifestation of the Holy Spirit was evident, because of the many spiritual gifts, for example, speaking in tongues.

Doesn't this pose a sort of twofold problem? First, throughout the ages speaking in tongues has remained as a sort of troublesome gift. Second, the manifestation of the Holy Spirit was evident through spiritual gifts such as speaking in tongues. Speaking in tongues in the Bible is a tangible and visible indicator of the presence of the Holy Spirit. The implications of this become more relevant when we take it to its conclusion. Are gifts really attributable to God?

These two questions have distracted much of Christendom for centuries. Many attempt to spur on an outpouring of the Holy Spirit through their interpretation of speaking in tongues. Many gifts or talents evident among the Christian body of believers are overlooked and even ignored because of their lack of sensational value in comparison to other gifts. The argument is not whether to give recognition to the person possessing certain gifts, but to refrain from neglecting

Throughout the ages speaking in tongues has remained as a sort of troublesome gift.

other gifts. It is my conviction that the church's responsibility is actively to nurture these spiritual gifts. I believe these issues are real and relevant as our time soon approaches the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. We are in a period for the responsible management of spiritual gifts.

REACT

1. Why have Adventists been uncomfortable with the gifts of speaking in tongues and faith healing?
2. How can someone know whether such gifts are authentic?
3. What should you say to someone who, you believe, is practicing a gift that is not authentic?

By Edward Guzman, senior religion major at Atlantic Union College, South Lancaster, Massachusetts.

THE UNIVERSAL GIFT



“And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor. 13:13, NIV).

More Than an Act of Kindness

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: 1 Cor. 13:1-3

Emma, my mother-in-law, stood at the door of our office. For three days she had been wearing the same ugly dress. She had washed it so often that the color had turned gray. Right on the front there was a big patch.

I wanted to hide myself, imagining what our employees would think of her. The problem had begun three months before, when Bill and I returned from our honeymoon. Emma, his mother, was on the phone all day. She called in the morning, and she continued to call into the night. She did not give up before wishing Bill a good night.

We had tried to make the most of our activities together with Emma: shopping, worship, etc. Of course, it wasn't fun to have her always close by. But we were kind to her and did our best to make her feel content.

We desperately looked for something to occupy her with—a constructive hobby or to get her in contact with people. But it was all in vain, until a part-time job became available in our office. Emma was interested, and our prayers were

I wanted to hide myself, imagining what our employees would think of her.

answered. But there was still this ugly dress! This nearly killed me at my work. Till now I had enjoyed my job. I asked God: "Why did You allow this to happen?" The following night I could not sleep. I prayed: "Oh, God, I know You want us to love one another. But I can't love Emma." I felt helpless.

Suddenly it was as though I was hearing a voice: "Why do you not let Me love her through you?"

"Lord, please love Emma through me!" I said. "What shall I do first?"

"Why not pay her an honest compliment?"

Unfortunately, I didn't know what to say. I was fully aware that I hated her. "God, forgive me!" I prayed. Emma's ugly dress was nothing compared to my ugly mind. At last I had an idea. "Emma, you type very well. Your work is so neat and correct."

Emma looked at me, and it seemed she could hardly believe me. Her open smile was like a warm shower to my heart. Over the months I had done many good things for her, but there was no love! In the following days, God multiplied my honest compliments, and, strange as it may seem, Emma changed for the better. Had I learned to love her? Yes. Before the end of the first week I went to her, embraced her, and said: "Emma, I like you." That was the last time I saw her wearing the ugly dress.*

*Condensed from *Adventecho*, No. 4/Feb. 1981.

By Olaf Schröer, pastor of the Luedenschedi (Germany) Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Never Forget Love

LOGOS

1 Cor. 13; Gal. 5:22, 23; 2 Pet. 1:3-11

The Most Important: Love! (1 Corinthians 13)

“And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor. 13:13, NIV).

What you can do is not as important as what you are through love. You may be an impressive speaker, you may be very learned, you may have great abilities, but you still may be without love. Of what use are loveless people? What is the benefit of loveless spiritual gifts?

What, then, is love? How does love present itself? In 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, Paul describes it: love forms the character and leads to a harmonious personality. Love consists of many positive attributes: love can wait, love opens toward the other person, love wants to forgive, love shuns evil, love is sincere. Love does not need to show off, love invests trust, love is willing to suffer, if necessary. Love is like God. First Corinthians 13 is a glance into the heart of God. He unites all these qualities perfectly. That’s why He dared the utmost—He suffered everything and went to the cross. God lived love through Jesus.

Love never fails, because God is eternal, and love comes from Him. Prophecy and the gift of tongues are not needed in God’s new world, but love will not lose its significance, even in eternity (1 Cor. 13:8-10).

The Source of Love: the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23)

“The Spirit produces love” (Gal. 5:22, TEV).

Christian love is not the fruit of human endeavor, but the effect of the divine Spirit. Please note that Paul does not speak about the work of the Spirit, but about the fruit. Fruit grows from a living connection with the tree. Only through close connection with God can sincere fruit of the Spirit grow within us. It is our task to maintain our relationship with Jesus. It is the task of the Spirit to let the fruit grow in us. We will become as He is by beholding Him and reflecting on Him.

In his list of the fruits of the spirit, Paul places love first. All further attributes are in close connection with love. The Spirit of God wants us, first of all, to be loving Christians. Loving Christians develop balanced and positive character traits such as joy, peace, patience . . .

“Love is the fulfillment of the law” (Rom. 13:10, NIV). Love lives responsibly. If we love God, we are not rebellious against Him, but obedient. God’s law condemns lovelessness against God and humanity. The Spirit of God enables us to love God and other human beings. Only the loving can truly be obedient.

The Consequence of Love: Effectiveness (2 Pet. 1:3-11)

“The more you go on in this way, the more you will grow strong spiritually and become fruitful and useful to our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 1:8, TLB).

God has already prepared the unfolding of our character and our ability to love. The key for such a Spirit-filled, loving Christianity is a deeper understanding of Jesus (2 Pet. 1:3). “The word here used for ‘knowledge’ (*epignosis*) is more

emphatic than the simple noun form (*gnosis*), and implies a fuller, more perfect knowledge that comes from contemplation of the object studied.”*

All the virtues listed by Paul grow simultaneously in communion with Jesus and find their climax in love to all human beings (2 Pet. 1:7). Through prayer we may claim this character development, which produces practical results: no longer will our lives and service be “ineffective or unfruitful” (verse 8, RSV). The effectiveness of our spiritual gifts is dependent on how love determines our personal

In his list of the fruits of the spirit, Paul places love first.

lives and the life of the church. A loving character fosters unity and effectiveness; it draws people into the church.

“And whatever you do, do it with kindness and love” (1 Cor. 16:14, TLB).

REACT

1. How can our capacity to love grow?
2. In what relationship are spiritual gifts and love?

**The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 596.

Love Transforms Life

TESTIMONY

Key Text: 1 Cor. 13:4-8

“In the contemplation of Christ we linger on the shore of a love that is measureless. We endeavor to tell of this love, and language fails us. We consider His life on earth, His sacrifice for us, His work in heaven as our advocate, and the mansions He is preparing for those who love Him; and we can only exclaim, O the height and depth of the love of Christ! ‘Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.’ ‘Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God’ (1 John 4:10; 3:1). . . .

“It was on the earth that the love of God was revealed through Christ. It is on the earth that His children are to reflect this love through blameless lives. Thus sinners will be led to the cross to behold the Lamb of God.”¹

“A new commandment I give unto you,” Christ said, “That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another” (John 13:34). Those who have never experienced the tender, winning love of Christ cannot lead others to the fountain of life. His love in the heart is a constraining power, which leads men to reveal Him in the conversation, in the tender, pitiful spirit, in the uplifting of

Love is not an impulse, but a divine principle, a permanent power.

the lives of those with whom they associate. Christian workers who succeed in their efforts must know Christ; and in order to know Him, they must know His love. In heaven their fitness as workers is measured by their ability to love as Christ loved and to work as He worked.

“Let us not love in word,’ the apostle writes, ‘but in deed and in truth.’ The completeness of Christian character is attained when the impulse to help and bless others springs constantly from within. It is the atmosphere of this love surrounding the soul of the believer that makes him a savor of life unto life and enables God to bless his work. Supreme love for God and unselfish love for one another—this is the best gift that our heavenly Father can bestow. This love is not an impulse, but a divine principle, a permanent power. The unconsecrated heart cannot originate or produce it. Only in the heart where Jesus reigns is it found. ‘We love him, because he first loved us.’ In the heart renewed by divine grace, love is the ruling principle of action. It modifies the character, governs the impulses, controls the passions, and ennobles the affections. This love, cherished in the soul, sweetens the life, and sheds a refining influence on all around.”²

1. *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 333, 334.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 550, 551.

By Stephan G. Brass, pastor of the Nordhorn and Osnabrueck (Germany) Seventh-day Adventist Churches.

Eros or Agape?

EVIDENCE

Key Text: 1 Cor. 13:13

Love is such a common word. People usually identify it with sex. Such a love you can nowadays even buy. But the love you can buy is not the love of which the Bible speaks. The Greek word *eros* is unknown to the New Testament, which uses *agape* for love, a word absent in classical Greek.¹ Christianity gave *agape* a meaning that is totally different from *eros*. *Eros* says: "I love you as long as you are young and attractive." *Agape* says: "I love you because we have a commitment to one another."² *Eros* desires and demands an object. *Agape* is determined by a subject.³ *Agape* is not just a feeling, but a principle of life. Therefore *agape* is not an inherited basic instinct. The *agape*-revolution comes from above and not from ourselves. In front of the many zeros of our inability to produce *agape* has to be placed the big 1 of God's gift.⁴

You may ask yourself. "Is this kind of love present in my church? in my life? Paul says: "If I . . . have not love, I am nothing" (1 Cor. 13:2, NIV).

Some may say, "Faith is the hallmark of genuine discipline." *Sola fide*, by faith alone, the watchword of the Reformation. Nevertheless, "If I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing" (verse 2). The Architect of

The love you can buy is not the love of which the Bible speaks.

faith says that love is even greater. Others emphasize religious experience. A personal relationship with God is essential. Nevertheless, "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels," and "if I have the gift of prophecy . . . but have not love, I am nothing" (verses 1-3). Love is greater than experience. Yet others emphasize service. Without good works faith is dead. Nevertheless, "If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing" (verse 3).

Knowledge, faith, religious experience, and service are essential, but Paul says that love is greater: "These three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love" (verse 13).

REACT

1. Why is it so difficult to practice *agape*?
2. How can we improve it?

1. G. Kittel, ed., *Theologisches Wurterbuch zum NT*, vol. 1 (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1990), p. 37.

2. H. Heinz, *Leben aus der Zukunft* (Hamburg: Saatkorn Verlag, 1989), p. 46.

3. G. Kittel, p. 37.

4. H. Heinz, p. 53.

By Erhard Gallos, pastor of the Lengerich (Germany) Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Love Is the Fruit of the Spirit

HOW-TO

Key Text: Gal. 5:22, 23

We can't do anything to produce love. Love is the fruit of the Spirit. It is a gift.

What does this mean? Is love not this romantic feeling one gets when he or she meets someone who ignites that fire within the heart? There are so many people who adore one another without the Holy Spirit. Don't they know about love? What is the difference? How do we receive this gift?

The apostle John writes in his letter, that God is love. If we want to know what love is, we have to know God. Someone who doesn't know God personally, does not know what love is.

Yes, there are romantic feelings, but that is not love. Read 1 Corinthians 13 earnestly, and you will discover that sentimentality, amorous feelings, and best intentions do not fit into it. Only the gift that comes from above does so. Jesus Christ has shown us what it means to love. With His sacrifices He demonstrated that God is love.

What should I do to receive love?

1. Pray. Spend time with God. Communicate with Him through prayer. Tell Him your problems and your joys. Ask Him to give you the right understanding. Listen to Him. Don't run away. Give Him time to talk to you.

Someone who doesn't know God personally, does not know what love is.

2. Open yourself to the work of the Spirit. He is God. He wants to work in your life, to transform you through love. He gives you the gift and helps it to grow. Only with that growing gift can we be part of the family of God. God the Father is love (John 3:16; 1 John 4:16). Jesus Christ is love (John 13:1). The Holy Spirit is love (Rom. 15:30). Therefore, God's children are love. Jesus told His followers that love is the sign that they are His disciples (John 13:34, 35). To open yourself to the work of the Spirit is to open yourself to a friend. Spend time with Him. Study the Bible to deepen your understanding of Him and His work, and let Him do His job.

3. Develop your love through your church. "Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds" (Heb. 10:24, NIV). That's it. Together as a church family we should help one another to grow in love. Explore the Bible together to find out who the Spirit is and how He wants to work in and through your church. Discover under His guidance what love is all about. Pray together that God may uncover the gift of the Spirit in each member of your church family. Practice it together by patiently accepting, caring for, and forgiving one another.

By Dragutin Lipohar, pastor of the Uelzen (Germany) Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Love Makes Attractive

OPINION

Key Text: John 15:9-17

“Two weeks in a Virginia jail . . . Twenty-thousand-dollar bail . . . and everybody thinks, that I’m the fool, but they don’t get any love from you. The things we won’t do for love. I’d climb a mountain if I had to . . . I follow my heart and leave my head to ponder deep in this love no man can shake. I follow my heart and leave my mind to wonder. Is this love worth the sacrifices I make?”

Is it possible to have the same feelings for my sisters and brothers in church, or at least for God, as Tracy Chapman feels for her lover? Of course, we all know the differences between *agape*, *philos*, and *eros*. Do you remember your feelings from the past when you were in love? You felt able to climb all mountains in this world if necessary. Would you be willing to make the same investments—maybe sacrifices—for fellow church members?

There is this old brother sitting in the last row, watching everyone carefully and criticizing your lifestyle. Is there need to be united in love with such people? Which love is it that Jesus wants us to remain in? He didn’t ask whether His love is worth His sacrifice. We need to understand what Jesus did. That’s possible if we stay connected with Him daily.

Still it is a miracle if human beings of different interests and abilities love and

The spiritual gift of love prepares the ground for a united church and our personal contentment.

accept each other! If this happens, people will become attentive and attracted. There is no need to think enviously of the gifts our friends have! You will be happy about the possibilities you have through their gifts. Love will give us the ability to accept the habits of persons who are difficult to understand.

The spiritual gift of love prepares the ground for a united church and our personal contentment. Love will change our attitudes. Without love we can’t use all our other spiritual gifts effectively!

We and our church will be attractive with the love Jesus will give to us. Try to love the difficult and gain the experience of a united and growing church that gives strength to you.

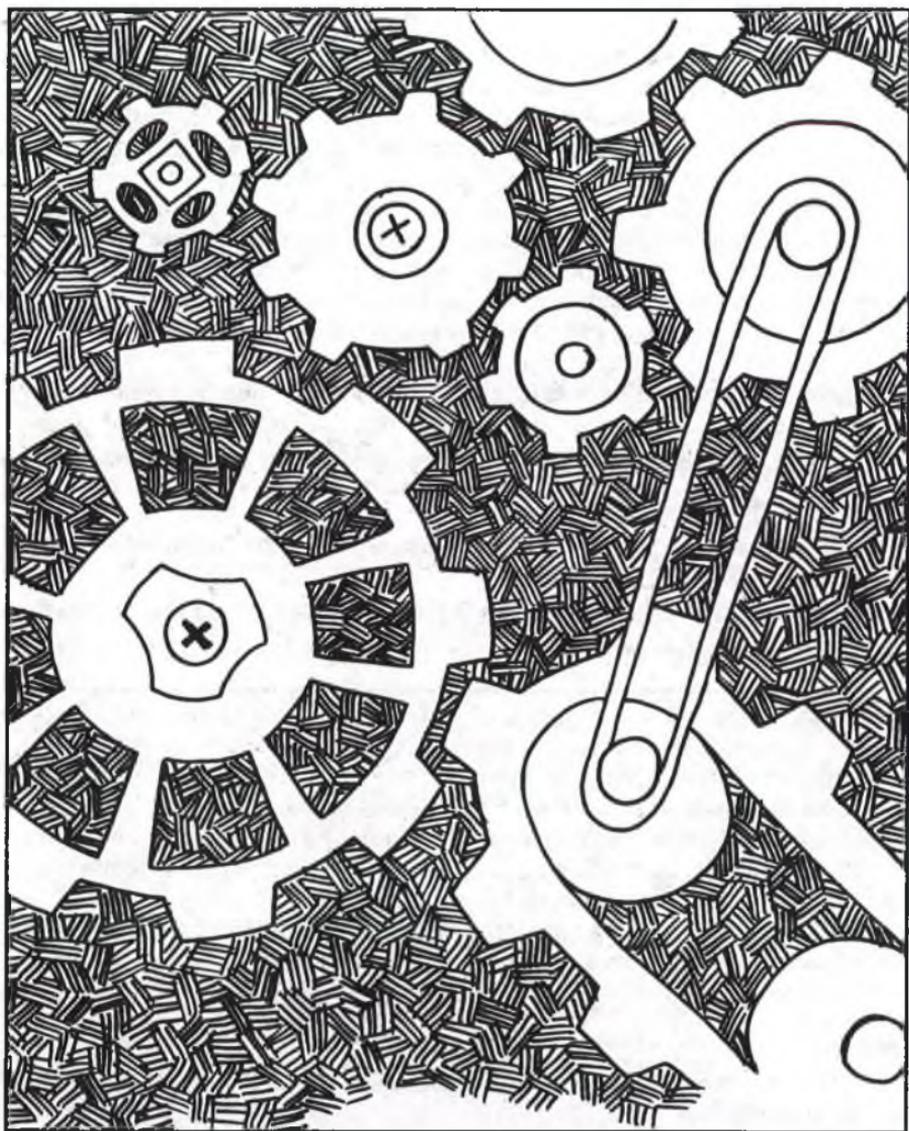
REACT

1. How can we get a deeper comprehension of the love Jesus is talking about and love as He does?
2. What are your experiences in the acceptance of different gifts, habits, and characteristics in your church?
3. How do we and our church become attractive?

*Tracy Chapman, “For My Lover,” 1983.

By Detlef I. Lang, a physician at the University of Münster, Westfalia, Germany.

SUPPORT GIFTS



“When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles” (Acts 9:26, 27, NIV).

Mellowing Into Yellow

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Acts 9:26, 27

As far as I was concerned, yellow hovered in the nether regions barely above puce, orange, and avocado green. When I finally moved into my own space, blue became queen, and mauve and beige her ladies-in-waiting. Together they symbolized my burgeoning freedom. So yellow and avocado green were prohibited as painful reminders of long-clipped wings.

Later, I was eager to welcome my aunt to a long-anticipated visit to California. She had volunteered to make me one of her cleverly wrought crocheted dolls, complete with flower-strewn gown and a jaunty little cap. At the airport, I caught sight of her bouncing cheerfully toward me, the doll lovingly cradled in her hands dressed in, you guessed it, yellow!

You can understand, then, why I was a little distraught when dandelions began turning up in the front yard. Invasion of The Hated Yellow. In the abstract, I rather

Yellow is a gift along with all the other colors.

like dandelions, just not in my backyard. And definitely *not* in my front yard. So I ruthlessly exterminated the dandelions.

But one day I realized that my garden, though nice, was boring. That moment's insight freed me to introduce some supporting touches of The Hated Yellow. The eye-appealing result taught me that yellow is a gift along with all the other colors. Every gift contributes something irreplaceable. The key is to leave room for all the gifts. Every garden needs yellow.

By Ruth E. Burke, adjunct professor of German, La Sierra University, Riverside, California.

Spiritual Gifts

LOGOS

Gen. 18: 1-15; Judg. 19:16-21; Matt. 25:34-40; 2 Cor. 9

Sometimes we try to do a lot of things in the church or feel obligated to do so without a special gift for that duty. We feel either guilty or discouraged because we are making no special contribution. We may be elected to a certain office such as elder, deacon, or superintendent without any special gift for that office. Perhaps one of the greatest discoveries we can make is our spiritual gifts.

A spiritual gift is not a natural talent. A natural talent is possessed by believer and unbeliever alike and is present from the day of physical birth. It is not the fruit of the Spirit. Fruit of the Spirit pertains to the character of Christ, and all qualities are essential and applicable to one person. What, then, is a spiritual gift? It is a divine endowment of a special ability for service upon a member of the body of Christ. It is an ability to function effectively in a particular service as a member of Christ's body.

Spiritual gifts are Christ-centered. There is a natural faith and a spiritual faith. Natural faith has confidence in concrete things: that a chair will hold my weight, car brakes will work, food has no poison in it, and it will nourish the body. Spiritual faith centers on Jesus Christ. So we have to distinguish between the natural and the spiritual—whatever is a spiritual gift centers on Christ.

We cannot choose our gifts. We may look at other's gifts and wish we had them. Choosing our gifts puts us in control of what we want, but suppose we all wanted the same gift. This could not minister effectively to the body. Christ knows we need a wide variety of gifts to accomplish a total service to the body of Christ for the common good of all (1 Cor. 12:7). Would you rather choose your gift or let Christ choose for you? Since it is Christ's work and He is all wise, would His choice not be superior? Faith is trusting God and believing that He loves us and knows what is best for us, thus it leads us to choose His way and not our own.

Gifts are distributed by the ascended Christ, to every believer, for the profit of others, through the Holy Spirit, at the time of conversion and on the basis of grace (Rom. 12:3; 1 Cor. 12:9; Eph. 4:7-11). We must always remember that a spiritual gift is given only when we surrender to the Holy Spirit. To be effective, the indwelling Spirit must constantly sustain and activate the gift. We do not use the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit uses us. He stirs up the gift within us.

To discover your spiritual gift is to discover God's will for your life of service. We can't do everything we are asked to do in a church. Sometimes we become a "Jack of all trades," agreeing to try everything asked of us. Thus we become frustrated and weary. Discovering our spiritual gifts gives us focus and enables us. First, we must be born of the Spirit. This happens when we receive Christ as a personal Saviour. To receive Christ is to receive the Holy Spirit by faith. Once we receive the Holy Spirit we receive our spiritual gift or gifts.

First, seek spiritual gifts through prayer (Mark 11:24). If we lack wisdom, ask of God (James 1:5). Second, study the Word. Read the four chapters of the New Testament that explain the various gifts. Look at the following list, and define each one. Which one seems to fit into your life?

Romans 12:6-8

Prophesying
 Ministering
 Teaching
 Exhorting
 Giving
 Ruling
 Showing mercy

Ephesians 4:11

Apostleship
 Prophesying
 Evangelizing
 Pastor-teaching

1 Peter 4:11

Speaking
 Ministering

1 Corinthians 12:6-10

Word of wisdom
 Word of knowledge
 Faith
 Healing
 Miracles
 Prophesying
 Discerning of spirits
 Tongues
 Interpretation of tongues

1 Corinthians 12:28

Apostleship
 Prophesying
 Teaching
 Miracles
 Healing
 Helping
 Administering
 Tongues

1 Corinthians 12:29, 30

Apostleship
 Prophesying
 Teaching
 Miracles
 Healing
 Tongues
 Interpretation of tongues

A spiritual gift is not a natural talent.

Trust the Lord to reveal your gifts to you. Watch for providential circumstances. Perhaps the leadership of the church may ask you to participate in a certain area of service. Others may say, "You know, I feel that you would make an excellent teacher" or "You are especially good in organization." When several people tell you the same thing about your abilities, the Lord is speaking to you and singling out your spiritual gifts.

Attend a seminar on spiritual gifts. Consult your pastor as to what may be available.

Read the literature on the subject. Go to the library and consult the librarian.

Try different areas of service. Which one seems to fit you?

There must be a "burden" or element of conviction. Conviction is important.

You can be sure God will guide you as you pray and seek His wisdom and ask Him to reveal your spiritual gifts to you.

REACT

1. Why are spiritual gifts important?
2. How do you differentiate between natural gifts and spiritual gifts?
3. Why is it possible to have all the fruit of the Spirit but not all the gifts of the Spirit?
4. What are the purposes of the spiritual gifts?

By L. Calvin Osborn, pastor of the Country Village Seventh-day Adventist Church, Riverside, California.

Unity in Diversity

TESTIMONY

Key Text: 1 Cor. 12:12-14; 27-30

Through the ages Satan has constantly striven to distract God's people from the work God has appointed them. The same thing is happening today. Our church in recent years has been caught up in an effort of trying to decide what qualifications one should have to serve the church in certain capacities.

God is a God of order. Therefore, wherever there is confusion, God is not honored. God's granting to every believer one or more spiritual gifts to operate the varied functions of the church is clearly spelled out in Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy. And the way it is done is to ensure harmony in the body of Christ. "Men have varied gifts, and some are better adapted to one branch of the work than another. What one man would fail to do, his brother minister may be strong to accomplish. The work of each in his position is important."¹

God is the one who outfits us for service. It is His Holy Spirit that dispenses the various gifts to individual believers. Our task is to draw close to the Lord and maintain a constant relationship with Him, and He will guide us into the paths where He wants us to serve. Ellen White admonishes: "Young men and young women, gather a stock of knowledge. Do not wait until some human examination pronounces you competent to work, but go out into the highways and hedges, and

Wherever there is confusion, God is not honored.

begin to work for God. Use wisely the knowledge you have. Exercise your ability with faithfulness, generously imparting the light that God gives you."²

Disunity usually occurs in God's church when the members have lost sight of their mission. The devil always has work for idle hands: "Many of the professed followers of Christ feel no more burden for souls than do the world. The lusts of the eye, and the pride of life, the love of display, the love of ease, separate the professed Christians from God, and the missionary spirit in reality exists in but few."³

When God's church once more becomes not just a nursing home but also a training camp for soldiers of the cross; and when we stop bivouacking but instead begin marching in unison, then will we be more concerned with finishing the work than with bickering about who shall do what. It is in the doing that we will discover our true gifts, for spiritual gifts are for Christian service.

1. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 608, 609.

2. *Ibid.*, vol. 7, p. 281.

3. *Christian Service*, pp. 35, 36.

By Ed and Linda Henry, professor of English and a fifth-year education major, respectively, La Sierra University, Riverside, California.

Support Gifts

EVIDENCE

Key Text: 1 Cor. 12:14-20

The preacher called for volunteers just before the worship service: "If you can help us pass out handbills for the evangelistic meetings beginning next week, we can cover the town in a couple of hours. How many can be here at 2:30 this afternoon?" In the church of 2,000 people, two hands went up.

Disappointed, the preacher made a second appeal: "I know you are just being timid. Brethren, the Lord is coming and we are sitting on our hands. Those who are truly consecrated to this message *will be out* this afternoon at 2:30. How many can I count on?" Two more hands went up.

Then the preacher lost it. "That is really poor!" he shouted, and he delivered one of the sternest rebukes I have ever heard. "You people are dead, unspiritual, and unconsecrated," he thundered. He gave no indication that he had any concept of spiritual gifts.

All the time I was growing up Adventist I understood that if you gave Bible studies, went colporteur, or manned a can at Ingathering time, you were consecrated and spiritual. In fact, I can remember being taught clearly that this was indeed a measure of spirituality.

But in the past few years, Adventists have shifted their emphasis from what

Those who are truly consecrated to this message *will be out* this afternoon at 2:30.

some church-growth specialists call "consecration theology" to "gift theology." In the former, our response was measured by degree. The really consecrated could do anything in the way of soul winning. But the more consecrated people did the higher tasks.

The pastor who harangued his church that Sabbath morning would not repeat that approach now because he is a leading exponent today of the new theology of spiritual gifts. The concept is not new, of course. We were just a bit slow to grasp it for a variety of traditional reasons. One practical aspect of this new understanding is the personal freedom to look for the Spirit's leading in our lives. No longer do we need to listen to others telling us what we should be doing. Instead, we can listen for the voice of the Spirit. And we need not feel demeaned when our gift is different from someone else's.

With this new liberation comes a powerful witness of a church that works together like a body in which each organ functions in harmony with others.

The result is that we will cease to judge and begin to suffer together. We will cease to be arrogant and begin to be empathetic. The Holy Spirit carries on the work of God in believers through the gifts.

By Edwin Zackrison, professor of theology and ministry, School of Religion, La Sierra University, Riverside, California.

Equipped to Serve

HOW-TO

Key Text: Eph. 4:11-15

When I first joined the Navy, I wanted to become a cartographer stationed aboard an aircraft carrier. After ten weeks of intense training, however, I was assigned to the “deck force” on a World War II-vintage destroyer. I was depressed; I knew I was capable of more important service than chipping paint, swabbing decks, and cleaning officers’ quarters.

Several weeks on the deck force taught me humility. I got very high marks for my cleaning work, and it was not long before I discovered my true calling as a sailor. While serving as a lookout watch on the bridge (the nerve center of the ship), I watched the visual signal crew at work sending and receiving messages to other ships at sea via signal flags, the semaphore, and signal lights. I found a signalman manual and studied it fiercely until I could read the semaphore and Morse code messages sent by the signal crew. Soon I knew how to read signals. In a short while, I was promoted to signals. I was in heaven; I had found my calling as a sailor.

Years later as a new believer, I felt a need to serve the Lord as a minister of the gospel. After several weeks studying theology, however, an English teacher suggested that I do a double major in English and in theology. This I did, and today

I was assigned to the “deck force” on a World War II-vintage destroyer.

I am an English teacher.

Similar to the apostle Paul, who was talented with tent making but spiritually gifted in preaching and teaching the gospel, I, too, had a talent for visual signals, but was spiritually gifted to teach. Spiritual gifts are given to the born-again believer by the Holy Spirit “to prepare God’s people for works of service” (Eph. 4:12, NIV).

How then can you discover your spiritual gifts? In his book *Your Spiritual Gifts*, C. Peter Wagner lists “four fundamental prerequisites”:^{*} (1) *You have to be a Christian*. Since it is the Holy Spirit who gives the gifts, you must receive Christ to receive these gifts. (2) *You have to believe in spiritual gifts*. You must believe that you are called to serve, and in order to serve effectively, you must discover what gifts are given you. (3) *You have to be willing to work*. James has said it better than anyone else: “Faith without works is dead” (2:17). (4) *You have to pray*. The simplest way to discover your gifts is to ask the Lord to reveal them, and He will (1:5).

^{*}C. Peter Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, Division of Gospel Light, 1994), pp. 106-108.

By Edward Henry, assistant professor of English, Riverside Community College, Riverside, California.

Peacemaking—a Supporting Gift?

OPINION

Key Text: Matt. 5:9

In 1991, I sat on a bench with a Hindu pilgrim who came to perform the rite of *puja* by the sacred Ganges River, to wash away his sins for inner peace. The old devotee sat in deep meditation with eyes closed. Then he opened his eyes and smiled at me. “Tell me, sir,” I asked, “how soon will we have peace?”

“I don’t know,” he responded softly, “but the great one told me that Kalyug (era of darkness) is about to end, and we are about to enter Salyug (era of truth and light).”

For end-time Adventists, the support gift of peacemaking is crucial for individuals, as well as for corporate leaders: To enhance harmony, to offer forgiveness, and to give unconditional love to humankind.

Mahatma Gandhi, founder of Indian independence, believed and practiced the principles Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7). Thus, he modeled the nonviolent behavior that Jesus espoused and spearheaded the Indian independence movement. Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the Muslim leader of the freedom movement, sometimes disagreed with Gandhi. Jinnah reported that the peasants

**“If you are right, you don’t need to be angry,
but if you are wrong, you can’t afford it.”**

were poised for violent demonstrations all over India. Angrily, he confronted Gandhi, “Mahatma, what we need here is an ‘eye for an eye.’”

Gandhi responded thoughtfully, “Mr. Jinnah, ‘An eye for an eye’ will make the whole world blind . . . if you are right, you don’t need to be angry, but if you are wrong, you can’t afford it.”

One hundred years later, Martin Luther King, a grandson of slaves, became the driving force of the U. S. civil-rights movement. Adopting Gandhi’s non-violent policy, Dr. King sought to exemplify the Christian attitude that emanated from the Sermon on the Mount. His “I Have a Dream” message at the Lincoln Memorial distilled the essence of Christian fundamentals and thereby established his leadership in the African-American civil-rights movement.

REACT

1. How can Christians identify the supporting gift of peacemaking within the family circle and integrate it in the marketplace and corporate office?

2. Is the gift of conflict resolution absent/weak in Adventists’ negotiating labor/management disputes? Are Christians as skilled, less skillful, more skillful than non-Christians? Are they more ethical and honest? Explain your answer.

3. What spiritual gifts do you think God has assigned to you?

4. How does your church help members discover their spiritual gifts?

By Mansoor Massey, director of health promotion and public information, Kern County, California.

TEACHING GIFTS



“These things command and teach. Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim. 4:11, 12, NKJV).

You Can Run, but You Can't Hide

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Prov. 28:1

“The wicked man flees though no one pursues, but the righteous are as bold as a lion” (Prov. 28:1, NIV).

At age 17, I was a baptized church member, but something was missing from my life. In my search for fulfillment and the solution to my longings, I returned to the streets of Los Angeles. I selfishly ignored the feelings of others. Meanwhile, a voice, which I knew was the Holy Spirit, urged me in different ways to make better use of my time and talents. I stubbornly ignored the impressions I received and continued going my own way. I did not pray, because I was not ready to make a full commitment to spiritual things. I was not ready to use my talents and gifts for service to God. In short, I wanted to continue going my own way and doing what I wanted to do.

When I enrolled in college, I was a bit immature for my age. While there, I met a great man. I mistakenly believed marriage would solve my problems. We married and moved to Florida. My wild behavior changed a bit, and I began taking part in

I was ignoring salvation and wasting the precious gifts given me by God.

church activities. Unfortunately, I had no sense of commitment to anything. Because there was a part of me that I had never surrendered fully to God, I often ditched the responsibilities entrusted to me, claiming the tasks were outside my comfort zone.

My life changed drastically when my husband went away on a week-long business trip. Earlier, a friend had given me a religious book, which I began reading. In its pages, I suddenly came face to face with reality—I was wasting the life God had given me. I was ignoring salvation and wasting the precious gifts given me by God.

Shortly after this spiritual awakening, I prayed: “God, please open my eyes, and show me what You want me to do.” His path for me suddenly became clear. I had known for some time that I possessed a talent for working with young people. I knew how to relate to them and make difficult and complex problems easy for them to comprehend. Thus began my real love for God and the exercise of my gift for teaching youth.

I have many things yet to learn, but, now that my fears and anxieties about serving the Lord have ceased, my gifts and talents are improving and expanding.

By Heather Henry, a psychology major at South Florida Community College at Avon Park.

Teaching, an Indispensable Spiritual Gift

LOGOS

Deut. 11:18-22; 1 Tim. 4:9-11; 2 Tim. 2:2; Prov. 28; 1 Pet. 5:1-3

Like a golden thread woven into the exquisite tapestry of the Bible, the teaching gift stands out as the most effective function of the church in communicating the gospel. Teaching as a spiritual gift is an essential tool for our understanding, appreciation, and proclamation of the Christian message. It is also indispensable for the nurture of church members, as well as for the preservation of the church's message. In the final analysis, all spiritual gifts bear a vital relationship to the gift of teaching. Teaching as a spiritual gift instructs new believers in the fundamentals of the Christian faith, confirms them in the faith, and transforms them into informed disciples.

Effective Teaching—Making the Gospel Attractive (Deut. 11:18-22)

When God wanted to communicate His saving message to Israel, He made it striking, captivating, and simple. The method He employed revealed the importance of teaching as a spiritual gift to communicate truth. This is illustrated in Deuteronomy 11:18-22:

- God's Word was to be central in the lives of His people. It was to be *fixed* in the mind and heart (verse 18). Genuine teaching fixes truth in the mind and heart of the learner.

- The message was to be clear and captivating. God's words were to be tied as symbols on the people's hands and foreheads and inscribed on the door frames of their houses and gates (verses 18, 20). This metaphor emphasizes the importance of keeping the message appealing.

- There is no inappropriate place to teach God's Word. "Teach . . . [the Lord's words] to your children, talking about them when you *sit* at home and when you *walk* along the road, when you *lie down* and when you *get up*" (verse 19, NIV).

The result of diligently teaching the Word of God is that the student learns to love God, walk in all His ways, and hold fast to Him (verse 11).

The Schools of the Prophets as Bulwark of the Nation (*Education*, pp. 44-50)

After Israel was established as a nation in the Promised Land, God issued specific instructions for the establishment of the schools of the prophets. The survival of the nation depended on the success of these schools. The location of these centers, the curriculum to be followed, the qualification of the teachers, and the eligibility of the students were also stipulated to ensure the effectiveness of the system. The purpose of these schools was fourfold:

- To serve as a barrier against corruption.
- To provide for the mental and spiritual welfare of the nation.
- To promote the prosperity and strength of the nation.
- To provide the nation with individuals who were qualified to act as leaders and counselors.

The Teacher From God (John 3:3)

In the interview between Nicodemus and Jesus, the learned doctor expressed a truth about Jesus as "a teacher come from God" (John 3:3). Almost two-thirds of

Jesus' ministry on earth consisted of teaching. In public and in private, Christ taught and preached the good news (John 7:35; Matt. 7:29; Luke 19:47). He taught the disciples the principles of the kingdom (Matt. 9:31). He taught the Gentiles the good news of salvation (John 7:35).

In every sermon, discourse, parable, anecdote, or miracle, Christ's teaching captivated His audience. In His parting words to His disciples, Jesus gave the Great Commission, which was the mandate to "make disciples of all nations . . . *teaching* them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19, 20, NIV).

The Gift of Teaching—a Key to Apostolic Growth (Acts 15:35; 11:26; 5:42)

Following in its Founder's traditions, the apostolic church became well-known for its teaching ministry. The book of Acts abounds with references to the powerful teaching of the church. Members and leaders "taught great numbers of people" (11:26); the apostles "taught diligently the things of the Lord" (18:25, KJV); "They ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ" (5:42). Empowered by the Spirit, they integrated all the gifts of the Spirit in one way or another with that of redemptive teaching.

Paul's exhortation to Timothy eloquently illustrates the role of teaching in the apostolic church. In his powerful appeal, Paul urges: "Devote yourself to the public

The teaching gift stands out as the most effective function of the church in communicating the gospel.

reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching" (1 Tim. 4:13, NIV). He exhorts Timothy to be an effective teacher of the word by publicly exemplifying the Christian graces; by a life of faithfulness to God; by maintaining an impeccable moral record; by a diligent and studious reading of God's Word, and by preaching sound doctrines. As a means of strengthening the church, Paul further encourages Timothy to select able teachers and leaders who would eventually assume church leadership.

The gift of teaching is related to all functions of the church: evangelism, nurture, discipleship, and the selection of church leaders. Clearly, this gift is inseparably linked to all the gifts of the Spirit, "until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13, NIV).

REACT

1. In what specific ways could a pastor employ the gift of teaching in evangelism and nurture of the congregation?
2. What do all the gifts of the Spirit have in common?
3. Why do you think Jesus spent more time teaching than in any other aspect of His ministry?

By George W. Brown, retired president, Inter-American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, Coral Gables, Florida.

Youthful Teaching

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Luke 2:41

Since the earliest of recorded history, teaching has been a skill used by the wisest of people to preserve culture, to pass on lessons learned in life, and to instill values. Teachers have been pictured stereotypically as the older and wiser people in the community. But Ellen White has written that teaching is an important responsibility that rests on the shoulders of both the young and the old. She writes: “The very best talent that can be secured is needed to educate and mold the minds of the young and to carry on successfully the many lines of work that will need to be done by the teacher in our church schools.”¹

Yet the gift of teaching should not be so narrowly applied to teachers in the formal sense of the word. Many youth consider teaching God’s Word a responsibility of church pastors, Sabbath School teachers, and parents—not themselves. After all, many of today’s youth are busy with school and work. Many youth excuse themselves from this responsibility, claiming that they’ll be better prepared to do God’s work after finishing their education or after they have settled down with their work and family.

The work of God can begin at home and among our friends.

The work of God can begin at home and among our friends.² Youth should not be an excuse to put off God’s work, but should instead be a motivation. Teaching others about Christ doesn’t have to be done in a classroom. Our actions can be a testimony to others at school and at work. We can all do our part to help in teaching Sabbath School lessons. The Lord is calling for “young men and women to gird themselves for lifelong, earnest labor in the Sabbath-school work.”³

Although not every person is as blessed with the gift of teaching as others, all should use the gifts God has given and do their part in spreading God’s Word.

REACT

1. What makes a teacher a good teacher?
2. The gift of teaching is really a combination of what skills?
3. In what respects are all Christians teachers?
4. List the different techniques Jesus used to teach others.
5. What is the difference between teaching and preaching?

1. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 200.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 428.

3. *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 13.

By Jere Robert Seralde, a pre-med student at South Florida Community College at Avon Park.

Who Started It, Anyway?

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Prov. 1:5, 7

Teaching is an essential part of human existence today. From our earliest beginning, we were in the learning process. We learned that if we cried when we were hungry, food was provided. If we wanted to be cleaned or held, crying quickly became the learned response. These patterns continue throughout our lives.

God understood this. After all, He did make us. This is why He gave us instructions and examples in the Bible pertaining to the teaching of the Word. There is evidence in the Bible of biblical schools as early as Genesis. Noah was a Bible teacher. In fact, he held class for 120 years. I'm sure that class was in session for seven days a week, from sunup to sundown. In 2 Kings, there is mention of the school of the prophets. This is where young scholars had a chance to learn God's truths from various teachers, including the prophet Elisha. The Old Testament is filled with prophets who were teachers of the Word to others.

The entire Bible is filled with instruction, but certain books instruct more than others. One of these is Proverbs. Its author, Solomon, was visited by God one night in a dream. The Lord told him that he could have anything that he wanted. Solomon

The Bible has given evidence of God's desire for our instruction.

asked for wisdom. Wisdom was granted him, and Proverbs is one of the results of this wisdom.

It is interesting to note, however, that there is much more evidence of teaching in the New Testament. Let us begin with the Gospels. They are biographies of the greatest Teacher ever on earth. He wasn't always teaching a crowd of 5,000. Sometimes it was a beggar, sometimes it was a prostitute, and at other times it was one of the highest-ranking officials in the church. One of Jesus' major roles was that of a teacher. After His death and resurrection, He charged His disciples with the same role.

If you continue to dig into the New Testament, you will notice two basic phases of instruction. The first includes all the different stories of the work of the disciples after the ascension of Christ. In the second, Paul writes many letters to the various new churches that had been started by the disciples. Each of the letters gave words of instruction to these new believers to help them continue to grow in Christ.

As we can see, the Bible has given evidence of God's desire for our instruction. It is not His wish to leave us in the dark about His character. He wants us to know everything about Him that we care to learn. Receiving this instruction is up to us.

By Kirk C. Henry, computer technician/analyst at South Florida Community College at Avon Park.

Just Do It

HOW-TO

Key Text: Matt. 28:19, 20

At times while studying my Bible, I come across passages that I don't fully understand. To comprehend them better, I either go to my parents, the pastor, or someone who has a greater knowledge of the Bible than I do. Just as Philip was used by God to go and explain (teach) to the Ethiopian eunuch what he was reading (Acts 8:26-39), God wants to use us to finish what He has started.

In Matthew 28:19 God says, "teach all nations." That means we can't just sit back and let time go by, expecting that someone else will take the teachings of God to those who are eagerly waiting to learn about Him. We don't have to be pastors or evangelists to be able to reach out and teach someone of God's love and compassion for humanity. As soon as we accept Christ into our lives, we become teachers of His word. Our thoughts, words, and deeds need to reflect Christ so others can become more acquainted with Him through us. Of the greatest Teacher who ever lived, the servant of the Lord, Ellen White, says: "Thus in His life, Christ's words had perfect illustration and support. And more than this; what He taught, He was. His words were the expression, not only of His own life-experience, but of His own character. Not only did He teach the truth, but He was the truth. It was this that gave His teaching power."

That means we can't just sit back and let time go by.

In summary, here are a few points that could help us become teachers of God.

1. Know Him. First, we need to know Christ personally before we can teach others of His goodness. The only way this can be accomplished is through the study of His Word and daily contact with Him.

2. Practice what you preach. If your lifestyle is in agreement with your teachings, you'll be able to draw others closer to you and closer to God.

3. Follow Christ's methods. Christ used parables to teach His followers. This was His way of clarifying His teachings in a manner everyone could understand.

Sometimes we may feel inadequate to teach others about our beliefs and the love of God. Like Isaiah, we need to be always willing to say, "Here am I; send me" and believe that He will give us the wisdom to speak (Isa. 6:8, KJV). "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you" (1 Pet. 3:15, KJV).

REACT

In practical, everyday terms, what is meant by the expression "Be ready always to give an answer" (1 Pet. 3:15)?

**Education, pp. 78, 79.*

By Sylvia Haakmat, a nursing major at South Florida Community College at Avon Park.

Reach Them Before You Teach Them

OPINION

Key Text: 1 Tim. 4:11, 12

Think of a person who has helped you in the past and who you feel has the spiritual gift of teaching. Which of the following qualities did he or she possess:

- Remarkable understanding and knowledge of the Bible
- Excellent communication skills
- Close relationship with Christ
- Taught by example, not just by words
- Had a sincere love for you and others
- All of the above

To find the answer to this question, let's look at 1 Timothy 4:11, 12. It states that "These things command and teach. Let no one despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." What is your answer to the above question now? I feel the answer is within each individual's heart, and my heart tells me: All of the above.

In the two verses we just read, God didn't say Bible understanding and knowledge were the *only* qualities for teaching others. Actually, He said there are six qualities that make up an effective teacher. Generally, I have found this promise to be very true. A person with the spiritual gift of teaching needs to *reach* the person

God put several individuals in my life who taught me about Him.

before he or she can begin *teaching* him or her Bible truths. You may be wondering, *How can I reach another person without reciting Scripture first?* Once again, 1 Timothy 4:12 says that two qualities that teach are love and faith. Proverbs 3:3, 4, states, "Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man" (NIV).

I haven't been a Christian my whole life. God put several individuals in my life who *taught* me about Him. The two things that were constant about these individuals were that they loved me, and I could tell they were Christians just by their conduct. Every one of them *reached* me (became my friend) before they *taught* me about Jesus. I really respected them for that. They cared enough about me to get to know me and my feelings and beliefs. Once I got to know these loving people and saw how they lived, I was very interested in what they had to say. In my opinion, besides Christ, they were the best *teachers* I have ever had.

REACT

How much of an authority on Scripture must a person be to share it with others?

By Jason D. Fairchild, a graduate student in special education at Florida State University at Tallahassee.

LEADERSHIP SKILLS



“Whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matt. 20:27, 28, NKJV).

Leadership or Servanthood

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Acts 6:1-6; Matt. 20:26-28

“I don’t operate a taxi service. I can’t have everyone riding in my car.”

Anjelita shook her head in disbelief as the elder rambled on about carrying the visitors home after the tent meetings. How could he be so uncaring? At the beginning of every meeting, he welcomed the visitors enthusiastically, and everyone could see him. His charisma and warmth could only be a reflection of his Christian experience. He was a seemingly good church leader. He was willing to be in the forefront welcoming the visitors but would never offer them a ride after the meetings.

Today many Christians are just like that elder, appearing enthusiastic and excited, misleading the public into believing they are doing God’s will, yet they neglect to follow God’s way. In the New Testament church, seven individuals accepted the role of ministering to the needs of the neglected. As leaders in the ministry, they were servants ministering to the physical needs of the church. Leadership and servanthood form a dichotomy in the foundation of administrative

In the New Testament church, seven individuals accepted the role of ministering to the needs of the neglected.

duties related to the Christian. The two are connected and inseparable. Jesus’ example as one willing to serve is the example toward which we ought to strive. At the Last Supper, He insisted that He wash the feet of all His disciples, showing His ability to lead through service.

In our Christian experience, we can be true leaders only when we accept the role of servanthood. The deacons of the early church recognized their responsibility to serve. How can we be leaders and not serve as true Christians?

By John Carey, a lubricant sales engineer for Texaco Bahamas Limited, Nassau, Bahamas.

Leadership Is Service

LOGOS

Matt. 20:20-28; Phil. 2:4-11; Rom. 12:1-3; Acts 6:1-7

Servant-Leadership (Matt. 20:20-28)

Matthew 20:20-28 represents a biblical perspective of servant-leadership. The passage begins with a mother making an ambitious request for positions of leadership for her two sons, James and John. Jesus replied: "You don't know what you are asking. . . . to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father" (Matt. 20:22, 23, NIV).

Mrs. Zebedee and her sons were mistaken concerning: (1) the meaning of the positions requested, and (2) the meaning of the cup that Jesus would drink. In addition, it would seem that they misinterpreted the fulfillment of Christ's suffering, referred to in Matthew 20:17-19. They were thinking in terms of personal ambition. The prevailing thought of the Jews related to a Messiah who would come and establish an earthly kingdom by force.

The other ten disciples also had their minds on an earthly kingdom (verse 24). Further, there is a possibility that Salome, James and John's mother, might have been the sister of Jesus' mother Mary. This would make John and James full cousins of Jesus. So the thinking of the ten might have been "that this close relationship entitled them to a special place in his Kingdom."¹

Ellen White also refers to a kingdom of a different order. Says Mrs. White, "Christ was establishing a kingdom on different principles. He called men, not to authority, but to service, the strong to bear the infirmities of the weak."²

In Matthew 20:27, 28, Jesus now explains true leadership: "Whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

The servanthood leadership style advocated by Jesus called for drinking of His "cup," and it involved a "ransom." The Greek meaning for *ransom* denotes redemption, or a ransom price paid for the liberation of someone.³ In this sense it cannot be denied that Jesus fulfilled the role of Messiah, "He will save his people from their sins" (1:21).

Role-Model Leadership (Phil. 2:4-11)

Paul recommends Christ as the model for leadership. He cautions against selfish ambition. It is naturally desirable to think of oneself and one's needs, but Paul here advocates a paradigm leadership role that is based on unselfish service for others. Writing from Rome on the occasion of his first imprisonment following ten years since first preaching at Philippi,⁴ Paul warns: "Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Phil. 2:4). Additionally, argues Paul, "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus" (verse 5). What was His attitude? (1) Christ's attitude was considerate and altruistic. "While conscious of His equality with God, [Christ] decided to forgo the glory associated with that exalted state in order to accomplish His compassionate purpose of saving lost mankind."⁵ (2) It was one of voluntary service. Paul writes: "But made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness" (verse 7).

Leadership Requirements (Rom. 12:1-3)

Leaders are required to make decisions, some more crucial than others; consequently they must have a basis. Paul encourages a life of consecration. First, there is an appeal for a fitness of body (Rom. 12:1). Next, he calls for a renewing of the mind (verse 2), and in verse 3, Paul implores for a demonstration of the renewed life. Says F. F. Bruce, "A this-worldly spirit of self-seeking and competition must not rear its ugly head. An exaggerated view of one's own importance must give way to a sensible estimate of one's position."⁶

Leadership's Need for a Clearly Defined Role (Acts 6:1-7)

It has been established that servanthood leadership involves service; however, that service needs to be clearly defined. The account of Acts 6:1-7 shows that the then church membership had grown. With an increase in membership came also added responsibilities, but this was not to divert the apostles from executing their primary function, which is enunciated in verses 2-4: "So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, 'It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men. . . . We

The other twelve disciples also had their minds on an earthly kingdom.

will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."

The answer of the twelve disciples could suggest that they were the only ones to minister in preaching, prayer, and teaching. The context of Acts shows otherwise. Philip and Stephen were known to preach and teach, however the primary function was clearly defined.

REACT

1. In your way of thinking, how does the present style of leadership in your church measure up to the model of Matthew 20:28?
2. What is the new name given Christ that Paul alludes to in Philippians 2:9?
3. How may one lose focus on his or her calling?

1. William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975), p. 229.

2. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 550.

3. See "Matthew," *The Interpreter's Bible*, page 497.

4. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 137.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 154. Refer to verse 6.

6. F. F. Bruce, editor, *The International Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), p. 1339. See also *Prophets and Kings*, page 489.

By Leonard Audley Johnson, pastor of Grant's Town (Bahamas) Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Divine Power + Human Effort = Success

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Josh. 8:1-25

As Mrs. Jones watched her students busily working at their desks, she felt relieved but perplexed by the events of the morning. Somehow the students seemed unusually noisy and fidgety that day. Two of them ended up in a brawl, and she had to interrupt the class to settle the dispute.

After the dispute was settled and the period was ended, she sat at her desk upset. She thought that she could have handled the problems better. She knew something was wrong that day. In fact, something seemed wrong all week. As the real reason for her apparent failures dawned on her, she bowed her head as the words fell from her lips, "Father, I've been depending on myself to teach Your students. Now, Lord, I come to You. Please help me."

How often is this the case with Christian leaders? They lead in various capacities and make the tragic mistake of depending on their education, skills, and intellect to make decisions. Many of us as leaders, not only in church but also at the workplace and in our homes, are often guilty of excluding divine guidance and depending on limited human abilities to lead those entrusted to our care.

Somehow the students seemed unusually noisy and fidgety that day.

"The secret of success is the union of divine power with human effort. Those who achieve the greatest results are those who rely most implicitly upon the Almighty Arm."

Peter's experience on the sea provides a symbol of what happens to the leader who loses faith in divine power and begins to rely on self. (Read Matt. 14:22-33.) While Peter kept his trust in divine power, he walked upon water, but when he doubted, the only power left for him to rely on was self; and as a result, he began to sink. The same thing happens to leaders who neglect divine guidance in their leadership; they begin to sink in waters of failure and despair.

Joshua depended on divine power. However, there was a time when he made the mistake of making a decision based solely on human calculation.

REACT

What was the result of Joshua's mistake?

**Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 509.

Humility: An Administrative Gift

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Luke 22:24-26

The background for our key text today involves a request made of Jesus that James and John receive special considerations in His kingdom. This request had such an adverse effect upon the other disciples that neither the solemnity of the Passover nor the startling announcement of Jesus' betrayal was sufficient to refocus their thinking on the importance of what was happening (Luke 22:4). Using this opportunity to teach the importance of humility, Jesus said: "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; . . . but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve (verses 25, 26).

In God's eyes, greatness is a function of humility (18:14, last part). Human history is replete with accounts of great people in this world who made shipwrecks of their lives on the sands of eternity. It is the Spirit of God (1 John 3:24) who creates a desire to be humble (teachable); it was this Spirit who prompted David to say, "thy gentleness hath made me great" (Ps. 18:35).

Christ came to show us how to live a more abundant life (John 10:10; Matt. 5:48)

Human history is replete with great people who made shipwrecks of their lives.

in an imperfect world. This abundant life is one of humble, willing service. He further made provisions for those who accept this new life; He died to free them from a life of slavery and gave them His Holy Spirit (John 15:26, 27; 16:7-11) to guide them (16:13) into doing right. The spirit of humility made it possible for John to say of Jesus, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). Of Himself Jesus was able to say, "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (5:30).

The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5, 6, and 7) may be declared to be a description of those who would be citizens of heaven, as outlined by Jesus. Central to His teaching on how a candidate ought to be (beatitudes) was the principle of humility, a characteristic of the fruit of the Spirit reflected in such expressions as "meek," "merciful," "peacemakers," and "persecuted."

REACT

1. Is humility essential to the administration of the gifts of the Spirit? If so, in what respect? If not, why?
2. How would you describe greatness and how would you apply this definition to individual Christian growth?
3. Ellen White referred to humility and meekness as being indispensable to soul winning.* What do you think she meant?

**Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 527.

By Ednal Collie, head of the religion department, Bahamas Academy at Nassau.

What Is the Role of a Leader?

HOW-TO

Key Text: Rom. 12:8

From the biblical perspective, a leader is a person with a God-given talent and responsibility to influence God's people to fulfill God's purpose in them. Leaders should be dedicated to God and to the task, having a real concern for the needs of the people and not just their own status. They should not be afraid to speak out and should make decisions based on truth and justice, not on self-interest or out of fear of giving offense.

New Testament teaching on leadership deals with serving rather than ruling. Within the church, Christians are called to examine their motives. Our first concern is to minister to others, not to receive the respect we think we deserve. We should share the blame if those we lead fall by the wayside because we didn't warn them of danger.

For more information on leadership styles and administrative and organizational plans, look up the following texts: Exodus 18:13-27; Ezekiel 33:1-9. Ezekiel had a keen sense of his responsibility as watchman. He was critical of leaders who did not take their responsibilities seriously.

Our first concern is to minister to others, not to receive the respect we think we deserve.

According to Ellen White, people should not yield to the burning urge to become great leaders or to the desire to make plans for themselves. It is easy for the devil to work through us in believing we are doing God's will when in fact we are not. We cannot have a burden for souls unless we have the spirit of Christ.

REACT

1. Why is leadership important in God's church?
2. What is the difference between a leader and a follower?
3. What should a follower do, if anything, when someone in a leadership position is incompetent, negligent, self-serving, or dishonest?

By Kaseen Penn, physical-education teacher, Bahamas Academy, and associate pastor of the Hillview Seventh-day Adventist Church, Nassau.

God's Call for Good-Samaritan Leaders

OPINION

Key Text: Phil. 2:4-7

On January 25, 1915, the voice of Alexander Graham Bell was carried by the telephone, which he had invented. "Mr. Watson," Bell called to his assistant, "Come here. I want you."

The Holy Spirit is bringing God's call from heaven to your heart to be a good-Samaritan leader. "Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness" (Phil. 2:4-7, NIV).

Ellen White writes the following about Jesus' young adult life: "Jesus showed a loving interest in all men. Every suffering one whom He met, He tried to help. He had little money to give, but He often denied Himself of food in order to help others."¹ "He spoke a word of sympathy here and a word there, as he saw men weary, yet compelled to bear heavy burdens. . . . He taught all to look upon themselves as endowed with precious talents, which if rightly employed would secure for them eternal riches."²

"[Jesus] taught them to look upon themselves as having precious talents."

According to Romans 12:1, 4-6 and 1 Corinthians 12:1, 4-7, each believer in the body of Christ has been given a spiritual talent by the Holy Spirit. God is calling on each of us to use those abilities for the benefit of others.

Alexander Graham Bell and Thomas A. Watson used their natural talents to bless society. They, just like the good Samaritan of Luke's gospel, are persons we should follow.

REACT

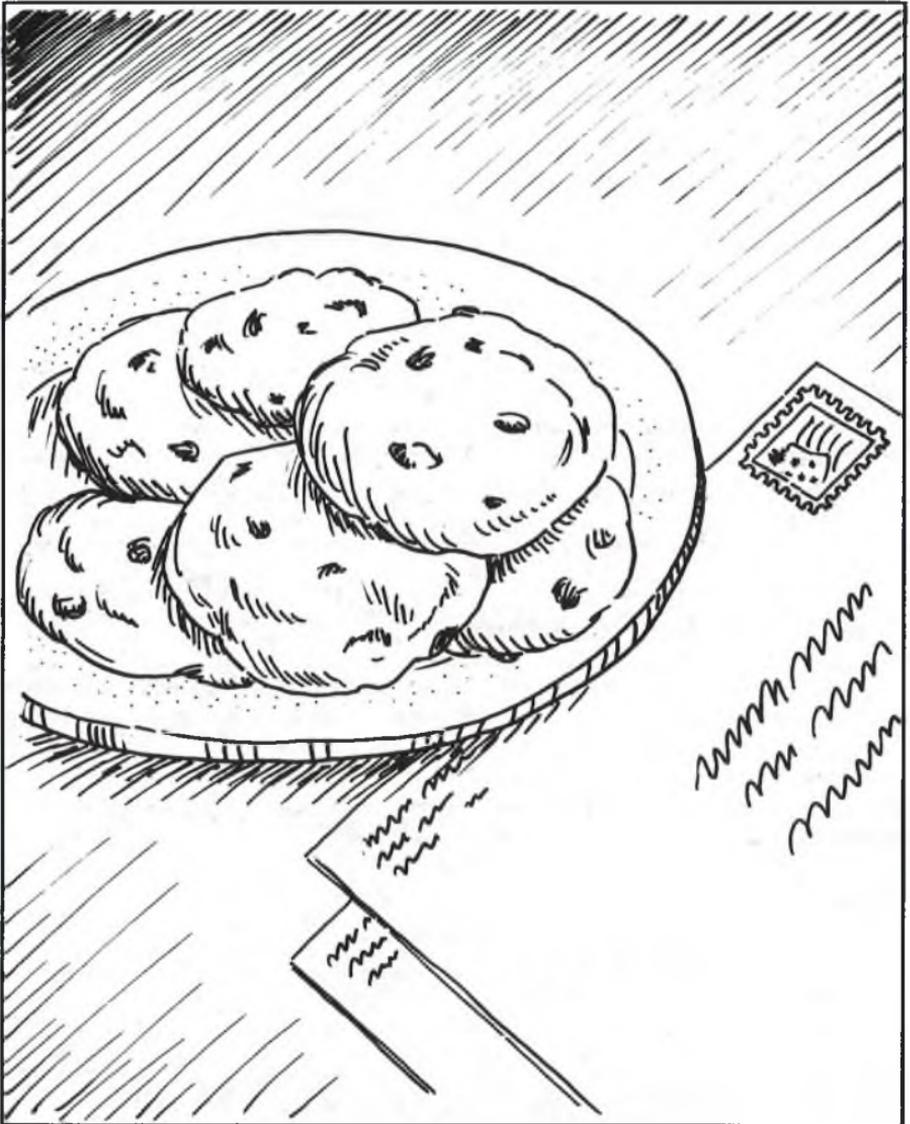
1. What is your natural or acquired talent?
2. How can a handicapped person be encouraged to use his God-given talent to help others?
3. How can you help to hasten Jesus' second coming by using your talents?

1. *The Story of Jesus*, p. 38.

2. *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 90, 91.

By Lydia Browne, religious-knowledge teacher for the Ministry of Education, Bahamas Government, Nassau.

OUTREACH GIFTS



“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8, NKJV).

If Only I Could Minister for the Lord

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Gal. 5:22, 23

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law” (Gal. 5:22, 23, NIV).

I hope Mr. Jones enjoys these cookies; the poor man has been so sick, thought Mrs. Wright as she took the freshly baked batch out of the oven. The previous week in church she had heard about Mr. Jones' illness and knowing that, like herself, he was widowed, thought he might benefit from a dose of chocolate chips.

*A few minutes later, she took the festively wrapped batch of cookies and climbed into her car to deliver the gift. As she was driving, she began thinking about the previous week's church service. *Lucy did such a beautiful job on that song. Her smooth alto voice made chills go up my spine. If only I could sing like that, how I could minister for God.**

The thought had no sooner left her mind when she noticed a car in the other lane with its blinker on. Without even thinking, she slowed her car down to let the driver get over in her lane. She smiled as the driver waved a small Thank you.

She took the festively wrapped batch of cookies and climbed into her car to deliver the gift.

Now what was that I was just thinking about? Oh yes, Lucy. I really must send her a note to let her know what a good job she did. And that guest speaker this weekend! My eyes were just filled with tears by the time he was done. If only I weren't so frightened to speak up front. I can't even seem to make myself have prayer! If only I had the gift of speech. I could really minister for God then. She sighed wistfully as she pulled into Mr. Jones' driveway.

While she was visiting with Mr. Jones, she helped him wash his dishes and made him a nice dinner. All the while, she thought about what she could do to minister for the Lord. She didn't know how to play an instrument or write eloquently. How could the church possibly benefit from her membership?

*That night she wrote an encouraging note to the pastor, a thank-you note to Lucy for her song, and sat down to call an old friend who had just lost her husband. As she was getting ready for bed, she began to muse again, *What could I possibly do to be a blessing to my church family and minister for God?**

By Julee Means, a sophomore communications/journalism major, Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska.

The Easiest Job in the World

LOGOS

Matt. 28:16-20; 24:14; Acts 1:8; 8:1-40

Matthew 28:16-20; 24:14

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19, NIV).

Jesus knew what He was doing when He said this—the last words He spoke to humans on earth. It was His last contact with His life on earth. The words weren’t warm and fuzzy; they were strong and purposeful. “Go.” They are words to be taken seriously. Words that hang throughout time as God’s great commission to us. It is no coincidence that Christ left us here with a purpose, because at some point in time, everyone asks himself or herself the question “Why am I here?” Once again, truth has provided the answer.

It has been said that just to pose a question creates an answer. And just as Christ begged the question, “How can we teach the *entire* world about you?” He also provided the answer. The disciples had nothing—no money, no faxes, no telephones, no fiber optics, and no television. How were they to accomplish this overwhelming task? “And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age” (verse 20). They weren’t supposed to spread the gospel. They were supposed to allow *Jesus* to spread the gospel through them. His message. His power. Don’t do it yourself. Don’t even try it. “Stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:49).

Acts 1:8

“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

God never asks us to do the impossible. He knows our true state of weakness. But over and over He tells us in the Bible that we don’t have to do anything. It is only God’s power that can accomplish what has been set before us. “Not that we are competent to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:5, 6).

These texts, rather than being a weight on our shoulders, a job from which we inwardly cringe, are in fact freeing! Christ meant them to be a source of great joy and excitement! God is a great God, and our biggest concern shouldn’t be doing; our greatest concern should be emptying ourselves so that Christ’s work, the “doing,” will have a ready instrument through us.

Christ told us how to empty ourselves, perhaps the most difficult lesson of all to learn. “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33, KJV). Put another way, “See your true state of helplessness and know that in me rests all the power you need. Understand this lesson and it will be impossible for your joy to remain caged. Then you shall be the kind of witness that I created you to be.” Webster’s dictionary defines witness as “one who sees personally.” “When the Holy Spirit comes on you, . . . you will be my witnesses” (Acts 1:8, NIV).

When we see Christ personally, after emptying ourselves of ourselves, we naturally, through His power, become His witnesses. We have made room for the Holy Spirit. We have given Christ permission to do through us. It is then that you suddenly become a witness. As Ellen White put it, "Every true disciple is born into the kingdom of God as a missionary."¹

Acts 8:1-40

Simon wanted to witness (Acts 8:18). He wanted to have an outreach gift. But he thought he knew how he should be used. Contrast Simon with Phillip in verse 26. Phillip was told only one thing: Go. He was not told for what he was going. He was simply being the vessel that the Lord said he would be. So he went. He had no idea how the Spirit was going to use him. But he knew that it was impossible for the Spirit to remain quiet within him. Simon said, "Give me . . . [so that I can do]" (verse 19). Phillip "started out . . . [so that the Spirit could do]" (verse 27). "Devotion to God and a spirit of sacrifice should be regarded as the first requisites of acceptable service."²

We are witnesses every day. And we leave either a positive memory with someone or a negative one. We either glorify God or we don't. We either leave ourselves open to receive the greatest spiritual gift of all, the Spirit, or we do not. Thank God that we are not told to go out alone, to do this great calling on our own merit, for we would surely fail. As soon as we take our eyes off Christ, we will fail. As soon

God never asks us to do the impossible. He knows our true state of weakness.

as we look at service as our only goal, we will fail. We must look to Jesus so that we may serve. Let us be like Phillip as we seek to reach others, listening to the call of the Spirit and going, doing, saying, being whatever will most glorify the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

REACT

1. Does hearing the words "Go and tell all the world" make me feel uneasy or afraid? Why?
2. What confidence can we have that we can be successful witnesses?
3. How can you tell what your spiritual gift is?
4. Why is it more important for us to be more concerned about whether we are open to being led by the Spirit than being concerned with what our spiritual gift is?

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 195.

2. *Messages to Young People*, p. 303.

Unselfish Service

TESTIMONY

Key Texts: Matt. 25:14-30; 1 Cor. 12:1-27

Jesus said to us, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation" (Mark 16:15, NIV). He did not expect us to do this by ourselves. He promised to be with us always and provided us with spiritual gifts to fulfill His commission. Spiritual gifts are for the unique purpose of building up the church so it can serve the world.

Spiritual gifts were never meant to be used to glorify ourselves. "The Christian is in the world as a representative of Christ, for the salvation of other souls. There can be no growth or fruitfulness in the life that is centered in self."¹

Although there are various gifts, no gift is insignificant. All spiritual gifts can be used to serve the world in the way God intended us to do. Using talents to magnify ourselves is very dangerous. That is what Satan himself did, and it led to his downfall. "Little by little Lucifer came to indulge the desire for self-exaltation. The Scripture says: 'Thou hast said in thine heart, . . . I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. . . . I will be like the Most High.' Isaiah 14:13, 14."² It corrupted him so much that instead of working for God, he began striving to get other angels to think that God was unfair.

"God is testing every soul that claims to believe in Him. All are entrusted with

Although there are various gifts, no gift is insignificant.

talents. The Lord has given men His goods upon which to trade. He has made them His stewards, and has placed in their possession money, houses, and lands. All these are to be regarded as the Lord's goods and used to advance His work, to build up His kingdom in the world. In trading with the Lord's goods, we are to seek Him for wisdom, that we may not use His sacred trust to glorify ourselves or to indulge selfish impulses. The amount entrusted varies, but those who have the smallest gifts must not feel that because their talent of means is small, they can do nothing with it."³

REACT

Why are there so many different kinds of spiritual gifts?

1. *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 67.
2. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 35.
3. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, pp. 245, 246.

By Daphne Erhart, a nursing major, Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska.

Giving Your All for the Lord

EVIDENCE

Key Text: 1 Cor. 12:4-11

Bill started a medical supply company. Bill's brother, Charlie, laid off from a construction job, asked Bill for work and was made vice-president. Charlie's best friend, Walt, a recent history graduate from college, became financial vice-president; and his fiancée, Angela, was hired for marketing. Valerie, who studied office management in college, was hired as secretary.

Soon, Bill noticed some flaws in his small company. Charlie spent more time on the golf course than in the office. Angela's week out with the flu caused Valerie to add marketing to her already-hectic workload. Paperwork was left undone, and contacts were left unchecked. Walt discovered that the only similarity finance has with history is that, although finances do repeat themselves, they grow bigger with interest. Soon, the once-happy company began to unravel.

After graduating with a computer-science/business-administration degree, Sarah began a computer-software company. Her business started slowly, but Sarah persisted, hiring only the best-suited employees to fill needed positions. After years of dedication, hard work, and intelligent planning, Sarah's small business had become a large and successful computer software corporation, attracting thousands of merchants and consumers.

Walt, a recent history graduate from college, became financial vice-president.

Why did one business succeed and the other fail? Key elements. Bill's hiring practices were haphazard. Sarah, on the other hand, sought people with the correct skills, placed them accordingly, and seized opportunities as they came.

Our church is a kind of corporation. Our president, God, has selected us to be His employees and has certain jobs He gives us to fulfill. God has given us power, plus talent, in certain areas. To some He gives the talent of preaching, to others teaching, to some nurturing, to others healing, to still others evangelism. By prayerfully selecting various people to work in the church, we are making a giant step toward wholistic evangelism.

Evangelism, however, is not limited to those who hold church offices. It counts on everyone in the church family, from the first-grader who shares God with his playmate to the woman who participates in weekly prison ministry; from the church members who invite visitors to their home for a Sabbath meal to the businessman who car pools with his colleagues every day. Evangelism takes many forms, and all should fit the particular spiritual gifts God has graciously given us.

God would not place us in a position without being willing to become involved. In fact, He's eager to join us and prove how far our spiritual gifts can be used for Him to save a dying world. Why not take Him up on His offer?

By Laurel McClelland, a senior secondary-education major in English and religion, Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska.

A Living Witness

HOW-TO

Key Text: Matt. 5:17, 18

Throughout the New Testament, we read about the call for Christ's followers to share their light with others. Thankfully, Jesus will not leave one of us to do the work on our own. He gives each of us distinctive talents and abilities to share the joy we have with those around us. So the question is not *who* should be working in Christian outreach, but *how* should we all be working in Christian outreach. The following steps may help you to use the gifts you have been given to reach those around you.

1. Realize that every Christian is called upon to be a witness for Christ. Many believers feel that because their spiritual gifts are not in the category of evangelism or preaching, they need not worry about witnessing. However, whether we want to be or not, we are all witnesses in one way or another. When we call ourselves Christians, our lives are on display, and people around us are watching to see how we act and react. How we deal with our peers, with controversy, or with negative situations makes a tremendous impact on those with whom we come in contact. When we display a Christlike character, we indirectly point others to Jesus.

2. Know what your spiritual gifts are, and use them. Only through prayer, practice, and the submission of ourselves to the will of Christ can we learn what our spiritual gifts are and develop them. Pray that the Spirit, who gave you your

Whether we want to be or not, we are all witnesses in one way or another.

gifts, will reveal to you what they are and that He will give you opportunity to use them. Be willing to try new things, and don't be afraid to take risks. You will never know whether you are talented in a particular area unless you try.

3. Be alert to witnessing opportunities. Perhaps, when you think of witnessing, you imagine knocking on someone's door or preaching a sermon to someone at work. As we've already discussed, however, witnessing is accomplished in both direct and indirect ways. We need to be alert to our opportunities to share a warm smile or a friendly handshake. Perhaps we can offer help to someone in a time of need or even share our testimony with a struggling friend. The key to effective witnessing is developing relationships. As people see that you care for them, they will see that Christ cares for them.

4. Take the initiative. Don't wait for others to come to you, but look for ways to make acquaintances. So often we are willing to make friends if others will make the first move. However, as Christians, we are called to take the initiative!

REACT

How can you build friendships with the people with whom you come in contact every day?

By David Kennedy, a senior religion major, Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska.

Measuring the Spirit

OPINION

Key Text: Gal. 5:22, 23

Galatians 5:22, 23 is nice and neat, real rules written in a little package, so we can measure and judge one another and our own actions by those words. The fruits of the Spirit look a lot like that, and too often we use them in that way. It is too easy to fall into that clever trap that the devil sets.

We say that just because a church member has no compassion toward the homeless on the street that he is wicked and terrible and should be disfellowshipped. Or we talk at supper about the church-school teacher and how she has no patience and loses self-control.

How are we supposed to know how these people are dealing with problems in their lives? How do we know that the teacher is desperately praying every day that the Holy Spirit will help her take more time to explain things? Or how do we know that the church member is not, at the moment, helping in a soup kitchen on the other side of town, an area through which we wouldn't ever want to drive? Our narrow, limited minds are never able to see and feel all that our fellow humans are seeing and feeling. We can't say that, because we can't see them standing up to our standard, the Spirit is not working on them.

On the other hand, those who look as though they have all of the fruits don't

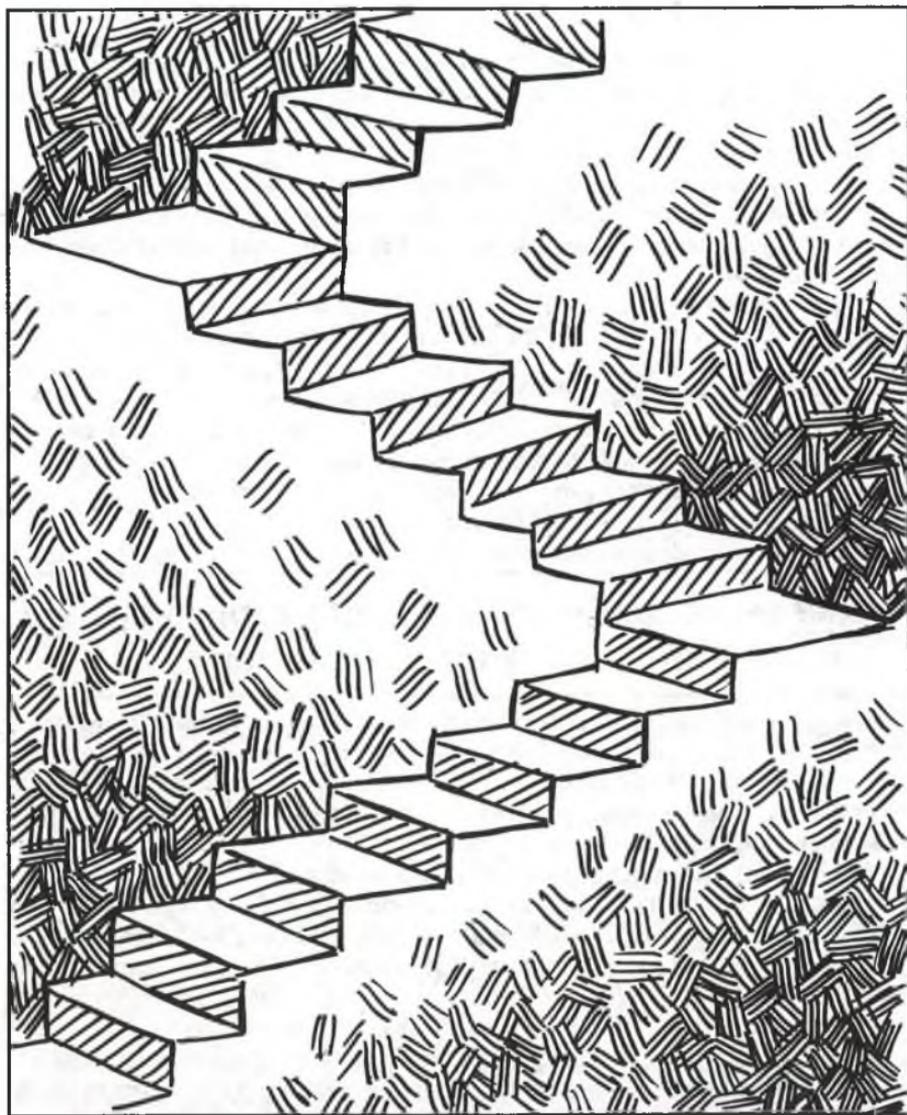
Those who appear to have it all wrapped up are sometimes having the hardest time.

always do things for the highest good either. Those who appear to have it all wrapped up are sometimes having the hardest time. They must be broken by the Spirit, like anyone else, and, as is often the case, they break much harder than those who are weaker. Just looking as though you have all of the fruits of the Spirit is no guarantee of salvation, be assured.

The fruits of the Spirit are gifts to us, not a measurement of how much of the Spirit we have. To use them like a gauge is taking them and twisting them to meet your own shortcomings and judgmental attitudes. All in this world are given the fruits of the Spirit if they choose. Just because they look like the epitome of holiness doesn't mean that they love God. And if they don't show the fruits in a way we decide appropriate, that doesn't mean that they don't show them at all. The fruits are a guideline, not a standard. It is when we help and encourage one another to fulfill our Christ-centered mission that we find ourselves using these gifts to lift up others, not to measure them up.

By Paul Britain, a communication major at Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska.

THE “O” WORD



“It is my pleasure to tell you about the miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me. How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; his dominion endures from generation to generation” (Dan. 4:2, 3, NIV).

Overcoming Martyrdom

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: 1 John 5:5

The word *overcoming* still frightens Adventists out of their pews. For many it's buried in a haze of painful memories. Fiery sermons of certainty about the last days and the need to overcome sin. Brochures shouting perfection. Ellen White statements such as, "The work of overcoming is to be the study of every soul who enters the kingdom of God. That impatient word quivering on your lips must be left unspoken. . . ."¹

There were Overcoming Techniques: pray, eat proper foods, choose good friends, don't listen to rock music, don't watch movies, go to an Adventist school, take cold showers. The problem is, most had trouble mastering the techniques, let alone getting around to much actual overcoming. Impatient words quivering on lips were the least of our concerns.

But in this week's text, John talks about overcoming and smiles at the same time. He mentions the "O" word without the slightest hint of pain, worry, discouragement, anger, or frustration. In fact, in the same breath he talks about love, victory, and faith.

The key is to look at what John doesn't say about victory. First John 5:4 doesn't say that Christian victory comes through will and resolve, or stronger effort. It says,

All the world's efforts are like toy guns pointed against the atomic power of God's love.

"This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith" (NIV).

The next verse tells us that faith is accepting Jesus as the Son of God. Jesus demonstrated that all the world's efforts are like toy guns pointed against the atomic power of His love. His love restores lives, heals hearts, and destroys evil. It led to His death, but empowered His resurrection.

We won't overcome the world by becoming vegetarians, fasting, or learning our memory verse each week—as good as those things are. We will overcome the world by making sure we're on God's side. We then become part of *His* victory. We may be the weakest players—but look out, we're on His winning team.

While we're on the team, we want Him to coach us. We want to grow in His love. He promises us "a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline" (2 Tim. 1:7). But in the end we'll have no delusions as to who leads the team to victory. Incidentally, Ellen White finishes her quote above with the words "You should overcome the idea that you are a martyr, and lay claim to the promise of Christ, who says, 'My grace is sufficient for thee.'"²

1. *Messages to Young People*, p. 91.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 92.

By Gary Krause, creative director at the South Pacific Division Adventist Media Centre, Sydney, Australia.

Revisiting Nicodemus

LOGOS

Acts 8:9-25; 13:4-12; 14:3; 19:11-20

We must remind ourselves of the powerful links between John's first letter and his Gospel, where he primarily focuses on the particular moment when unbelievers come to belief. He records in detail their meetings and conversations with Jesus and traces their intellectual and emotional journey to the moment of belief.

John 3 records the internal battle of Nicodemus as he strives for belief in Jesus. John 4 describes the incredulity of the Samaritan woman in conversation with Jesus, culminating with many Samaritans moving toward belief in Him on the basis of her testimony. Likewise, stories of the official's son in chapter 4 and the Bethesda invalid in chapter 5 through to the climax in John 20 with Jesus' own doubting disciple, Thomas. He should have found belief easiest of all, but finally dispels his doubts after the resurrection in the triumphant words "My Lord and my God" (20:28, RSV).

John's Gospel was written so we could identify with these experiences. His book comes deep from within the heart of the disciple who loved Jesus most. He writes so "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life" (verse 31).

It's significant that the first detailed conversation in John's Gospel is with the intellectual unbeliever Nicodemus, and that the conversation centers on the concept of being "born again," the same concept that's central to 1 John.

First John 1:3 takes up where John 20:31 leaves off: "We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard" (1 John 1:3, NIV), but this time it emphasizes the *results* of belief: "so that you also may have fellowship with us." The fact that "our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ" (verse 3), is rooted in being "born again" as a son or daughter of God. The inevitable implication is that whoever loves the Father loves the child (1 John 5:1).

Drawing the Strings Together

It's easy to fall into the trap of seeing John simply as a dewy-eyed sentimentalist who tells nice stories in his Gospel, and in his first letter loses his way in his enthusiasm over love. But in 1 John 5:1-5, John draws together his arguments against Gnostic heretics, who have tried to destroy the church. He does so with the incisiveness and comprehension of an academic. In verses 6-12 he draws out the implications of his conclusions.

The Docetist heretics led many astray with their belief that Jesus couldn't possibly have had a real physical body. They were adamant that only the spirit is good and that the body (or flesh) is intrinsically bad. How could a good God, who is spirit, possibly commune with an evil body? In 1 John 4:2 John debunks these Gnostic assumptions by emphasizing that it's central to Christian belief that Jesus has come "in the flesh."

In 1 John 5:6, John openly condemns those who follow Cerinthus, another heretic. Cerinthus taught that Jesus was an ordinary but righteous young man who, at his baptism, was blessed with having the God-part enter him. As the dove descended, Jesus became God. But before his death, the God-part returned to heaven

because God could never die.

John reiterates that Jesus came by water and the blood, and that the Sonship of Jesus was always in the flesh—at His death as well as at His baptism.

In view of this particular heresy, it becomes clear why Thomas' inspection of Jesus' bodily wounds is such an important climax to John's Gospel—Jesus is still flesh and blood even after His resurrection.

False imported beliefs had far-reaching implications for Christian living. The platonic view of the body led to three heresies:

- Some would follow ascetic practices to purify their evil bodies. These practices were opposed to the feasting, celebratory style of God's system in the Old Testament.

- Others would say that things done by or to the body couldn't affect their spirituality. This gave an excuse to plunge into promiscuity and debauchery—thus John's emphasis on commandment keeping (see 1 John 2:6; 5:3).

- Yet another group would claim that their spiritual self was now so distant from their fleshly desires they could no longer possibly sin (1 John 1:8).

All of these lifestyles and beliefs derived from a faulty understanding of the human nature of Christ, and arose from a denial that Jesus was born as God. By importing foreign philosophical notions into Christianity, the whole Christian dynamic is canceled.

John's Gospel comes deep from within the heart of the disciple who loved Jesus most.

The Genius of John

John battles Christians (so-called) who want to merge two vastly different beliefs into one. The result is a church suffering at the hands of judgmental perfectionists or promiscuous, misrepresentative members. John uses Gnosticism's affinity for a Yin- and Yang-style "divided universe" to make his point. The Gnostics thought in terms of good versus evil, light versus darkness, real versus counterfeit, Spirit versus the world, and truth versus lies. Christian Gnostics had a passion for Spirit, truth, goodness, and light, and John adds the Christian notion of love, which, being central to the teachings of Jesus, they couldn't possibly reject.

Once the concept of love is injected into the Gnostic thought-world, the lifestyle implications are automatic. Love for one another becomes uppermost, the commandments of Jesus guide brotherly love, and forgiveness once again assumes its primacy in the salvation process.

REACT

1. Are there traces of modern Gnosticism in the Adventist Church? Explain your answer.

2. What kinds of other modern philosophical notions are threatening the church?

By Gary Christian, manager of New South Wales Country Services for the Sydney City Mission, Sydney, Australia.

Cooperation and Victory

TESTIMONY

Key Text: 1 John 5:1-5

“Faith familiarizes the soul with the existence and presence of God, and, living with an eye single to the glory of God, more and more we discern the beauty of His character, the excellence of His grace. Our souls become strong in spiritual power; for we are breathing the atmosphere of heaven, and realizing that God is at our right hand, that we shall not be moved. We are rising above the world, beholding Him who is the chief among ten thousand, the one altogether lovely, and by beholding we are to become changed into His image.”¹

“Man’s efforts alone are nothing but worthlessness; but cooperation with Christ means a victory. Of ourselves we have no power to repent of sin. Unless we accept divine aid we cannot take the first step toward the Saviour.”²

“Neither life nor death, height nor depth, can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus; not because we hold Him so firmly, but because He holds us so fast. If our salvation depended on our own efforts, we could not be saved; but it depends on the One who is behind all the promises. Our grasp on Him may seem feeble, but His love is that of an elder brother; so long as we maintain our union with Him, no one can pluck us out of His hand.”³

“None of the apostles and prophets ever claimed to be without sin. . . . The nearer

“None of the apostles and prophets ever claimed to be without sin.”

we come to Jesus, and the more clearly we discern the purity of His character, the more clearly shall we see the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the less shall we feel like exalting ourselves.”⁴

“John did not teach that salvation was to be earned by obedience; but that obedience was the fruit of faith and love.”⁵

“There are those who have known the pardoning love of Christ, and who really desire to be children of God, yet they realize that their character is imperfect, their life faulty, and they are ready to doubt whether their hearts have been renewed by the Holy Spirit. To such I would say, Do not draw back in despair. We shall often have to bow down and weep at the feet of Jesus because of our shortcomings and mistakes, but we are not to be discouraged. Even if we are overcome by the enemy, we are not cast off, not forsaken and rejected of God.”⁶

1. *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 335.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 381.

3. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 553.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 561.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 563.

6. *Steps to Christ*, p. 64.

By Gary Krause, creative director at the South Pacific Division Adventist Media Centre, Sydney, Australia.

Ecstatic Love

EVIDENCE

Key Text: 1 John 5:1-4

In Western society, the word *love* so saturates our conceptual world that we fail to see the uniqueness of this Judeo-Christian contribution.

Eastern religions have little understanding of *agape* love. Although Buddhists will argue that we should show helpfulness toward others, they would turn their back on the concept of Christian love. For love is all about our *attachment* to God and to other people, and if anything is central to every Buddhist “denomination,” it’s the commitment to *detachment* from our own individuality and from the love of others.

Greek philosophy and various Eastern religions find salvation through enlightenment, not via love. The individual mind assumes prime importance, and another loving person is merely a distraction.

The Christian concept of love and the idea of a God who gives salvation for nothing in return is totally incomprehensible to Hindus. For them, salvation is a bargain—I give, I get. Most of the world’s religions reduce to this bargain, including the animistic “Shaman” (or witch-doctor) religions that have become so popular with New Agers today.

Sadly, the Hebrew religion of Jesus’ day had degenerated into a bargain reli-

Eastern religions have little understanding of *agape* love.

gion. The Pharisaic belief permeating the society of His time was that if certain rules were kept, God was obligated to give salvation in return.

Can you imagine how John felt when he discovered the centrality of love, so alien to the religious culture of his day? In 1 John 3:1 he launches into ecstasy with, “How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!”

John speaks passionately in 1 John 5:4 when he addresses those sinless Gnostics who have been relentlessly striving for the victory of their spirit over “the world” (the Gnostic term for all that is evil and susceptible to death). Victory isn’t by the enlightenment of the mind or by grinding effort. “This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith” (verse 4). Victory comes by way of a loving relationship with Him who overcame the world for us.

If we fail to hear John’s exhilaration and exuberance about love in his writings, we’ve failed to understand *anything* he says.

REACT

Are there similarities between Hinduism, Buddhism, and some interpretations of Adventism? Explain your answer.

By Gary Christian, manager of New South Wales Country Services for Sydney City Mission, Australia.

Raise the Risen Christ

HOW-TO

Key Text: 1 John 5:5

We inherit eternal life only through our faith in the risen Christ, the Son of God. Our faith in Christ is demonstrated through our understanding and response to His life, death, and resurrection.

John tells us that we can overcome the world only in the measure that we believe in the Messiah Christ as the Son of God. He points out the “three witnesses” that testify that Christ is the beloved Son of God—Spirit, “water and blood” (verse 6, NIV).

The reference to water takes us back to the waters of Jordan. Christ demonstrated submission to His Father’s will when he strode into the waters of Jordan to be baptized. His baptism exemplifies the significance of His death and resurrection and is yet another emblem of the salvation plan.

The blood of Christ is both a somber and a victorious symbol of the exhilarating promise of redemption. On one hand it’s a symbol of the terrifying death of Christ, emphasizing the enormity of sin’s burden since the inception of time. On the other hand, it signifies the wonder of new life, the victory of the risen Christ! We are called as children of God to raise the risen Christ; to testify that the shedding of the precious blood of the Son of God was the genesis of resurrected life, the dawning of eternal life, for us—a fallen humanity.

The blood of Christ is both a somber and a victorious symbol.

This paradoxical nature of the salvation plan becomes a model for our daily living. The choices we make each day involve a dying to our carnal inclinations through the power of the Spirit and testifying to the victory of the cross. Faith in the saving power of Calvary then becomes for us a participation in the blood of Christ; but also, by the same token, a recurring baptismal experience. In both, our response can be shaped and sustained only by the stirring of the Spirit in our lives. As we succumb to the Spirit’s leading, we raise Christ, crucified and risen, so that others may believe.

Our faith in Christ must be a living, growing faith. It involves:

- Being prepared to walk the road to Golgotha; to accept pain and sacrifice and to trust in the liberating power of the cross.
- Keeping the commandments through daily walking with the Spirit of God.
- A commitment to the rites and responsibilities of baptism.
- Perceiving the world on bended knees—seeking God in prayer, humility, repentance, confession, and reflecting the presence of God in our lives and through our interactions with others.

By Jane Fernandez, an English teacher at Sydney (Australia) Adventist College.

Overcoming Victory

OPINION

Key Text: 1 John 5:4

It was a great victory.

The tribes of Israel had spent seven days trudging around the circumference of the city of Jericho. Using a bizarre military tactic, the priests sounded their trumpets. The impregnable walls of Jericho fell to the ground, another campaign to reclaim the Promised Land accomplished.

In mid-1995, Croatia had regained much of the territory taken by the Serbs after the breakup of the former Yugoslavia. The siege of Sarajevo appeared to be over as a result of NATO air strikes. At last it seemed there truly might be peace in the region.

Nineveh's citizens had been warned—annihilation was their God-ordained fate. Yet they turned the fury of Yahweh around, repenting of their evil ways. Destruction had been averted.

The book of Daniel seemed only to raise questions for William Miller. But when he realized that Daniel had forecast Jesus' return to earth—even seeming to name the day—his questions were answered.

It was a terrible defeat.

The inhabitants of Jericho were under siege by the Israelites. The walls of the

He was so ashamed that he curled up and wanted to die.

city had been constructed to keep them safe. Somehow the unthinkable happened, and an army was ransacking their town. Terror barely had time to set in before the massacre began.

Their homes had become the latest battlegrounds. Thousands of Serbs became refugees overnight. The tables were turned, but premeditated human misery went on.

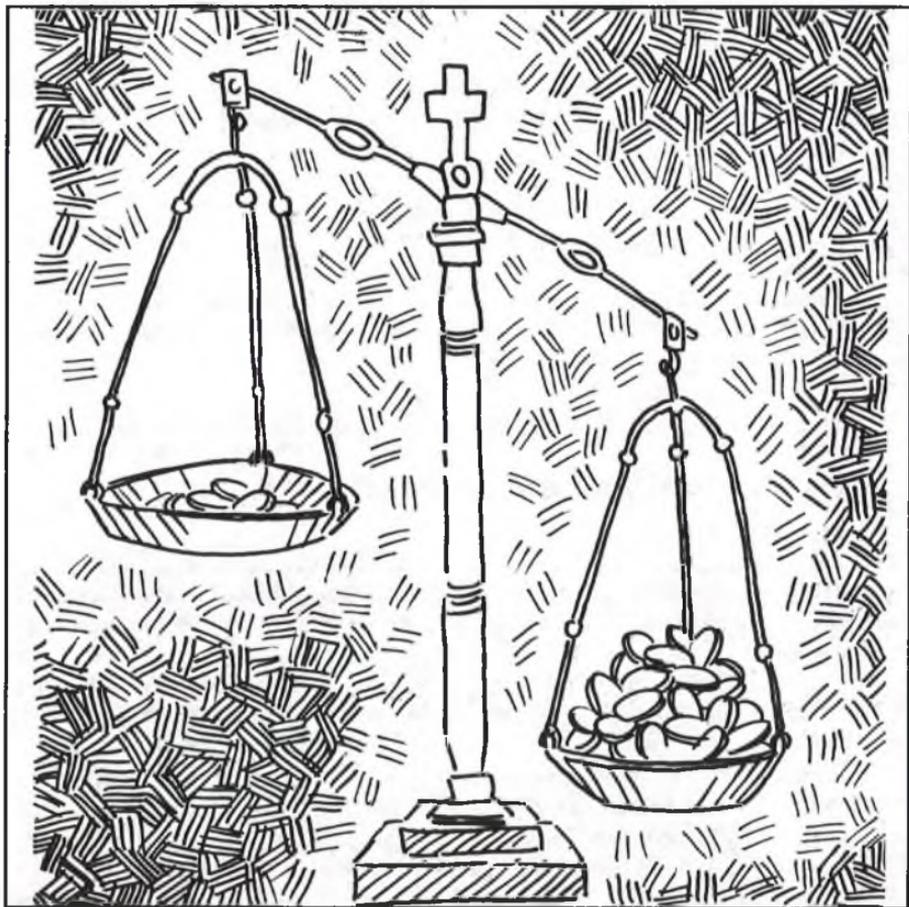
Not only had he endured the stench and ignominy of sitting inside a fish for a few days, Jonah was now humiliated as God changed His mind—just like that, without any warning or word of explanation. Jonah's reputation as a prophet was on the line. He was so ashamed that he curled up and wanted to die.

They had gathered on hilltops and waited. Everyone knew exactly what they were there for. Jesus was coming—that very day—to remove them from this world of sin and suffering. They waited as the sun set. They waited through the night, yet October 23 dawned just like any other day.

The flipside of victory is defeat. And the notion of defeat should raise many questions for people who follow the message of Jesus, a Man who rewrote the rules about enemies and who demonstrated daily that life isn't about wining or losing, but about loving.

By Elissa Milne, a composer and private music teacher in Sydney, Australia.

WHAT EARTHLY GOOD ARE THEY?



“The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.’ His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’” (Matt. 25:20, 21, NIV).

Discovery

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: 1 Cor. 12:4, 5

The people wore little clothing. Every male carried an AK-47. They spoke Karamajong and seldom smiled.

Jeff was 19. He was a Westerner and spoke only English. He felt all alone. Jeff found himself in Africa for one year's voluntary work with ADRA. Four months had already passed, and he felt he had done little. Karamoja was his big chance to help Samson, the man in charge, arrange food deliveries to schools and health clinics.

Two weeks into this assignment, Samson had fallen from a motor bike and received severe head injuries. Suddenly, Jeff found himself in charge of feeding 15,000 people. Only one thought persistently raced through his mind, "Am I capable of doing this job?"

The job description was not very clear. All Jeff knew was that World Food Program (WFP) would be trucking tons of food to this remote part of the country. The food had to be stored and delivered to each school according to their student population. It did not take Jeff long to realize that, to gain more food for their families, all the school principals lied about the number of students.

Jeff's nerves were on edge after discovering, one month into the job, that the pre-

The previous two white men who had held his job had become target practice.

vious two white men who had held his job had become target practice for some of the warriors' AK-47s. The men had not been killed, but the project had been abandoned. Jeff's prayer life and constant contact with God had never been so strong.

After the first month, the food distribution was progressing well. The second month went by without any major problems. After returning from WFP headquarters, the third month's activities were to be radioed to Jeff. The only instructions Jeff had been given were to empty the storehouses before the food started rotting. For that month the radio link did not work at all. After a week of frustration, Jeff began food-for-work activities all over the district. By the end of the month, the storehouses were empty, and Jeff wondered whether he had done what WFP had wanted.

On returning to WFP headquarters, Jeff received praise beyond any expectations. The words that stuck in his mind were, "You have a gift for working with these people."

He had no idea that his answer to the challenge was seen by others as a real gift. Now, he strongly believes that the Holy Spirit was right there with him in Karamoja.

You may be struggling to know what your spiritual gifts are. What does the Bible say? What does history teach us? How does any of this apply to you today? This week's lesson will help you discover some answers for yourself.

By Robyn Dunstall, a senior theology student, Avondale College, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia.

The Parable of the Talents and Spiritual Gifts

LOGOS

Matt. 25:14-30; Eph. 4:12-16; 1 Cor. 12:12-31

The parable of the talents is found at a very significant place in the Gospel of Matthew. One of the unique features of this Gospel is that it gathers five major blocks of Jesus' teaching into what is referred to as the five discourses. This parable is found in the fourth discourse, which deals with the end of the age and the coming of the Son of Man (Matthew 24, 25). Like the two parables that precede it (the parable of the faithful slave [24:45-51] and the parable of the 10 maidens [25:1-13]), the parable of the talents deals with what takes place between the leaving and the return of somebody significant. The two previous parables deal with how people act when the promised return is delayed; this parable deals with the servants' responsibilities while they await the return of their Lord.

The parable of the talents (verses 14-30) describes the actions of a wealthy householder departing on a long journey. He calls three of his servants together and distributes his monetary assets among them according to their abilities. One is given five talents, another two, the last one. A talent represented a considerable amount of money in the first century. A hired laborer would work for a wage of a *denarius* per day (20:2), and although the ratio was not constant, one talent would be worth at least 3,500 *denarii*.^{*} In other words, the householder was able to leave in the care of his servants an extraordinary amount of money. He was truly wealthy. If nothing else, this sum represents the kind of disparity that existed between the poor and the truly rich at the time of the New Testament.

The passage of time brought the return of the householder, and the servants each returned to the householder his original investment. The difference between them was that the servants receiving five and two talents had doubled their stake. They were rewarded. Because they had been faithful over little, they were to be put in charge of many things (25:21, 23).

What then is the meaning of the parable? In particular, what does the parable reveal about the topic of this week's study—the discovery of spiritual gifts?

Within the context of Matthew 24 and 25, the meaning of the parable is relatively straightforward. It shows that even though Christians look for the soon return of Jesus with great longing, this does not mean that they should abandon their present responsibilities. Just as the maidens failed to make provision for the possibility of delay (25:3, 4), so the servant with the one talent was wicked because he did not put that talent to use during this lord's absence (verses 26, 27). Which brings us to the point at which the parable has relevance to the topic of the lesson—our responsibility to use our spiritual gifts.

The servant who did not use the one talent that he had been given had it taken away from him (verses 28, 29). This is true of our natural talents as well. The pianist who does not practice, the language student who does not revise vocabulary and use the language, and even the mathematician who takes up other professional interests will all eventually lose their skills.

There is another side to this coin. Those who do use their natural talents develop

them. A gifted athlete has raw ability and determination. But these things of themselves do not make champions. That takes practice. It takes time and effort, honing native talent to develop it into useful skills.

There is some ambiguity about the relationship between natural abilities and spiritual gifts. But whatever this relationship is, spiritual gifts share these characteristics with natural talents: if used, they increase; if unused, they diminish.

This has some pretty important personal implications for each of us. What happens if we do not use our spiritual gifts? What about spiritual gifts we may have but don't yet recognize? Does this mean that when we are asked to fill a particular

There is some ambiguity about the relationship between natural abilities and spiritual gifts.

role in the church we should say Yes, even though we will be learning how to do new things?

REACT

1. Make a list of at least three of your abilities that you could use for the good of the Christian community and its outreach.
2. Do you think of any of these as spiritual gifts?
3. When was the last time that you said Yes when you were asked to use abilities associated with these gifts?
4. Describe a time when you discovered new gifts in yourself as you undertook new responsibilities.

**The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 8, pp. 733, 734.*

By Robert K. McIver, senior lecturer of New Testament in the theology department at Avondale College, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia.

Use It, or Lose It

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Rom. 12:11

During my schooling days, I decided to learn to play a musical instrument. As Mum had a guitar lying around the house, I picked it up and began to learn it. I found it reasonably easy, and as I spent more time with it, my skill in playing the instrument increased. I found myself and my trusty guitar leading out in the singing for Sabbath School and church, playing for some special events, and eventually joining a band.

Unfortunately as other time pressures mounted up and as circumstances changed, I began to spend less and less time practicing and playing my guitar. The skill that I had developed began to fade. I found myself looking up chord charts that I had once known fluently. The less time I spent developing my skill, the less skill I had.

It is the same with our spiritual gifts. If we do not take the time to develop them, we could end up losing them. "Uncalled for and unused, the spiritual gifts bestowed on . . . [church members not using their gifts] have dwindled into feebleness."¹

God has given each of us spiritual gifts or talents. He does not want us to treat them like an unwanted gift received at Christmas, tossed into the bottom of the wardrobe. He wants us to *use* the gifts that He has given. "The talents, however few, are to be put to use. The question that most concerns us is not, How much have I re-

“You will never reach a higher standard than you yourself set.”

ceived? but, What am I doing with that which I have?”² Are you using your talents, or have you buried them underground?

“The development of all our powers is the first duty we owe to God and to our fellow men. No one who is not growing daily in capability and usefulness is fulfilling the purpose of life.”³ These are strong words indeed, but when reflecting on Christ’s being at the head of the church and His people the body, these words seem justified. For a head without a body is useless. If we are to be an effective workable body, we need to develop and use the spiritual gifts that He has given to us.

Finally, “Many whom God has qualified to do excellent work accomplish very little, because they attempt little. . . . Remember that you will never reach a higher standard than you yourself set. Then set your mark high. . . . Let nothing hinder you.”⁴ “Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor” (Rom. 12:11, NIV). Continue always to develop your spiritual gifts.

1. *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 127.

2. *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 329.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 329, 330.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 331, 332.

By Travis Manners, a senior business student at Avondale College, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia.

The Use of Spiritual Gifts: Past and Present

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Rom. 16:1, 2

“I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deaconess of the church at Cenchrae, that you may receive her in the Lord as befits the saints, and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been a helper of many and of myself as well” (Rom. 16:1, 2, RSV).

In the period immediately after Christ’s death, the members of the early Christian church were encouraged to make full use of the spiritual gifts they possessed. This allowed them to work in the capacity to which they were suited. As they used spiritual gifts to their full extent, the church grew rapidly. Therefore, we find that men and women shared equally the work of the church. Women and men served as deaconesses and deacons, the early church equivalent of local church leaders (verses 1-21). The women mentioned here are Priscilla, mentioned before her husband, therefore breaking with the tradition of the time; Persis; Mary; Junias; Tryphena; and Tryphosa. Note especially Phoebe, whom Paul is sending to work for the church.

As the church became more structured and regimented, so did the opportunities to use spiritual gifts. As priesthood became a career option, it seemed as though the gift of preaching and teaching was reserved for men.

We find that men and women shared equally the work of the church.

A similar situation occurred at the beginning of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. One of our most respected church leaders was a woman. Ellen White had been given a message and gift from God and was able to fulfill God’s work for her. At this time, many female Bible workers evangelized and preached alongside men. As our church developed and became more structured, however, so did the requirements for preachers. Women were once again marginalized as the gift of ministering, and preaching was relegated to the male domain.

REACT

1. In what ways are we hindering, or limiting, church growth?
2. In what ways can human decisions over who has which spiritual gifts actually limit God’s aspirations for us?
3. In what ways, if any, does the concept of spiritual gifts relate to the issue of the ordination of women to the ministry?
4. How should we reconcile differences between others’ perceptions of what our spiritual gifts are with our own convictions?
5. How do we balance the carrying out of one’s gift for nurturing the church with other responsibilities such as personal health and family needs?

By Ruth Dauven, a senior education student with a major in history at Avondale College, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia.

How Useful Should We Be?

HOW-TO

Key Texts: Matt. 25:21; Eph. 4:13

Spiritual gifts with which God endows His people are special attributes from the Holy Spirit for the growth of the church and fulfilment of its mission. As believers, we are never excused from service (Matt. 25:14-30). God sets out conditions of our work. We do not necessarily choose the particular talents (gifts) He gives us, but we are accountable in how we use them.

Effective ministry occurs when the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23) evident in God's followers, work hand in hand with spiritual gifts. Although spiritual gifts are identified in Scripture, there are no specific instructions as to how to discover and verify particular gifts. Nevertheless, through prayerful study of God's Word and insights gained from life experiences, some guidelines can be provided.

1. As a practicing Christian, believe that you have a spiritual gift. Friends, colleagues, and church officers can assist you with a realistic self-evaluation of what your gifts may be.

2. Look around and see with what needs you can identify. Help the church meet the particular challenges of the twenty-first century in the church and in the wider community. Ask the question: "What special gifts do I have for reaching the socially isolated, those in poverty, the work-stressed individual, the spiritually de-

Effective ministry occurs when the fruits of the Spirit work hand-in-hand with spiritual gifts.

spondent?"

3. Actively develop your gift. God wants guided action on our part: "I don't want any of you sitting around on your hands. I don't want anyone strolling off, down some path that goes nowhere. And mark that you do this with humility and discipline—not in fits and starts, but steadily, pouring yourselves out for each other in acts of love, alert at noticing differences and quick at mending fences" (Eph. 4:3, 4, The Message).

4. Be open to the Holy Spirit. "There is no limit to the usefulness of one who, by putting self aside, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon his heart, and lives a life wholly consecrated to God." We may in fact, never know our full range of gifts and talents, and some risk-taking may be involved.

5. Empower others in the way you use your gifts. "If you help, . . . don't take over. . . . if you give encouraging guidance, be careful that you don't get bossy; if you're put in charge, don't manipulate; . . . if you work with the disadvantaged, don't let yourself get irritated with them or depressed by them. Keep a smile on your face" (Rom. 12:6-8).

**The Desire of Ages, pp. 250, 251.*

By Glenys Perry, lecturer in home economics/design and technology, Avondale College, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia.

What on Earth Are Spiritual Gifts?

OPINION

Key Text: Eph. 4:12-16

Consider an average church in an average town in an average developed country. It is the time of the year when the nominating committee meets to fill the positions of service in that church. “What about sister So-and-so?” somebody suggests for the position of Sabbath School secretary. “I’m sure she has a gift for that job.” Gift? They can’t be talking about spiritual gifts, can they? Especially considering that the sister may have been the fifteenth person called to that position, where each one before was also considered to have a gift.

The term *spiritual gift* is too easily applied to those who work for or in the church. But really, are these all spiritual gifts? Are the skills these people display any better, or “Spirit-inspired,” than those of non-Christians in the outside world? If the gift is to be judged by its fruit, we would have to conclude that there are many more non-Christians with spiritual gifts than church members holding office.

Spiritual gifts are special gifts given for special God-given tasks. How can we expect to receive spiritual gifts if we are not prepared to serve? In this world many are in need of food and shelter, both real and spiritual. If we are not prepared to serve to that end, can we really presume that our skills are still Spirit-given? This is not denying that God has a work for each one of us in our local church. This work is

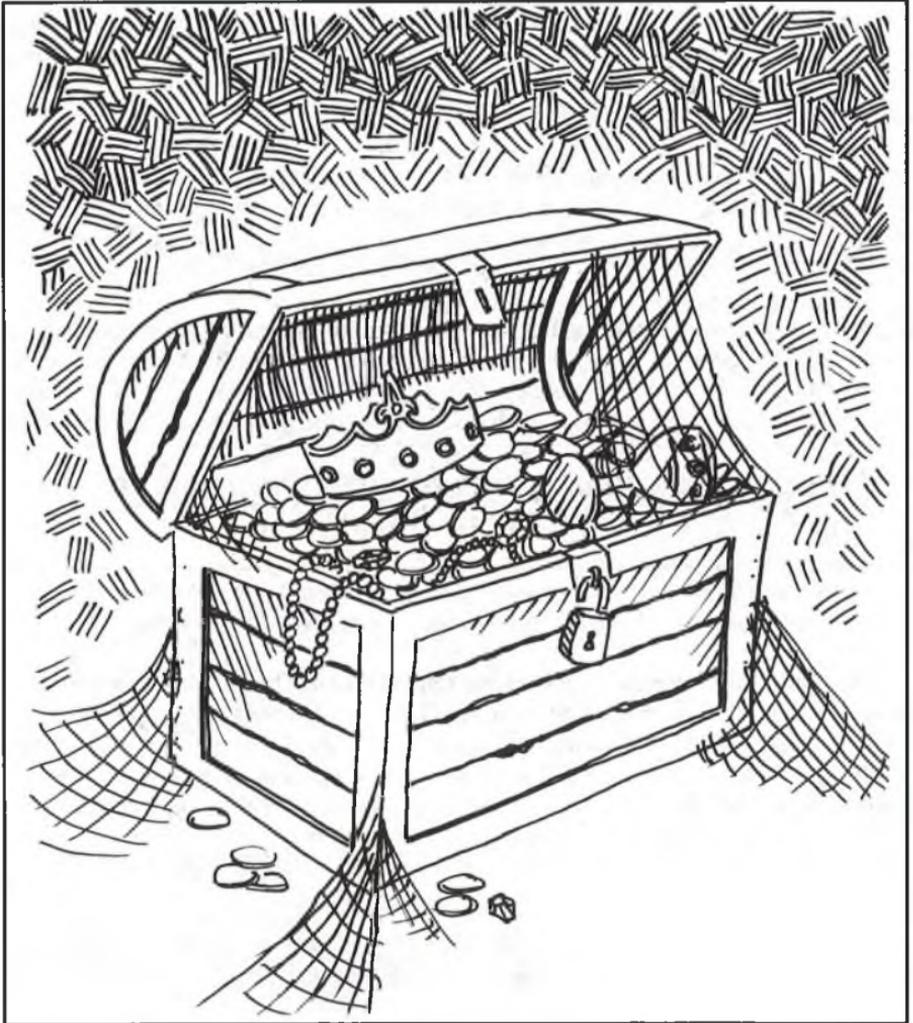
The term *spiritual gift* is too easily applied to those who work for or in the church.

important, and we should do our earthly best to do it—but it is just that, our earthly best. We must use the talents and gifts that God has given to every member of the human race.

The skills that we are given at birth are important resources that God has created in us. We are expected to develop these for God’s service and not to expect a spiritual handout when we become a Christian. God may choose to give a special blessing in the form of a spiritual gift at certain times, but this should be seen as the exception and not the rule. Our sister So-and-so may have a special spiritual gift, but for the most part, God expects us to use and develop our earthly talents to serve Him.

By Greg Hammond, a senior education student with a physics major at Avondale College, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia.

ALLOWING A TREASURE TO ROT



“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service” (Rom. 12:1, NKJV).

An Old Man's Umbrella

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Matt. 25:25; 2 Cor. 9:8

There was an old man who had a very nice umbrella. He was so proud of it that he took it everywhere. Rain or shine, he had the umbrella in his hand. The habit was strange in itself, but he had one other peculiar habit. He never, ever, opened the umbrella. When raindrops fell, he sought shelter somewhere and waited until the rain had gone. When he was in a hurry, he ran with the umbrella held firmly in his arms. If the rain was heavy, he asked some stranger to share that person's umbrella with him. In the case of the heaviest rain, he never went out. The reason he never used his umbrella was clear, yet strange. He didn't want it to get wet.*

In Japan, we have a proverb, "Takara no mochigusare." It literally means "Keeping a treasure and make it rotten." We use this proverb when someone has something valuable and doesn't use it properly or doesn't use it at all, so its real value cannot be revealed. The person who does "keep a treasure and make it rotten" might

In the case of the heaviest rain, he never went out.

be doing it without noticing that he or she owns the treasure. If we don't want our treasures to become rotten, we must first find out what treasure we have. Once we know what we have, the next step is to learn to use it properly. This week, we are going to study how we can use the spiritual gifts that have been given to each of us for others. By sharing our umbrellas with others, we can receive even greater joy.

*Adapted from *An Old Man's Umbrella* (Tokyo: Kyoiku Shuppan).

By Michiko Hasegawa, a senior English-linguistics major at Tsukuba University, Ibaraki, Japan.

Converting Spiritual Gifts Into Ministries

LOGOS

Rom. 12:1-3

Before listing some of the spiritual gifts and their functions, Paul instructs his readers regarding the ingredients necessary for the proper use of their gifts. An understanding of these ingredients is crucial for effectively converting spiritual gifts into ministries and employing those gifts to their full potential.

Ingredient 1: Total Commitment (Rom. 12:1)

Paul passionately urges each Christian to present his or her body as a “living sacrifice.” The choice of these two words is provocative. How can a sacrifice remain alive? In Bible times the sacrifice had to be killed before it was placed on the altar. To be a living sacrifice is to be dead, yet alive. How is this possible? Galatians 2:20 holds the key.

Presenting our bodies is another interesting point. God wants more than just mental assent to the truth. He looks for more than just an acceptance of the theory or mechanics of service. He desires our total commitment—both mind and body. A sacrificial animal was offered in totality, not just its head or hooves. Total commitment means we must learn to remain totally on the altar of sacrifice every day. When we choose to get off the altar, we cease to be a “living sacrifice.” When applied to using our gifts in Christian service, this translates into being “on 24-hour call” for God. Our spiritual gifts must be employed in God’s service in a continuous and wholehearted way. Jesus said, “Occupy till I come” (Luke 19:13).

Living sacrifices must be holy, as opposed to unholy. Nothing immoral or impure can be an acceptable sacrifice to God. Animals offered to God had to be blemish-free (Lev. 3:1; 22:20; Deut. 15:21; 17:1; Mal. 1:8). We are expected to give God our best, since He gives us His best. “The Christian’s dedication of himself to a life of purity and holiness is an act of spiritual worship.”¹ How can we have the purity God requires? (1 John 1:9). “When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us.”²

Offering ourselves to God is a “reasonable service.” God never asks us to do anything unreasonable. We must use our intellects to choose total commitment. Then we must daily trust Him for power to remain committed. Serving God is not a passive or brainless activity. It is very reasonable (Isa. 1:18).

Ingredient 2: Transformation (Rom. 12:2)

“Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold, but let God remold your minds from within.” God wants to transform our minds, our way of thinking, and our characters—away from the sinful to the pure—for optimum use in His service. How does He accomplish this transformation? How can we cooperate with Him in this work? “It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our

love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit. If we would be saved at last, we must learn the lesson of penitence and humiliation at the foot of the cross.”³

Ingredient 3: Humility (Rom. 12:3)

Because of our sinful human nature, it is easy for our heads to swell up with pride. However, “Humility is the immediate effect of self-surrender to God and the consequent renewing of the mind. The consecrated believer recognizes his dependence upon God’s grace for every spiritual gift he [or she] may enjoy, and this leaves no room for undue self-esteem.”⁴ We must continually remember Jesus’ words, “Without me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5).

REACT

1. What specific and important instruction do 2 Timothy 2:15 and Hebrews 6:12 offer us as we seek to convert our gifts into active ministries?

2. What are the differences between talents and spiritual gifts? What are the similarities?

3. Compare the following quotation with Paul’s instruction in Romans 12:1-3:

To be a living sacrifice is to be dead, yet alive.

“The greatest competition of the true devotion to Jesus is the service we do for Him. It is easier to serve than to pour out our lives completely for Him.”⁵ Do you agree with this comment? Why, or why not?

1. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol.6, p. 616.

2. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 668.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 83.

4. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 618.

5. Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Discovery House Publishers, 1992), Jan.18.

By Mark Duarte, a pastor and director of the Seventh-day Adventist Language Schools of Japan.

Spirit of Service

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Acts 8:26-40

“Long has God waited for the spirit of service to take possession of the whole church so that everyone shall be working for Him according to his ability. When the members of the church of God do their appointed work in the needy fields at home and abroad, in fulfillment of the gospel commission, the whole world will soon be warned, and the Lord Jesus will return to this earth with power and great glory.”¹

In the story of Philip and the Ethiopian found in Acts 8, God used the gifts of both men. God had placed the Ethiopian in a position of wide influence. “God saw that when converted, he would give others the light he had received, and would exert a strong influence in favor of the gospel.”² To Philip God had given the “special power to explain the Word of God with clearness.”³ “An angel guided Philip to the one who was seeking for light, and who was ready to receive the gospel; and today angels will guide the footsteps of those workers who will allow the Holy Spirit to sanctify their tongues and refine and ennoble their hearts. The angel sent to Philip could himself have done the work for the Ethiopian, but this is not God’s way of working. It is His plan that men are to work for their fellow-men. . . . Everyone who has received the gospel has been given sacred truth to impart to the world. God’s

Everyone who has received the gospel has been given sacred truth to impart to the world.

faithful people have always been aggressive missionaries, consecrating their resources to the honor of His name, and wisely using their talents in His service.”⁴

“The different parts of the work are to be brought together, piece by piece, to make a complete whole. . . . The lines of God’s work are not all the same, and neither are they to be carried forward in exactly the same way.”⁵

“Where there is a union of workers, there is opportunity for them to consult together, to pray together, to co-operate in labor. None should feel that they cannot link up with their brethren because they do not work in exactly the same line as they themselves do.”⁶

REACT

1. What are some of the often-overlooked gifts?
2. How are you using your special gift in witnessing for the Lord?

1. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p.111.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 107.

3. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 144.

4. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 109.

5. *Evangelism*, p. 103.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 104.

By Devona Narita, a homemaker in Tokyo, Japan.

What's Spiritual About Spiritual Gifts?

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Exod. 31:1-11

In discussing spiritual gifts, Paul deals mostly with spiritual gifts in spiritual settings, like prophecy and tongues. But, as we know, Paul never meant his list of spiritual gifts to be exhaustive. God needs the ministry of His people certainly not only in spiritual works but also in secular works.

When Moses and the Israelites, who had lived many years among the heathen, finally set out from Egypt, one of the first things God wanted to prepare for them was not just priests, but also the tabernacle and its furnishings. God gave the pattern, but not all the details. Someone with the right gift just had to interpret it, and produce the final product. And that's when God chose Bezalel son of Uri and "filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts" (Exod. 31:3, NIV). Bezalel had a spiritual gift in "engineering."

Spiritual gifts are not only for ministry in spiritual settings. God needs you to put your gifts to work for Him in the settings where you excel. As Garrie F. Williams puts it, "Don't feel discouraged today if within the setting of the Christian church you feel less gifted because you excel with computers, needlework, or engineering but are not able to take an active role in public leadership within the church. Whatever your spiritual gift is, God will give you creative energy as you use it for His

Paul never meant his list of spiritual gifts to be exhaustive.

glory."¹

What can we learn from Bezalel's case? These suggestions will help you convert your spiritual gifts into ministry even in a secular field:

1. Do your ministry willingly. God calls only for willing ministers (Exod. 35:26; 36:2).

2. Seek education and training. "All had to learn. . . . They had to be trained before they could do it as God desired."² "Without doubt these men [Bezalel and Aholiab] were selected because of their superior talent and previous experience. To this God promised to add special wisdom and knowledge. Thus they were fitted both naturally and supernaturally for their task."³

3. Be willing to cooperate with others in your ministry. Bezalel needed to cooperate with his assistant Aholiab (Exod. 35:34). Overall cooperation is a key to successful ministry.

1. Garrie F. Williams, *Welcome, Holy Spirit* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1994), p.16.

2. Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p.1108.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 661.

By Arnold P. Siboro, an electrical-engineering student at Takamatsu National College of Technology, Takamatsu, Japan.

Have the Confidence

HOW-TO

Key Text: Rom. 12:1

What is your spiritual gift? Can you say it plainly? Some Christians may answer in a feeble voice, "I'm in the middle of seeking it with earnest prayer. So I haven't got it yet." At any rate, it seems that many Christians cannot answer these questions confidently. But this can be the most fundamental reason that keeps us from converting spiritual gifts into ministries.

Why can we not develop our spiritual gifts into ministries? In many cases, the reason for this lies not in the lack of the gift, but in the lack of our confidence in receiving it. Even the greatest people in the Bible agonized over not finding the strong conviction that they could get the spiritual gift before fulfilling God's mission. But remember this: to everyone, whoever he or she may be, God has already given a splendid spiritual gift of his or her own. This is a universal truth.

Nevertheless, many of us have expended all our energies on looking for some special gifts from God, so that they are in danger of doing nothing in practical use of gifts, just like the man who was given one talent but buried it in the ground.

Like the one-talented person in the Bible, some Christians always complain of the size of gifts. The question is not in the magnitude of it, but in the influence the gift will provide. We should focus not only on what the gift is but also on how we

Why can we not develop our spiritual gifts into ministries?

can make use of it. So all we have to do is to keep on acting in the faith of Jesus, who has given us everything we need.

If there is a person who doubts whether he receives some special spiritual gift or not, to him I want to say, "Haven't you forgotten the most precious spiritual gift that you have been given already?" Let's contemplate the cross of Jesus, the greatest gift that has been given to everyone, without exception. All the spiritual gifts that we have respectively attained are from the cross of Jesus. And ultimately the most special, precious gift that comes from Jesus is life itself. In fact, without Christ's death, we cannot live anymore in the real sense. Considering this, how can we say that we have no confidence in having received the gift?

REACT

Reconsider Matthew 25:29, and discuss what this verse truly means to us.

By Manabu Kusayama, a graduate student of linguistics at Tsukuba University, Ibaraki, Japan.

In the Name of Jesus

OPINION

Key Text: Acts 3:1-10

One day Peter and John were going up to the temple. When they came to the gate called Beautiful, they saw a crippled beggar asking for money. He had been crippled since he was born, and he had never walked before in his life. This crippled beggar was brought out to this gate every day, so he could beg. He couldn't work for his bread, because he was crippled. Everywhere he went, he couldn't carry himself. Instead, he had to ask someone to take him to wherever he had to go. This day he was asking for money as he usually did.

When he saw two men walking toward him and heard one of the men shout at him, he hoped that they might give him something. They said they didn't have any gold or silver, but they had something much better than gold or silver, which is a great power of healing. Then they prayed for this crippled beggar to walk in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Instantly, this beggar's feet and ankles became strong, and he began to walk for the first time ever in his life.

How miraculous this spiritual gift was! Peter and John received this great power from God as a spiritual gift and used it in the name of Jesus Christ. They never would have accomplished this if they had done it just for their own interest. However, since they worked in the name of Jesus and to praise God, they could perform such

They had something much better than gold or silver.

miracles with great power.

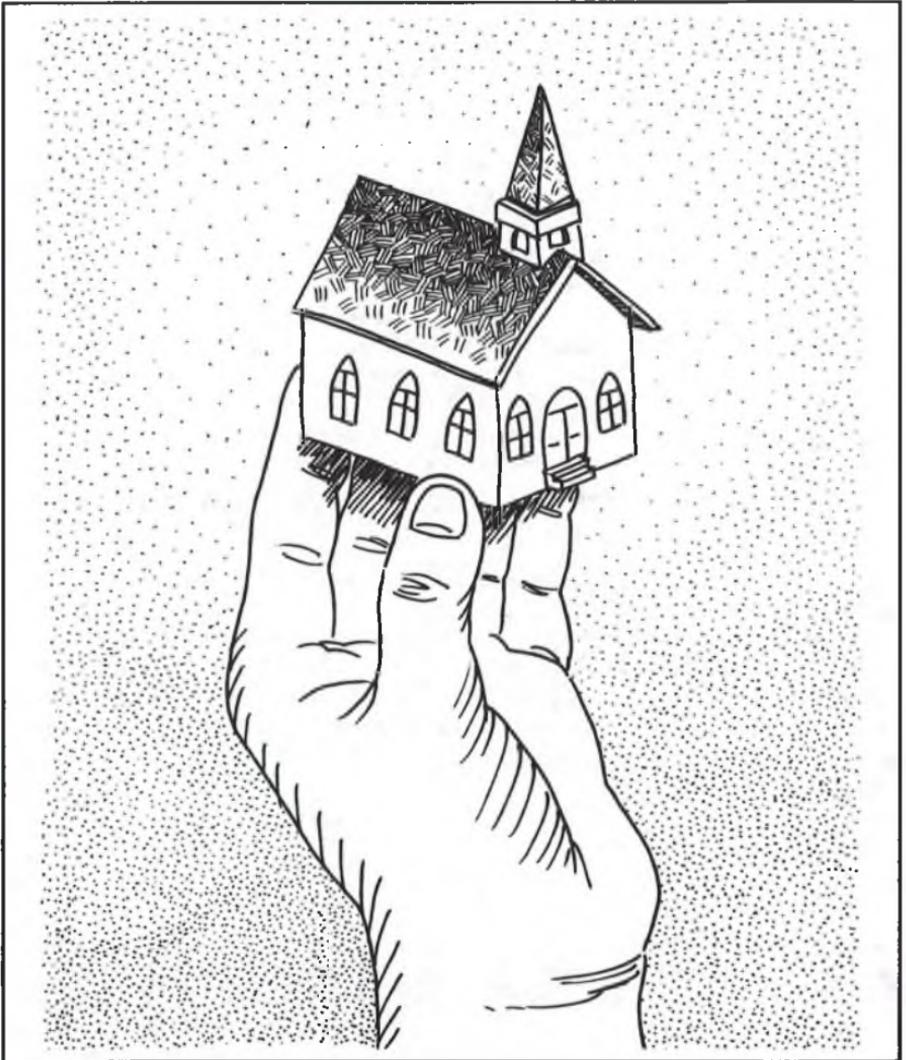
What we see in this story is that our spiritual gifts are given from God and are to be done in the name of Jesus in order to bring praise to the Lord. When we pray, we always pray in the name of Jesus Christ. So when we use our spiritual gifts for the ministry, we should always do our work in the name of Jesus and for the glory of the Lord also. I am sure we will accomplish far more than just benefits for ourselves.

REACT

1. What is the purpose of a spiritual gift?
2. Why does God give us spiritual gifts?

By Fumio Narita, accountant at East Japan Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Tokyo, Japan.

TO DO OR NOT TO DO



“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law” (Gal. 5:22, 23, NIV).

To Do or Not to Do

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: 1 Cor. 12:7

It was midsummer again, and the leader of Vacation Bible School was up in church asking for volunteers to help in her program. I looked around and saw people shifting uncomfortably or studying their bulletins. At least, I was in good company. It struck me that if everyone were participating actively in some way for the church, the leader would probably be turning away volunteers for VBS. A twist on the immortal words of John F. Kennedy may apply here: "Ask not what your church can do for you; ask what you can do for your church."

"Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good" (1 Cor. 12:7, NIV). And each person's contribution is important. "The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body" (verse 12). As Paul goes on to say, the body can't function properly if it is missing a hand or if the eye decides it is not important and stops contributing its service to the body.

So if my spiritual gift is an important part of the body of Christ, why am I uncomfortable about volunteering for VBS? Maybe it's because my gift is not suited

Many gifts are necessary for VBS, and most likely mine is one of them.

for the job. That would be a valid excuse if someone asked me to speak in tongues or to prophesy, but many gifts are necessary for VBS, and most likely mine is one of them.

Perhaps the problem is not so much one of having the right spiritual gift as it is one of assessing my priorities. If I help with VBS, I won't have time to work late at my job and thus further my career. I won't have as much free time to relax and watch my favorite TV programs. Could the question be not so much what gifts I have to contribute to the church, the body of Christ, but how much of my time and energy I am willing to invest in the work of Christ? To do or not to do? That is the question.

By Earl Cornell, a postdoctoral fellow in nuclear physics at Indiana University, Bloomington.

The Gifts in Practice

LOGOS

Gal. 5:13, 14, 22, 23; 1 Cor. 12:7; John 13:34; Rom. 14:13, 19

We've spent the past 12 weeks talking about the gifts of the Spirit. Now we come to an opportunity to put our knowledge into practice. To begin, let's review our assumptions about spiritual gifts.

Paul's first letter to Corinth and his Epistle to Rome are our main sources of "gift lists" in the Bible. The one in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 registers gifts (wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, distinguishing between spirits, tongues, interpretation of tongues), whereas 1 Corinthians 12:28 lists givers (apostles, prophets, teachers, workers of miracles, healers, helpers, administrators, speakers of tongues). The one in Romans (12:6-8) inventories prophecy, service, teaching, encouragement, (financial) contributions, leadership, and mercy.

First, are the gift lists in Romans and Corinthians the same? No. Perhaps the Roman church wasn't in desperate need of miracles and administration, while the Corinthians were; maybe what many Roman members most needed at that point in time was encouragement. Indeed, Paul, who had never set foot in Rome when he wrote them the letter from Corinth, said, "I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong—that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith" (1:11, 12, NIV).

Clearly, the needs of the Roman and Corinthian congregations were different. In addition, we might ask whether the two gift lists are exhaustive. Should we, therefore, conclude that there are no other gifts of the Spirit? No. Even Peter supplies his own "short list" (hospitality, speaking, serving) in his letter to the scattered believers in Asia (1 Pet. 4:9-11).

What gifts of the Holy Spirit does your church require? Apparently, the Spirit will reveal both the needs and the gifts of your congregation. But being gifted is not enough. A gift, even a gift of the Holy Spirit, can be disregarded or rejected. The "passing judgment" that Paul mentions in Romans 14:13 can also be translated "determining" or "deciding."¹ Who are we to determine the roles our brothers and sisters can or cannot play in the church? While we are to be on the lookout for our congregation's needs and the gifts the Holy Spirit distributes to fulfill them, hoping to make connections between the two, God warns us to judge ourselves first (Rom. 12:3).

First Corinthians 12:7 states that the gifts are given for the *common* good, "though personal benefit is not excluded (14:4, 12)."² That is, exercising our gifts can (and should?) be pleasant and fulfilling to us as individuals, at the same time as they edify the body of Christ. On the other hand, gift-giving that is harmful or injurious to the giver or to the receiver must be suspect. It may be inspired by someone other than the Holy Spirit. "Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification" (Rom. 14:19).

How? As always for the Christian, the key is love. No gift list, no admonition to exercise our own gifts or to recognize the giftedness of others in the church, comes without this message: "Serve one another in love" (Gal. 5:13); "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves" (Rom. 12:10); and let us not forget the entire chapter of 1 Corinthians 13. Without love,

gifts of leadership, hospitality, healing, even mercy, are devoid of the Spirit of God. Our unloving giftedness will turn in on us and destroy us (Gal. 5:15). If we have forgotten to love our neighbors as ourselves (verse 14), we are no longer fit to serve. Wisdom lies in following Paul's advice to the Corinthians: Desire, covet, be zealous for the greatest spiritual gifts, but let the Spirit show us the way, the better way—the way of love (1 Cor. 12:31).

REACT

1. Why and how do gifts destroy the giver and the receiver if not exercised with love?

2. In your church nominating committee, how is information about congregational needs, spiritual gifts, and "fitness to serve" processed?

3. Is it proper for you personally to take the initiative in informing your church leadership about what your spiritual gifts are and the ministry you would like to carry out? Explain your answer.

4. You are a member of the church board. Here are two other members, and each suggests a different-yet-valid plan for a proposed project. This appears to be a conflict between two people having the same spiritual gift. How do you determine which plan to follow?

5. What should be done when conflicts arise between people having different

Exercising our gifts can be pleasant and fulfilling to us as individuals.

spiritual gifts? How should we prioritize them?

6. "It takes all of the Christian graces (see Gal. 5:22, 23) to make a person a true follower of Christ." Do you agree or disagree? Why?

7. In what ways can you take a strong stand on behalf of those relegated to the position of second-class citizens in the church?

8. Enumerate some ways you can be instrumental in spiritually feeding and nurturing new church members.

1. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 639.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 770.

To Your Church's Health

TESTIMONY

Key Texts: Eph. 4:11-13; 1 Cor. 12:4-6, 12, 27-31

The Scriptures and the Spirit of Prophecy both emphasize the importance of acknowledging others' spiritual gifts and encouraging their use. In this way, the church becomes more unified, increasing its ability to work effectively. This is a direct measure of a church's "health."

"The talents that Christ entrusts to His church represent especially the gifts and blessings imparted by the Holy Spirit."¹

"We each need the help we can receive from other minds. . . . The various gifts given to different ones are to blend for the 'perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ' (Eph. 4:12)."²

The church carries out its work through the spiritual gifts of its workers. It is counter-productive when individual members fail to recognize or support the spiritual gifts of other members. This can lead to bickering and disunity in the congregation, making it difficult for the church to carry out its various missions. In essence, the church becomes unhealthy.

"Man may see no place for the working of certain gifts, because they are not his gift."³ We should realize that "however diverse the talents of His workers, these workers are to labor in unity, all revealing kindness and love. By different gifts the

This is a direct measure of a church's "health."

truth is to be proclaimed, all the gifts controlled by the same Spirit."⁴

Disunity is dangerous. It interferes with the receiving and use of our spiritual gifts and is "bad advertising": "The world is looking with gratification at the disunion [seen] among Christians. . . . Let us not make it possible for Satan to point to our church members, saying, 'Behold how these people, standing under the banner of Christ, hate one another. We have nothing to fear from them while they spend more strength fighting one another than in warfare with my forces.'"⁵

"By our unity we are to bear strong, indisputable evidence that Christ came to this world to save sinners. . . . [Too often] men and women professing godliness build walls of separation between them and their fellow workers, because not all think in exactly the same way, or follow exactly the same methods. Those who stand apart, refusing to harmonize, dishonor God before the world."⁶

1. *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 327.

2. *The Upward Look*, p. 141.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 273.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 286.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 358.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 271.

By Wendy Markosky, a candidate for the Doctor of Music degree at the Indiana University School of Music at Bloomington.

The Love Imperative

EVIDENCE

Key Text: John 13:34

The gifts of the Spirit are not the same as the “fruit” of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). Whereas gifts (Greek *charismata*, lit. “gifts of grace”) refer to the extraordinary endowments of divine power for the upbuilding of God’s church, the latter naturally develops in the Christian’s life when he or she is controlled by the Spirit.¹ The supreme attribute demonstrated in the life of the Christian is love, which also includes all the other graces mentioned in Galatians 5:22, 23.

Love is an important theme in the Gospel of John, especially in the “farewell discourses” of chapters 13 through 17. It is significant that chapter 13 begins with Jesus’ washing the disciples’ feet, their surprise reaction, and Jesus’ explanation of His actions. Here Jesus provides not only an “actual instance” of divine love. It was incumbent upon His disciples, having been served by this love, to love as He loved.² In verses 34 and 35, Jesus climaxes the whole scene with “a new commandment, that ye love one another” (KJV).

Since the substance of the command to love one another was neither new nor unheard of, why is the commandment in John 13:34 characterized as new? The replacement of the “as yourself” of Leviticus 19:18 with “as I have loved you” may

Jesus ushered in a new dispensation that makes love possible and meaningful.

help to explain why the command of Jesus can be called new. Another plausible explanation is that Jesus ushered in a new dispensation that makes love possible and meaningful; His example showed a new demonstration of love, which His followers are now commanded to emulate. Notice that this chapter begins with a declaration of Jesus’ love for His own (verse 1), which He exemplified in selfless service for others (verse 4), and now concludes with a command that appears to be based “solely on the new reality of God’s love manifested in the Son.”³

Not only has Jesus given His followers a new concept of love; He has also freely given the Holy Spirit for its accomplishment in their daily lives. He enjoins Christians to keep on demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit, fervently and constantly rather than in sporadic outbursts. In place of the destructive and divisive elements of gossip, slander, and bigotry, Christ calls His followers to exemplify His love, peace, and gentleness to their neighbors both inside and outside their circle of influence.

1. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, pp. 768-770.

2. Victor P. Furnish, *The Love Command in the New Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972), p. 136.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 138.

By Mervyn R. Joseph, a doctoral student in music education at Indiana University at Bloomington.

Discovering Your Gifts and Using Them

HOW-TO

Key Text: 1 Cor. 12:7-11

Now that we know all about spiritual gifts and how they are given for church ministry, what are we going to do with this information? Here are some steps you can take to discover your gifts and use them:

1. Pray. It seems only logical that communicating with the Gift Giver would be the best way to start. He knows what our gifts are and how they should be used. God is more than willing to guide our steps if we are open to His leading (Ps. 37:23).

2. Take an inventory. What do you enjoy doing? What do you do well? Is there an area of church ministry in which you see a need? Is this need something you could fill? Do you enjoy communicating with people? Are you good at maintenance, organization, teaching, music, encouragement, creative problem solving, etc.? Though God sometimes communicates with us directly, He has also given us minds that He expects us to use to discover His will for us. Just as it is hard to change the direction of a vehicle standing still, there are times when we have to make a decision and begin working before God can change our direction to suit His plans.

3. Actively seek ways to use your gifts. Don't wait for the nominating committee's decision to use your gifts. Most areas of church ministry are always in need

God has given us minds that He expects us to use to discover His will for us.

of more help. If the adult Sabbath School doesn't need a song leader, surely one of the other divisions does. Though your church doesn't have an official "encourager," that certainly does not preclude an unofficial one. Perhaps your church is too big, and you don't know where your gifts are needed. Stop by the church office and express your desire to help with teaching or organizing or maintenance or whatever.

4. Expect the unexpected. According to Isaiah, God's ways of doing things aren't necessarily our ways (55:8). It may be that as you seek to use your gifts in church ministry, doors will close and windows will open so that you find yourself using gifts you never dreamed you had or in ways you never expected. God is full of surprises. Enjoy the journey.

REACT

1. Can Adventists be active, uncompromised church members and still be successful in secular careers?

2. How could the Adventist Church find a place for its "free-thinking and liberal" members?

3. What relationship, if any, do artistic and creative pursuits have with the concept of spiritual gifts?

By Rachele Berthelsen, a graduate music student at Indiana University at Bloomington.

An Irreconcilable Gift

OPINION

Key Text: Matt. 19:21

The life of service is one that is upheld by the Adventist Church as the highest calling to its members. Throughout the education of an Adventist young person, a life dedicated to the service of others is emphasized continuously. Our church produces many health-care professionals, many educators, and many other white-collar professionals who are an important part of its membership, as well as its financial base.

Being a painter, a house painter (for money), and the other, more artistic variety (for life), I have often felt left out of the equation. I have found an identity for myself that is very meaningful for me. The dilemma is that *my* religion doesn't seem to have a place for my art. My activity as a painter seems to contradict what I was taught as a young Adventist. In painting, I serve no one but myself. Am I to heed the call of Jesus to the rich young ruler? Am I to give up my artistic aspirations to follow Him? Does Adventism exclude achievement in the arts? Am I to change careers?

I have thought a lot recently about all my friends who entered medical school. They are soon to go on to their residencies. Instead of medical school, I went to

The dilemma is that *my* religion doesn't seem to have a place for my art.

work at an artist's colony in Vermont (one remarkable and wonderful year), and now to graduate school to study for a Master of Fine Arts degree. By the time I finish this last bit of schooling for a painter, my young physician friends will start their sleepless nights as interns. They will begin their lives of service to humanity, hoping to keep their youthful enthusiasm and idealism alive through those grueling years of residency. As for me, I will begin a life of searching to paint meaningful pictures *for myself*.

Yes, I can serve God no matter what my career might be. The fruits of the spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control—are states of being, not linked specifically to a particular job. The horror, though, is that I still feel left out in the end. Painting is a solitary activity, intensely personal. It's a quest to put into paint my personal vision for no one else but myself. This aspiration is very far indeed from the childhood ideals of service to humanity that I was taught.

Will there ever be a resolution of this dilemma for me? Will my Adventism exclude me from being a successful artist? Will my gift ever be reconciled with my religion?

By Roy Foo, an MFA candidate in painting at the Hope School of Fine Arts, Indiana University, Bloomington.

Next Quarter's Lessons

1, 2, 3 John

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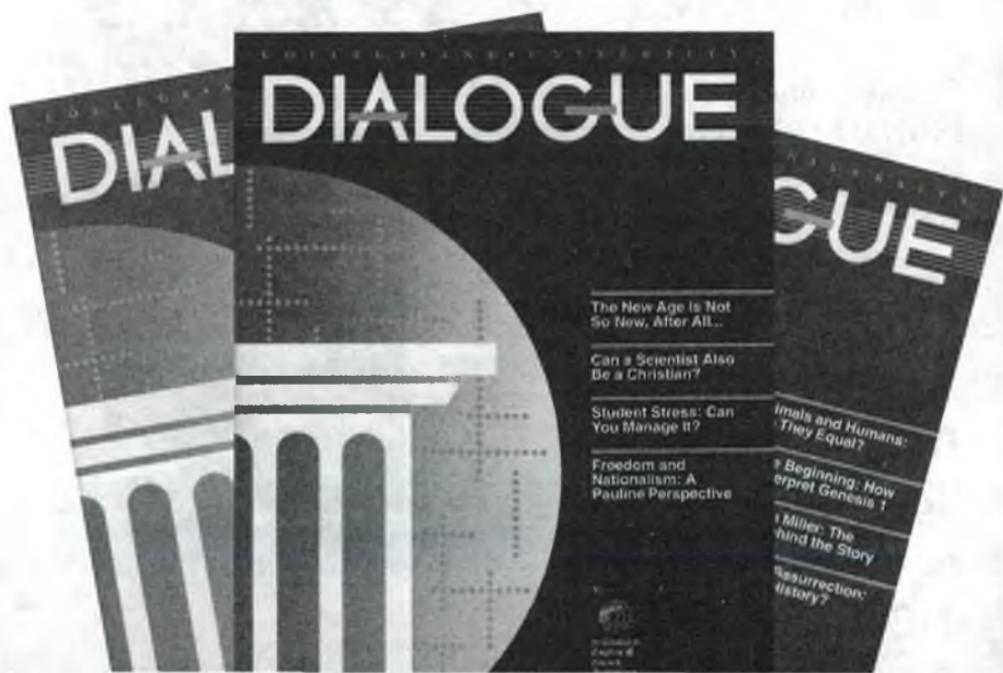
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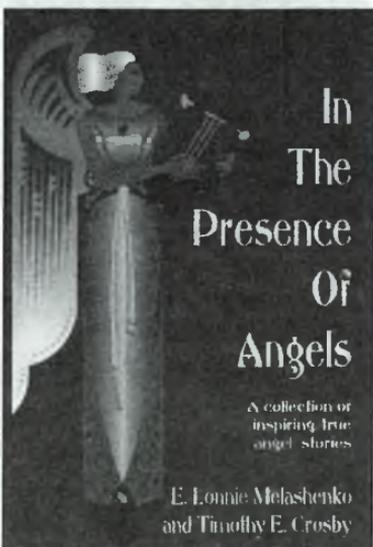
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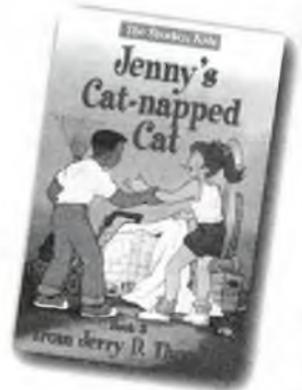
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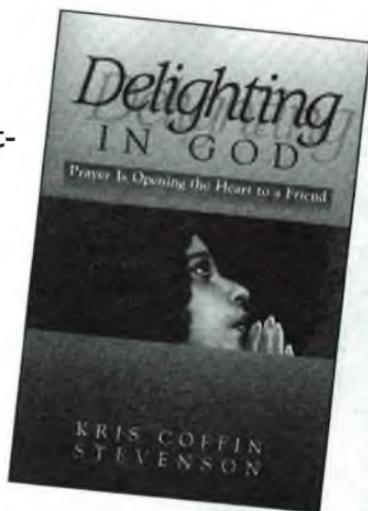
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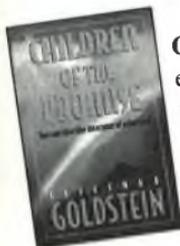
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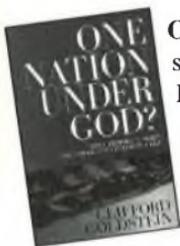
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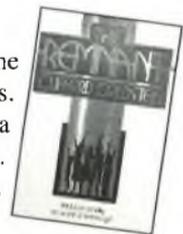
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Malawi	732	158,547	9,500,000
Tanzania	711	154,115	29,800,000
Uganda	440	85,002	19,800,240
Zambesi	446	204,443	11,200,000
Zambia	1,030	218,921	9,100,000
Eritrea Mission Field	3	450	3,528,500
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