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# Spiritual Gifts or Ministry Roles? Helping Church Members Embrace Their Places in God's Kingdom

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SPIRITUAL GIFTS OR MINISTRY ROLES? HELPING CHURCH MEMBERS  
EMBRACE THEIR PLACES IN GOD'S KINGDOM

A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of  
Harding School of Theology  
Memphis, Tennessee

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Ministry

By  
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March 2018

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

### **Statement of the Problem**

Popular teaching about gifts states that each person has a "spiritual gift" and that Christians must "discover their spiritual gifts" in order to serve God properly.<sup>1</sup> There are often complicated explanations of the differences between natural abilities and gifts.<sup>2</sup> Ministries may pass out surveys or questionnaires designed to help the members learn their gifts. The underlying assumption is that these gifts are hidden, and Christians cannot discern their gifts without a complicated process. Thus, Christians must solve the riddle to find their places in the kingdom, almost as though God does not want his children to know how he wants them to work in the kingdom.

Is this understanding of gifts the biblical model? Is this an ideal or even appropriate method of teaching Christians to find their role in the Kingdom of God? The

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<sup>1</sup> See the titles, for example, "Discover Your Spiritual Gifts" in Gene Wilkes, *Spiritual Gifts Survey* (Nashville: Lifeway Christian Resources, 2003); David Allen Hubbard, *Unwrapping Your Spiritual Gifts* (Waco, TX: Word, 1985); Don Fortune and Katie Fortune, *Discover Your God-Given Gifts* (Grand Rapids: Chosen Books, 1987).

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, "Gifts and Talents and Genes" in Hubbard, 105-114; Bruce Bugbee, *What You Do Best in the Body of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 62-64.

key question is "How can Christians understand gifts in a way that empowers them to be who God created them to be as they participate in God's mission?"

This project explored the biblical teaching about gifts. Based on this exploration, I designed a workshop to present in congregations to help the members understand how God created and empowers them to participate in the kingdom work of their congregation. The results of this exploration as discussed in chapter 2 call for a paradigm change regarding spiritual gifts. In the early stages of any paradigm shift there are difficulties with the use of language, and I am still working to hone my words for more precise communication. See "Review of Related Literature" below for an explanation of the language of this dissertation.

### **Ministry Context**

I have served as Director of Admissions at Harding School of Theology (HST) since November 2011. HST is a seminary in Memphis, TN, affiliated with the Churches of Christ. The majority of the ministry students are members of the Churches of Christ. Many are working in ministry settings, and over half are distance students.

My primary role is to recruit people to ministry and

help them receive training to carry out that ministry. Prior to this position, I spent sixteen years in various ministry roles, primarily as a campus minister at the University of Memphis, Kansas State University, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. As a campus minister, I helped students find their places to serve in the campus ministry and in the larger church. Through these empowering ministry experiences, several students found a call to serve in vocational ministry.

I am also a partner at Cordova Community Church of Christ. (The congregation has partners rather than members). My role in the church is leading a growth (small) group, sharing in worship leading duties, and occasionally preaching and has included adult education in the past. I am not a paid staff member or an elder, but as a growth group leader I serve on the leadership team. The congregation is a small church in Memphis. The membership includes long-time members of the Churches of Christ and others from different backgrounds. The congregation tends to attract hurting people and to serve as a place of healing. These people often move on after healing has taken place. There is a core who have been at the congregation for many years.

In my HST work recruiting people to ministry, I meet

individuals who have some level of desire to work in ministry but are struggling to discern whether God has places for them in vocational ministry. I also talk with ministers who feel overwhelmed and would benefit from empowering those in their ministry to help with the work. This project has provided me with tools to assist in both of those situations.

The workshop took place in congregations of the Churches of Christ. These congregations varied in size and location. The main part of the workshop was the same in each presentation in its relation to God's work in the individual Christian. The empowerment portion, about living out one's place in a specific expression of the body of Christ, was customized for each location in collaboration with the local leadership.

### **Review of Related Literature**

What I am calling the traditional view of spiritual gifts is that God gives each Christian at least one spiritual gift, which is a special power or ability. In this view, it is up to the Christian to figure out what that gift is. The method of figuring out the gift is to use a spiritual gift inventory. This view is typified by writers such as David Allen Hubbard and the later writings

of C. Peter Wagner.<sup>3</sup> My view of gifts is influenced by Max Turner and Kenneth Berding, who argue that "gifts" are not inherently "miraculous enabling by the Spirit" but are rather the ministries themselves.<sup>4</sup> In this dissertation "spiritual gifts" refers to the traditional view. "Gifts of ministry" refers to the alternative view I am proposing. The word "gifts" is used as a neutral term for the word used in scripture.

Several studies have undertaken to validate spiritual gift inventories. In 1994 Stewart Cooper and Stephen Blakeman investigated Don Fortune and Katie Fortune's *Motivational Gifts Inventory* and determined that the instrument is not internally reliable.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, Mark Ledbetter and James Foster had similar results in examining

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<sup>3</sup> Hubbard, 44; C. Peter Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1979), 42.

<sup>4</sup> Kenneth Berding, *What are Spiritual Gifts? Rethinking the Conventional View* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publishing, 2006); Max Turner, *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts*, rev. ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998). See Chapter 2 for an in-depth analysis of this teaching.

<sup>5</sup> Stewart E. Cooper and Stephen D. Blakeman, "Spiritual Gifts: A Psychometric Extension," *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 22, no. 1 (1994): 39-44, 43; Fortune and Fortune.

David Hocking's spiritual gifts inventory.<sup>6</sup>

Although James Robert Clinton shares the traditional view of gifts, his teaching on "identifying gifts" is helpful. He incorporates personal reflection in the context of an inventory and provides a process for community affirmation.<sup>7</sup>

Robert Pochek traces the popularity of the spiritual gift inventory to the church growth movement in the 1970s.<sup>8</sup> The desire among church growth proponents for such a tool coincided with the acceptance of psychological instruments such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator.<sup>9</sup> Pochek rejects both the spiritual gift inventory and the traditional view of spiritual gifts. He proposes instead an "ecclesiocentric

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<sup>6</sup> Mark F. Ledbetter and James D. Foster, "Measuring Spiritual Giftedness: A Factor Analytic Study of a Spiritual Gifts Inventory," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 17 no. 3 (Fall 1989): 280; David L. Hocking, *Spiritual Gifts* (Long Beach, CA: Sounds of Grace Ministries, 1975).

<sup>7</sup> James Robert Clinton, *Spiritual Gifts* (Beaverlodge, Alberta: Horizon House, 1985).

<sup>8</sup> Robert Pochek, "Toward an Ecclesiocentric Model of Spiritual Gift Identification" (Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011), 26. See chapter 3 for a brief explanation of his model.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

model of spiritual gift identification."<sup>10</sup>

### **Theological Reflection**

There are two major theological themes that inform this project. The first theme is that of gifts (χάρισμα, charisma, plural χαρίσματα, charismata). Most commentators assume this word means "spiritual gifts" and do not see a need to argue for the meaning. These writers then import theological concepts into the context based on this assumed meaning of the word.<sup>11</sup>

The χαρίσματα, however, are not abilities but rather are the ministries (roles, functions) themselves.<sup>12</sup> All ministry roles require a level of ability. Some of these ministries require miraculous abilities, and some do not



*Figure 1: Relationship of gifts of ministry and abilities*

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 4-5.

<sup>11</sup> Turner, *The Holy Spirit*, 263.

<sup>12</sup> Berding, *What are Spiritual Gifts?*, 33.

(see figure 1). God has provided individuals for the church to fill various roles or functions in the body to meet the needs of the body.

The second theme is the community of God or the church as the body of Christ. God calls people to work together to carry out his mission. Thus we see the body imagery of Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12: the church works properly only when each member is in the proper place. With Christians living out who God created them to be, the church is able to effectively participate in his mission.

Pochek argues convincingly that Paul's emphasis and focus in the gift list passages (Rom. 12, 1 Cor. 12, and Eph. 4) is not on individuals and their abilities but is rather on individuals serving needs in the church.<sup>13</sup> The emphasis is on the body, not the individual. It is in the context of the congregation and with help from the congregation that individual Christians learn their fit and have the opportunity to live out that fit. The theological reflection in Chapter 2 explains these concepts more fully.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 137 ff.

### Theoretical Framework

This project assumes that God created each person and prepared him or her to be part of the church. Abilities, skills, passions, and experiences uniquely equip each person for a specific place or role in the body of Christ. God places each Christian in the church to carry out this role (1 Cor. 12:18). The church fulfills her mission when each part functions properly (Eph. 4:11-17). The church, therefore, needs to help the members of the body identify their roles and functions.

Churches often turn to spiritual gift inventories to help members discover their gifts. These inventories may list gifts from the New Testament or extra-biblical gifts.<sup>14</sup> Ledbetter and Foster caution that many of these instruments are not scientifically validated and can actually do harm: participants may uncritically accept the results of the instrument because its resemblance to psychometric instruments gives it "an aura of credibility and respectability."<sup>15</sup> In other words, since it appears to be a scientific instrument, people trust it even if the instrument has not been tested. Pochek reviews four studies

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<sup>14</sup> Wilkes; Fortune and Fortune, 27.

<sup>15</sup> Ledbetter and Foster, 282.

of popular spiritual gift inventories and determines that none of them are in fact reliable as indicators of gifts.<sup>16</sup> Since these instruments have an inadequate understanding of the concept of gifts and are not scientifically validated, I did not use a spiritual gifts inventory in this project.

Wagner proposed a five-step plan for discovering gifts.<sup>17</sup> His use of the word "discover" highlights his acceptance of the traditional view of "spiritual gifts as hidden abilities", even though he is not using an inventory at this point in his writings. His five steps are:

1. Explore the possibilities.
2. Experiment with as many as possible.
3. Examine your feelings.
4. Evaluate your effectiveness.
5. Expect confirmation from the body.

For this project I worked with a modified version combining

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<sup>16</sup> Pohek, 29-55.

<sup>17</sup> C. Peter Wagner, *Your Church Can Grow: Seven Vital Signs of a Healthy Church* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1976), 82-3. In later writings, Wagner included a spiritual gifts inventory in step two of this process, but this project was based on his pre-inventory process. C. Peter Wagner, *Discover Your Spiritual Gifts* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2005), 74.

these five steps into three broad categories: study (Wagner's step one), introspection (steps two through four), and community affirmation (step five). Although Wagner is helping people uncover hitherto unknown abilities, I am using his process to help people realize how they can use what they already know about themselves for kingdom work.

The first principle of my theoretical framework is that biblical teaching about gifts counters the flawed traditional view and gives workshop participants a clearer vision of their places in the body. Wagner calls the Bible the "basic source of data" about gifts and urges his readers to become familiar with the biblical picture to help them recognize what God is doing within them.<sup>18</sup> I agree that a clearer understanding of the biblical picture of gifts and the body may encourage and motivate Christians to fulfill their ministry role.

Second, introspection helps individuals understand their places in the kingdom better. Participants looked at their life experience, their passions, and ways they have been successful. This introspection equates to Wagner's numbers 2-4 above: experiment with as many gifts/roles as

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<sup>18</sup> Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts*, 116.

possible, examine your feelings, and evaluate your effectiveness.<sup>19</sup> These questions helped workshop participants consider their passions, abilities, experiences, and skills. Instead of discovering or uncovering a hidden ability, these Christians are embracing who they already are and what they have already done (inside or outside the church) and putting that to work for the kingdom. The main questions are, "Who has God equipped me to be, and how can I participate in God's mission?"

The third step in this approach is community affirmation. Wagner says to "expect confirmation from the body."<sup>20</sup> Sometimes we do not see ourselves clearly, and other times those close to us see things in us we cannot see.<sup>21</sup> Thus I gave guidance for a community affirmation exercise that provided both a corrective to personal misperception and a lens to see how God had been using participants when they had not seen it themselves.

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<sup>19</sup> Wagner, *Your Church Can Grow*, 82-3.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>21</sup> Clinton, 106.

### Methodology

This project was program development.<sup>22</sup> I built a workshop for congregations to help members embrace their places in the church and to help congregations empower the members to fulfill their roles in the congregation. I provided a guide for congregations to help the church have a time of prayer prior to the workshop to seek God's guidance in the process.<sup>23</sup> The workshop began with a teaching section leading to a biblical view of gifts (step one above). Following the teaching time, participants engaged in personal reflection using guiding questions (step two above). After the time of reflection, the congregation formed small groups of people who knew each other well for community affirmation of gifts (step three above). The event concluded with ministry empowerment by the local leadership.

I presented the workshop for three churches. After collecting and analyzing data from each workshop, I modified the workshop for each additional presentation.

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<sup>22</sup> Nancy Jean Vyhmeister, *Quality Research Papers For Students of Religion and Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 171.

<sup>23</sup> Pochek, 148.

Following collection and analysis of the data from the final workshop, I wrote a final report.

I worked with a team of members of these congregations to serve as inside and outside observers. This team also helped analyze the data and modify the workshop. The project was done over the course of nine months.

I gathered data in several ways. First, I collected field notes at each workshop from an inside observer, an outside observer, and myself. I provided the observers with instructions on the type of information they should record. Second, I created a website where those who attended the workshop could share their stories of embracing their fit in the body of Christ. Third, I offered follow-up, one-to-one conversations on the phone or in person with those who attended in order to help them process their experience at the workshop and to solicit feedback on the workshop.

### **Limitations/Delimitations**

This project was delimited to select congregations of the Churches of Christ. Because this method focuses on individual Christians examining who God made them to be and why he brought them to their local congregation, as well as affirmation by members of that local congregation, the workshop was not altered based on the congregation size,

character, or location. The participants personalized and contextualized the process. The leadership empowerment portion was also contextualized in consultation with local leadership.

The program excluded the obviously miraculous ministries such as tongues, interpretation, and healing. If a person has such a role, they either know it or they do not. No amount of personal reflection or community affirmation would help them in such a case.

### **Outline of the Dissertation**

The dissertation is comprised of four chapters and various appendices. In this opening chapter I have established the problem, included a review of the literature, and provided the theoretical framework and methodology. The second chapter is the theological reflection. The third chapter is the development of the program. Chapter four is the summary and evaluation. Appendices include the sermons and teaching manuscripts, materials for participating congregations, and the data from field notes, one-to-one conversations, and the website.

## CHAPTER 2: THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

God has always provided people to carry out needed tasks or work for his people. God sent Moses to deliver his people from Egyptian bondage, a man fitted for the job by his life in the palace and his years in the desert as a shepherd. God provided the craftsmen Bezalel and Oholiab to build the items for worship in the tabernacle and specifically gave them the ability to do the work (Exod. 31:1-11). God gave the church in Joppa a woman named Dorcas to provide clothing for the church's widows (Acts 9:36-43). The Apostle Paul, as a well-travelled Roman citizen, was uniquely fit to reach Gentiles across the Roman Empire.

There is a tendency to view those mentioned in Scripture as super-Christians on the one hand and as paradigms for modern Christians on the other. We know that we cannot live up to examples of super Christians, especially when we read about Christians performing miracles and benefitting from God's miraculous work. God's work in the early church appears detached from modern life. On the other hand, we hear teaching like that of Henry Blackaby and Claude King, whose popular *Experiencing God* curriculum uses God's speaking to Moses in a burning bush

as paradigmatic for how God speaks to Christians today!<sup>1</sup> God prepared and used these heroes of the faith, but does he prepare and use ordinary people today? What is the biblical picture?

The Bible presents Moses and the apostles not as paradigms but rather as exceptions. Moses clearly had an unusual relationship with God (Exod. 33:11). A quick read through the book of Acts shows that Paul and Peter stood out from other Christians in their day just as they are unusual compared to the typical Christian today. Then as now, the church is composed of many Christians, each of whom God has placed in the body to carry out a particular role or function. Some of these roles are more public or receive more notice. Other roles are less visible, behind the scenes. With natural ability, experience, learned skills, and passions, each Christian has a unique place in the church; and the church is richer and more effective when each one carries out that function.

This project examines the concept of each Christian's role in the body through two theological lenses. The first lens is that of the role as a gift. The conventional view

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<sup>1</sup> Henry T. Blackaby and Claude V. King, *Experiencing God* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1994), 32 ff.

of gifts, which dominates writings on gifts, equates the gifts mentioned in Scripture with special abilities.<sup>2</sup> George Barna, in his survey on gifts defined the term as "supernatural abilities given by God, through His Holy Spirit, to those who believe in Jesus Christ."<sup>3</sup> Following Kenneth Berding, Max Turner, and others, I understand the gift to be the role or function in the church, the ministry.<sup>4</sup>

The second theological theme is the community of God. To have and to carry out a role in the church requires that there be a church, a community of God's people. The apostle Paul does not believe in Christians who are not connected to a church.<sup>5</sup> This chapter examines the community as the place where individual Christians both embrace and carry out their roles.

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<sup>2</sup> Berding, *What are Spiritual Gifts?*, 38; cf. the partial list of writers holding this view in Pochek, 131, n. 42.

<sup>3</sup> George Barna, *The Index of Leading Spiritual Indicators* (Dallas: Word, 1996), 24.

<sup>4</sup> Berding, *What are Spiritual Gifts?*; Turner, *The Holy Spirit*.

<sup>5</sup> James W. Thompson, *The Church According to Paul: Rediscovering the Community Conformed to Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014), 17.

### God's Gracious Gifts

The first theological theme for this project is that of each Christian's role as a gift from God. The conventional view of spiritual gifts is that the gift is a special ability that a person gets when he or she becomes a Christian.<sup>6</sup> With the conventional view, there is emphasis on the "hidden" nature of the gift. The Christian has to discover or uncover his or her spiritual gift.<sup>7</sup> The Barna Group reported in 2001 a growing number of "born again adults who are aware of spiritual gifts saying that God did not give them one."<sup>8</sup> This project rejects the conventional view in favor of the view that the gift to the individual Christian is a place to serve in the church.

God provides his community with individuals to carry out his work in the community and in the world. This begins with a vision for an equipping ministry. Ephesians 4:11-13

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<sup>6</sup> The phrase "spiritual gift" only occurs once in the New Testament (Rom. 1:11-12): "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."

<sup>7</sup> See Wilkes; Hubbard; Fortune and Fortune.

<sup>8</sup> Barna Group, "The Year's Most Intriguing Research Findings, from Barna Research Studies," December 17, 2001, accessed August 5, 2017, <https://www.barna.com/research/the-years-most-intriguing-findings-from-barna-research-studies>.

states that Christ himself gave to the church apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers to equip the saints for ministry and to help them grow to Christian maturity.<sup>9</sup> Although there is debate over exactly what those church leadership roles entail, the leaders are there not to carry out all the work of ministry but rather to equip the saints (Christians) to participate in the work of ministry. The gift in this context is certain individuals filling these roles in the church.

Paul further insists that the church can function properly only when each member is "working properly" (v. 16), carrying out the role that God has given him or her. Caldwell writes, "The church exists to equip people in order to release them back into the world, grounded in truth and community, dangerous for the gospel."<sup>10</sup> It is the responsibility of church leadership to help the saints embrace their calling in Christ and to provide opportunities for the saints to live out this Christian destiny.

Peter builds on this idea that every Christian has a

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<sup>9</sup> Sue Mallory, *The Equipping Church: Serving Together to Transform Lives* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 15

<sup>10</sup> Kirbyjon Caldwell in the forward to Mallory, 9.

role in serving God (1 Pet. 4:10-11). Peter connects the ideas of grace (χάρις, charis) and gift (χάρισμα, charisma; plural χαρίσματα, charismata) when he describes fulfilling one's role in serving others as being a faithful steward of God's grace.

### **Χάρισμα (Charisma)**

A brief word study will help clear up some confusion about gifts. In order to embrace his or her place in the church, a Christian needs to be free of the pressure to discover his or her special or hidden ability and free to live out who God created him or her to be in that context. A clear understanding of the biblical concept of gifts helps make this possible.

Χάρισμα (charisma) is a word that Paul uses sixteen times, twelve of them in Romans and 1 Corinthians.<sup>11</sup> Although Paul did not likely coin the term, it is uncommon in extra-biblical literature.<sup>12</sup> There is only one New Testament usage of this word outside of Paul (1 Pet. 4:10).

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<sup>11</sup> I am using "Paul" and "Pauline" in the traditional sense to refer to the author(s) of Romans through Philemon.

<sup>12</sup> Kenneth Berding, "Confusing Word and Concept in 'Spiritual Gifts': Have We Forgotten James Barr's Exhortations?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 43, no. 1: 40.

The lexical meaning of χάρισμα is "that which is freely and graciously given, favor bestowed, gift."<sup>13</sup> Note that there is nothing in the definition that implies "spiritual gift" in the sense of special abilities, it is merely something graciously given. The conventional view of the Greek word χάρισμα (charisma) is that it is a cognate of the word χάρις, "grace", and refers to something given by grace--what D. A. Carson calls a "grace-gift," William Carter calls "signs of grace," and Leander E. Keck calls simply "begracements."<sup>14</sup> Turner argues convincingly from linguistic evidence that the root of χάρισμα is not χάρις (grace) but is χαρίζομαι (charizomai, to give graciously).<sup>15</sup> For Turner, the use of χάρισμα instead of other "gift"

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<sup>13</sup> Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed., rev. and ed. Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1081.

<sup>14</sup> D. A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit: A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12-14* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 19; William J. Carter, *Each One a Minister: Using God's Gifts for Ministry*, rev. ed. (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2003), 6; Leander E. Keck, *Romans*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 47.

<sup>15</sup> Max Turner, "Modern Linguistics and Word Study in the New Testament," in *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*, 2nd ed., ed. Joel B. Green (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 198-208, especially 202.

words (e.g., δῶρημα, dorema) places emphasis on the graciousness of the gift.<sup>16</sup>

In English, the word "gift" can refer to a present (a birthday gift) or to a talent or ability (a gifted pianist). In this context, the former meaning is the correct one. The dual meanings in English lead to confusion in a study of gifts of the Spirit as popular teaching frames the discussion of gifts in terms of special abilities or talents.<sup>17</sup>

The gift (role) is graciously given, but that does not mean that no expectation comes with the gift. John M. G. Barclay writes on the nature of the giving and receiving of gifts in the Greco-Roman world and the importance of reciprocity between the giver and the recipient.<sup>18</sup> A related idea is the patron-client relationship in the Roman world.<sup>19</sup> God gives Christians roles and expects them to fulfill their roles.

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<sup>16</sup> Turner, *The Holy Spirit*, 264.

<sup>17</sup> For example, Daniel Overdorf, *What the Bible Says about the Church: Rediscovering Community* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 2012), 233.

<sup>18</sup> John M. G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 24 ff.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

Berding works to separate the word χάρισμα (charisma) from the concept of gift to avoid the confusion. He argues for "a concrete expression of grace." He also points out that pastoral and scholarly literature assumes a definition for χαρίσματα (charismata) as "spiritual gifts" but never constructs a defense of that definition.<sup>20</sup> Turner concurs: "A lot of theological freight is being carried on the back of apparently innocent linguistic assertions and assumptions here!"<sup>21</sup> B. Ward Powers emphatically states that χάρισμα "does not mean 'spiritual gift'" (emphasis his) and warns that adding the word "spiritual" to the definition leads people to a misunderstanding of the biblical text.<sup>22</sup>

Linguistics aside, Paul's usage of the word χάρισμα (charisma) indicates that the word does not mean "spiritual gifts" in the conventional view of the word. He uses the word in a variety of contexts where it makes no sense to translate it "spiritual gifts." For example, the word

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<sup>20</sup> Berding, *What are Spiritual Gifts?*, 36. As an example of the assumption, see Craig S. Keener, *Gift and Giver: The Holy Spirit for Today* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 91.

<sup>21</sup> Turner, *The Holy Spirit*, 263.

<sup>22</sup> B. Ward Powers, *First Corinthians: An Exegetical and Explanatory Commentary* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2008), 281.

refers to "the gift of eternal life" (Rom. 6:23). It also refers to celibacy and marriage (1 Cor. 7:7) and the blessing of escape from trials (2 Cor. 1:11).

In Romans 1:11-12 the "spiritual gift" is mutual encouragement. It is telling to note that in this text the adjective "spiritual" (πνευματικὸν, pneumatikon) is attached to (rather than assumed as inherent in) χάρισμα. Romans 5:15-16 uses the word to refer to salvation through Christ. The words χάρισμα and δῶρημα (dorema) are used interchangeably in these two verses (twice each).

Taken together, these verses indicate that χάρισμα does not inherently mean "spiritual gifts" in the sense of special abilities. This does not mean that the word cannot possibly mean special abilities, but the interpreter who calls for a special meaning in a particular context needs to explain why the typical meaning does not apply. None of the authors cited who hold the traditional understanding argues such a case; they merely assume the traditional meaning.

Berding argues that the χαρίσματα (charismata) are not the ministry abilities, but are the ministries (roles, functions) themselves.<sup>23</sup> He points out that many of the

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<sup>23</sup> Berding, *What are Spiritual Gifts?*, 33.

χαρίσματα in the various lists do not rely on special enablement from the Spirit, such as serving and giving.<sup>24</sup> All are manifestations of God's grace to his people, but not all require extraordinary enabling. All can be described as ministry functions given by God to bless the church, but not all can be described as special abilities. Rather than being the gift, a natural talent or ability is what qualifies a Christian to accept the gift, a particular role to fill in the church. Some roles, such as healing, may require a special enabling from God. Other roles, which are equally gifts from God, do not require any special ability.

The gifts discussed in Ephesians 4 (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastor-teachers) point to ministry roles or functions; in this context the gifts are clearly the people filling those roles. First Peter 4:10-11 describes the gifts as speaking and serving, which are also ministry functions. Some of these roles may require special abilities, but clearly not all of them do. It is possible, for example, to speak, serve, and teach without any special enabling from the Holy Spirit. Some biographers credit

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<sup>24</sup> Berding, "Confusing Word and Concept", 47.

Hitler's speaking ability as a key factor in his rise to power, but few would say he spoke by the Holy Spirit.<sup>25</sup>

In addition to Ephesians 4 and 1 Peter 4, the primary texts focused on gifts are Romans 12:6-8 and 1 Corinthians 12. Each of these four texts mentions or lists a group of roles with overlap between some lists and not with others (see Figure 2). Some lists include special enabling, and some do not. Nothing in these passages indicates that the authors believed they were writing an exhaustive list.<sup>26</sup>

<b>1 Pet. 4.10</b>	<b>Eph. 4.11</b>	<b>Rom. 12.6-8</b>	<b>1 Cor. 12</b>	
Speaking	Apostles	Prophecy	Wisdom	Tongues
Serving	Prophets	Serving	Knowledge	Interpretation
	Evangelists	Teaching	Faith	Apostles
	Pastor-Teachers	Encouraging	Healing	Teachers
		Giving	Miracles	Healing
		Leading	Prophecy	Helping
		Showing mercy	Distinguishing Spirits	Guiding

Figure 2: "Gift/Role lists" in the New Testament

The roles needed will vary from congregation to congregation and from time to time. There are roles needed

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<sup>25</sup> Fred Casmir, "Hitler: A Study in Persuasion" (Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 1961), 4, accessed July 31, 2017, [http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc\\_num=osu1291225834](http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc_num=osu1291225834).

<sup>26</sup> Some do assume the lists are exhaustive. The Barna Group report cited earlier, for example, reports half of all born again adults and one-quarter of all Protestant pastors listing one or more gifts that they possess which are not identified in the Bible.

now in some congregations that could not have been imagined in the first century, such as a sound technician (a position that is not a miraculous or supernatural ability but requires some combination of ability, training, and experience). There were probably some well-defined gifts or functions that were needed in every congregation in the first century (e.g., teachers), as well as other less well-defined gifts or roles that did not occur in every congregation.<sup>27</sup> William J. Abraham suggests that individuals grew into roles based on their calling within the body.<sup>28</sup>

Each of these passages that speaks of *χαρίσματα* (charismata) addresses specific needs of specific congregations. The writers are addressing specific teaching points. Thus, it is not surprising that the lists are not identical. In the following review of Romans 12.3-8 and 1 Corinthians 12, it is important to remember the occasional nature of the documents. This helps bear in mind that God provides individuals to modern churches as needed to carry out specific functions as needed in local contexts just as

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<sup>27</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans, New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 764.

<sup>28</sup> William J. Abraham, *The Logic of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 153.

he did in those ancient congregations.

### **Discussion of Romans 12:3-8<sup>29</sup>**

<sup>3</sup> For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. <sup>4</sup> For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, <sup>5</sup> so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. <sup>6</sup> We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; <sup>7</sup> if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; <sup>8</sup> if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

In Romans 12:3-8 the gift or role list includes prophesying, serving, teaching, encouraging, giving, leading, and showing mercy. These are all functions or actions that bless the church. Paul here does not mention the more obviously miraculous roles of 1 Corinthians 12 (e.g., speaking in tongues, healing). The context of the discussion is clearly laid out in v. 3: do not think more highly of yourself than you ought to think.<sup>30</sup> Paul urges this humility because God has given Christians a measure of

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<sup>29</sup> All biblical references in this paper are taken from the Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB) unless otherwise noted.

<sup>30</sup> Moo, 760.

faith (v. 3) and gifts (roles) that differ according to grace (v. 6).<sup>31</sup>

With the connection between function and gifts in verses 4 and 6, and the following list of roles, it appears that gift (χάρισμα) here refers to a calling or role, not a special ability.<sup>32</sup> In fact, John K. Goodrich argues that "in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you" is better rendered "a measure of trusteeship."<sup>33</sup> The gift (χάρισμα) is a ministry role, and the Christian understanding his function is a root of humility (v. 3) and interdependence (v. 5).<sup>34</sup>

As these roles are given by God and received by individual believers, there is no room for pride. The focus is one of function ("these members do not all have the same

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<sup>31</sup> Moo argues that the measure of faith is not a different measurement to each person (so that some have more faith than others), but rather a common faith measured out in the same amount to each believer. Moo, 761. But see Goodrich below for an alternate translation.

<sup>32</sup> Berding, *What are Spiritual Gifts?*, 62.

<sup>33</sup> John K. Goodrich, "'Standard of Faith' or 'Measure of a Trusteeship'?: A Study in Romans 12:3." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 74, no. 4 (October 2012), 772, accessed August 5, 2017, available from ATLA Religion Database through EBSCOhost.

<sup>34</sup> Goodrich, 772.

function," v. 4) and action (the formula "if your function is x, then x," vv. 6-8). Christians' filling of roles (vv. 6-8) is a description of the body of Christ functioning properly (vv. 4-5).<sup>35</sup> Berding points out that the Spirit is not specifically mentioned in this context.<sup>36</sup>

In this text, with Berding's understanding in mind (the gifts are the ministries or functions), the distinction between "spiritual gifts" and "natural abilities," which is a major concern of proponents of the conventional view, becomes a non-issue.<sup>37</sup> Natural abilities or talents (which Christians understand as coming from God) as well as learned skills and passions are all part of qualifying a Christian to fill a role. The difference is that the Christian is now using his or her abilities "so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 4:11). God has graciously given to the church Christians who can proclaim God's message, serve, lead, teach, encourage, give generously, and help the needy. The interests and capacities a person is born with or develops

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<sup>35</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, Word Biblical Commentary, 38 (Dallas: Word Books, 1988), 725.

<sup>36</sup> Berding, "Confusing Word and Concept", 41.

<sup>37</sup> As opposed to Hubbard, 105-114; Bugbee, 62-64.

through life are brought into the church and empowered by the Spirit to serve the church.<sup>38</sup>

This approach can remove some pressure from individual Christians to "discover" gifts. Instead, Christians are empowered to be the people God created them to be in serving the body. God brought each person to the congregation to help the congregation (the body) function properly. God gives the church people to fill needs. Whatever your function is, carry out that role. God is meeting needs with people.

### **Discussion of 1 Corinthians 12**

The final "gift list" is found in 1 Corinthians 12. One challenge in interpreting this passage is that virtually every modern English translation begins similarly to the NIV: "Now about the gifts of the Spirit..."<sup>39</sup> Some of

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<sup>38</sup> Molly T. Marshall, *Joining the Dance: A Theology of the Spirit* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 2003), 116.

<sup>39</sup> A quick search at Bible Gateway reveals that the Common English Bible, English Standard Version, Lexham English Bible, New English Translation, New International Version, New King James Version, and New Revised Standard Version all include the word "gift" or "gifts" (although some italicize it). The Holman Christian Standard Bible says, "Now concerning what comes from the Spirit," but in the 2017 update (the Christian Standard Bible), the translators fall in line with the other versions. The New Living Translation actually uses the phrase "special

the translations offer a margin note “or spiritual persons or things”. The Greek phrase is *Περὶ δὲ τῶν πνευματικῶν* (*Peri de ton pneumatikon*), “Now concerning the spiritual,” without supplying an object to the plural adjective *τῶν πνευματικῶν* (*ton pneumatikon*, the spiritual). It may refer to spiritual things, spiritual people, or spiritual matters. Garland shows that the adjective *πνευματικός* (*pneumatikos*, spiritual) never on its own means “spiritual gift,” and when it is used for such, the word “gift” is added (see discussion of Romans 1:11 above).<sup>40</sup>

By inserting the word “gift(s)” into the translation of verse 1, translators are biasing the reader’s understanding of what Paul is saying.<sup>41</sup> Since this phrase appears at the beginning of the chapter, readers naturally assume the chapter is about miraculous spiritual gifts. This can hinder readers from carefully reading and understanding what the text actually says.

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul mentions wisdom, knowledge,

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abilities,” adding both the concept of gifts and an interpretation of what that means. Accessed June 1, 2017, [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com).

<sup>40</sup> David Garland, *1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 561f.

<sup>41</sup> Powers, 276.

faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discernment, tongues, interpretation, apostleship, and teaching. This list includes the more obviously miraculous items speaking in tongues, interpreting tongues, healing, and performing miracles. The discussion in 1 Corinthians 12 is part of a larger section, chapters 12-14, about worship. Paul's argument in chapter 12 lays some of the groundwork for his teaching on the proper role of tongue-speakers and prophets in public worship settings in chapter 14.

Part of the issue about Corinthian worship is that this church is full of recent converts from paganism. They are bringing into the church their perceptions about worship from their pagan past (v. 2). Ecstatic utterances and prophecy were a part of that past, so Paul is giving a corrective to how these roles look in Christian worship. It is likely that some of the prophets and tongue-speakers are carrying over their pre-Christian experience, just as Simon Magus brought his pre-Christian understanding to his new faith and needed correction (Acts 8:9-24). Here in 1 Corinthians 12 Paul is "informing" the Corinthians how this worship should look in Christ.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Paul does not want them to be "uninformed" (v. 1) and he "wants them to know" (v. 3). He is offering a corrective to their pre-Christian thinking. I am indebted

A primary issue he is addressing in Corinth is an elitist view which elevates the spiritual status of tongue-speakers.<sup>43</sup> Paul's emphasis here in chapter 12 is that all of the roles come from the same giver (v. 4-11) and that all are equally indicative of the Spirit's presence in the recipient of the role. Verse 18 is a cornerstone of this teaching: "But now God has placed each one of the parts in one body just as He wanted." In other words, God has placed each Christian (part of the body) in the body (a particular congregation at a particular time and place) personally and purposefully. Whatever a particular person's place or role might be in the congregation, each is needed, valued, and given by God.

There are some roles or ministries that are "greater." Contrary to the Corinthians' high view of flashy, miraculous abilities such as tongue-speaking and prophesying, Paul gives priority to what may be viewed as less miraculous, but spiritually vital roles in leadership. The "greater gifts" (1 Cor. 12:31) are opportunities to benefit and build up the church.<sup>44</sup>

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to Dr. Richard Oster for this insight.

<sup>43</sup> Turner, *The Holy Spirit*, 267-268.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 269-270.

### **Summary and Implications**

In summary, linguistic and textual evidence shows that χάρισμα does not mean "spiritual gift" or "special ability" but refers to a gift, a role, graciously given. Adding "spiritual" to the definition leads to biased and inaccurate reading of the text. The gracious gift given to Christians is a place to serve in the community of Christ, as God has placed Christians in the body purposefully. Although some roles may require miraculous or special abilities, this is not inherent in the word χάρισμα but rather is the result of God's equipping the Christian for the role.

God-given roles in the modern church include some of the same roles that existed in the first few centuries. The church needs, for example, some roles from the Bible such as teachers, pastors, and evangelists. There are other roles that were important to the early church that do not appear in Scripture that are also important today, such as hymn-writers (and song-leaders) and artists. In addition to these common roles, there are roles needed in the modern church that were not needed then. God provides people to fill roles in the church such as accounting, building maintenance, and even catering, depending on the needs of each individual congregation.

### God's People as Community

The second theological stream that is key to this project is that of God's people as community. Community is a thread that runs boldly through all of Scripture from God's promise to Abraham (a great nation, Gen. 12:2) to John's final vision (they will be God's people, Rev. 21:3).<sup>45</sup> God's people are a community.

The way a group describes itself helps us see how the group understands itself.<sup>46</sup> One of the ideas the biblical language about the church expresses is that of community: assembly (ἐκκλησία, ekklesia, commonly translated "church"), body (σώμα, soma, Rom. 12, 1 Cor. 12), household (οἶκος, oikos, Eph. 2:19, 1 Pet. 4:17) and family (ἀδελφός, adelphos, brother-sister) language (Rom. 16:1, Heb. 2:11).

The assembly, or congregation, highlights the gathered nature of God's people. ἐκκλησία is usually translated as "church" in the New Testament. It serves as Greek

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<sup>45</sup> Overdorf, 19.

<sup>46</sup> Stephen James Walton, "Calling the Church Names: Learning about Christian Identity from Acts," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 41, no. 3 (September 2014): 225, accessed June 18, 2017, available from ATLA Religion Database through EBSCOhost.

equivalent to the Hebrew  $\text{עֲבֹדָה}$ , usually translated in the Old Testament as "assembly."<sup>47</sup> Some scholars have made much of the etymology of  $\text{ἐκκλησία}$  being  $\text{ἐκ}$  (ek, out of) and  $\text{καλέω}$  (kalew, I call), thus stating that the  $\text{ἐκκλησία}$  is the "called out ones."<sup>48</sup> Roberts rightly pointed out decades ago that by the New Testament era, the idea of being "called out" was not a part of the meaning of  $\text{ἐκκλησία}$ .<sup>49</sup>

Although Christians live out their faith day-to-day, God is with his people in a special way when they assemble to worship. Thus, Paul is able to write these words to the Corinthians in a matter of community discipline:

When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus with my spirit and with the power of our Lord Jesus, turn that one over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the Day of the Lord. (1 Cor. 5.4-5)

God is present in a special way with the gathered community. Abraham describes worship gatherings as a place where the Holy Spirit "moves within and through" those who have "given themselves unreservedly in service" and have

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<sup>47</sup> Overdorf, 80.

<sup>48</sup> J. W. Roberts, "The Meaning of Ekklesia in the New Testament," *Restoration Quarterly* 15, no. 1 (1972): 28, Accessed June 3, 2017, available from ATLA Religion Database through EBSCOhost.

<sup>49</sup> Roberts, 29.

"learned to discern the leading of the Holy Spirit."<sup>50</sup> The assembly is where Christians, through their encounter with God and one another, are charged and empowered to carry out their ministry function.

Although the word "body" is used many times in the New Testament in its literal sense, the only metaphorical occurrences are found in Paul.<sup>51</sup> He describes the church as a "body" (σώμα, soma) in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 10-12, Ephesians 2-5, and Colossians 1-3. Each congregation is the body of Christ individually, a unique manifestation of Christ's body in a particular location.<sup>52</sup>

Although unity is foundational to the concept of God's people as a body, it goes beyond the unity of an assembly. A human body functions as a single unit, each part contributing to the purpose. Although a lung and an arm have different functions, they are interdependent and neither can function on its own or with its own agenda. Not all members have the same function, but all have the same purpose. All members are to work together to minister to and with each other. Just as the human body is controlled

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<sup>50</sup> Abraham, 159.

<sup>51</sup> Overdorf, 271.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 272.

by the mind or head, the church as a body is under the control of Christ as head of the church (Eph. 5:23), working together to carry out his kingdom mission.

The individual Christian, as a body part, is vital to the healthy functioning of the body. Just as a human body suffers when any part is injured, if one part of the Christian body suffers, "every part suffers with it" (1 Cor. 12:26). There are at least two implications of this.

First, it behooves the congregation (the individual manifestation of the body of Christ) to help each Christian (body part) fill her role or function so that the church is not limping, blind, or short of breath. The church grows and builds itself up in love when all of the parts are functioning properly (Eph. 4:16). James W. Thompson phrases it this way: "in this body every member has a function that is vital to the life of the community" (Rom. 12:3-8).<sup>53</sup> It is to the congregation's benefit to have each member fulfilling her role.

Second, because the body loves each of its parts, it wants each part to experience the joy and satisfaction of living out its destiny and calling. A defining

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<sup>53</sup> Thompson, 120.

characteristic of this community as stated by Jesus himself is love for one another (John 13:34-35). Paul writes of this call to love in all three of these gift contexts (Rom. 12:10, 1 Cor. 13, Eph. 4:2). The members of the body are also to honor each other (Rom. 12:10, 1 Cor. 12:22-25). With love and honor, the body helps its parts (members) grow to maturity, strong and healthy, to carry out their roles in the body, the good works God created them to do (Eph. 2:10).

The household and family language adds another level of mutual concern. It makes sense that Paul and the church use this family language since many of the first converts were alienated from their natural families.<sup>54</sup> The church became their de facto family. The church was the household (οἶκος, oikos) of God (Eph. 2:19, 1 Tim. 3:15, 1 Pet. 4:17), and Christians were children (τέκνον, teknon and υἱός, uios) of God (1 John 3:1, Rom. 8:1, Gal. 3:26, and others), adopted (υιοθεσία, uiothesia, Rom. 8:15, Gal. 4:5), joint-heirs with Jesus himself (κληρονόμος, kleronomos, Rom. 8:17, Gal. 3:29, Eph. 3:6).

Paul refers to fellow Christians as brothers and

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 43.

sisters (Rom. 1:13), brother, (Gal. 1:2), sister (Rom. 16:1), son (1 Tim. 1:2), and mother (Rom. 16:13).<sup>55</sup> He addresses the church as "brothers and sisters" in each of his letters to congregations. Paul himself treated the Thessalonian Christians like a nursing mother caring for her children (1 Thess. 2:7). Paul sums up this family relationship in his exhortation to Timothy:

Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and with all propriety, the younger women as sisters. (1 Tim. 5:1-2)

By using family language, Paul identifies a strong sense of intimacy and personal relationships. This imagery began with Jesus himself, who teaches that the bonds of spiritual family are closer than those of biological family (Mark 3:31-35). The key verses are 33-35:

<sup>33</sup> He replied to them, "Who are My mother and My brothers?" <sup>34</sup> And looking about at those who were sitting in a circle around Him, He said, "Here are My mother and My brothers! <sup>35</sup> Whoever does the will of God is My brother and sister and mother."

The call to love one another is the practical

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<sup>55</sup> The word ἀδελφοί (adelphoi, brothers) is sometimes used for mixed-gender groups and so, based on context, may be translated "brothers and sisters". Bauer, 18. For example, in 1 Cor. 1:10 Paul addresses the entire congregation (a mixed-gender group) as ἀδελφοί.

expression of this new family relationship.<sup>56</sup> Thus the New Testament is filled with commands such as carry each other's burdens (Gal. 6:2), be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other (Eph. 4:32), bear with each other (Col. 3:13), and encourage one another and build each other up (1 Thess. 5:11).

### **The Community Role in Empowering Members**

The theological stream of community is vital to helping Christians embrace their places in the kingdom if God is placing each part in the body just as he wants (1 Cor. 12:18). When someone becomes a Christian, she is placed in the body, becoming part of a community. The body (community) functions and grows, becoming healthy and mature, when each member fills her role (Eph. 4:16). God has provided leaders to the church to equip the members to fulfill that role. Robert Pochek notes that the church growth movement and the related rise of spiritual gift inventories have de-emphasized the role of the congregation in the process of discerning one's role in the church.<sup>57</sup> This project re-emphasizes it.

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<sup>56</sup> Walton, 226.

<sup>57</sup> Pochek, 122.

Ideally, a Christian recognizes her place in the church when she first becomes a Christian. Abraham argues that evangelism itself is best conceived as "initiating people into the kingdom of God for the first time."<sup>58</sup> This initiation happens through instruction, experiences, rites, and forms.<sup>59</sup> A central act of the evangelism process is providing the initiate with "the necessary initial equipment to serve as one of God's agents in the church and in the world."<sup>60</sup> Failure in this arena robs the new convert of the fullness of God's work in her and of the opportunity to fully participate in God's work in the world.<sup>61</sup> Thus, one role of the church is to help the new believer understand why God has placed her in the body and to recognize and accept that ministry.<sup>62</sup>

Although taking one's place in the community is ideally a part of becoming a Christian, it is also a part of Christian discipleship. One purpose of church leaders is

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<sup>58</sup> Abraham, 95.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 159.

<sup>62</sup> Powers, 288-89.

to equip the saints for the work of ministry (Eph. 4:11). The church carries out this work of ministry and grows to maturity when every part of the body is working properly (Eph. 4:16).

Equipping, by its nature, assumes a relationship between the equipper and the trainee. For the congregational leadership to know where a Christian needs to be trained, the leaders need to know that individual Christian and what may be a good place for her to serve. The Christian needs to have a level of trust in the leadership to know they have her best interest at heart and that they believe in her as a minister.

The community's role in helping a member fill his ministry function addresses two issues related to the fact that people have trouble seeing themselves clearly. First, sometimes a brother may incorrectly believe that he has a call to serve in a particular area but not be suited for that function. He may believe that his role is to teach but may not be capable of teaching. Whether it is a lack of knowledge or an inability to communicate, this brother is unaware that he is not a competent teacher. The community (particularly the leadership) is responsible for helping him either learn to teach or to find another place of service.

Second, sometimes Christians have a hard time believing that they have anything to offer. Some may believe that their past sins disqualify them from service. Others may have general feelings of uselessness brought on by difficulties in life. Others may have a false understanding of the Christian virtue of humility and be hesitant to step into ministry roles. The community, because of mutual relationship and concern, can identify strengths and skills that people have and invite and encourage them to serve.

#### **Community Context for Role or Function**

Not only do Christians *fill* their place in the body through the help of the community, Christians *carry out* their role or function in the context of the community. The New Testament emphasis is on the interdependent use of gifts, combining various actions and roles to achieve a unified purpose.<sup>63</sup> The body imagery of Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4 highlights this interdependence. All body parts are necessary for optimal functioning. Each one is given a manifestation of the Spirit for the common good (1 Cor. 12:7). By comparing

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<sup>63</sup> Marshall, 118.

Christians to parts of the body, Paul is emphasizing the roles of the body parts, not any special ability.<sup>64</sup>

The emphasis in the body passages is on diverse contributions to a mutual goal. It is common sense in other human institutions that members have different roles in helping reach the goal. In my context of Harding School of Theology, professors teach classes. But this could not take place without the admissions office recruiting students or the advancement office raising funds; and these offices could not function without facilities, maintenance, administrative support, and other services.

The church is not a business or a school, but the analogy is helpful. There are members who function in publicly visible ways, such as preaching and leading in worship. There are visible and important roles that occur outside of the worship gathering, such as pastoral visits and community ministry. There also are equally vital though less visible roles such as showing mercy, giving generously, and offering encouragement. The preacher may be capable, but if the other parts of the body are not functioning, he will be preaching to an empty hall or unhealthy group. The fourth grade Bible class teacher may

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<sup>64</sup> Berding, *What are Spiritual Gifts?*, 39.

be effective, but if she does not have a safe, clean place to teach, she cannot fulfill her function.

**Summary**

God's people are a community. The language the church uses to describe itself emphasizes the communal nature of the group. The community has a vital role in helping Christians embrace their roles and functions in the church, and the community is also the context in which Christians carry out these roles and functions.

Although it is ideal for a Christian to take her place of service as part of her initiation into the church or through discipleship, most churches do not have a plan in place to help make this happen. The goal of this project has been to provide a process to help churches begin to help their members embrace their roles. Once a church has gone through the process described in Chapter 3, the church will be able to incorporate these principles and tools for on-going use in initiation and discipleship.

### CHAPTER 3: PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

The purpose of this project was to design a program for churches to present to church members to help them find their places in the church. The program included a time of study (presented by a teacher), a period of guided introspection, and a time of community affirmation. The workshop concluded with a time of empowerment by the congregational leadership.

The early chapters of Kenneth Berding's *What Are Spiritual Gifts?* are framed as a guest pastor giving a workshop.<sup>1</sup> The main focus of the section is clarifying the concept of gifts as explained in this project. Berding does not include a section to help the members discern their ministry, but it is helpful as an example of raising the issue with church members.

Robert Pochek also provides a model for role discernment in his dissertation. He calls his model "ecclesiological," emphasizing the role of the church in the discernment of the individual Christian's role.<sup>2</sup> His plan fits the acronym S-E-R-V-E:

1. Seek God's face in prayer

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<sup>1</sup> Berding, *What are Spiritual Gifts?*

<sup>2</sup> Pochek, 122.

2. Equip through biblical teaching
3. Recruit workers
4. Volunteer access
5. Evaluate effectiveness<sup>1</sup>

Although Pochek's model rightly relies on the congregation to help members discern their role, it swings too far in the other direction from the individualism he is reacting against.<sup>2</sup> The focus in his model is on what the church leadership does, and how the church leadership can get people to fit into existing church programs. It does not seem to bear in mind the possibility that God may be sending people to a location to begin a new ministry. The message essentially is "If you do not fit these particular volunteer needs we have, there is no place for you." The model is about recruiting, not empowering. There needs to be a balance between existing programs and God's calling of individuals in ways that may not fit those programs.

#### **Theme Verse and Workshop Name**

The theme verse for the workshop was 1 Corinthians 12:18: "But now God has placed each one of the parts in one body just as He wanted." Since the workshop stemmed from a desire to correct erroneous understanding of gifts, I chose

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., 148-56.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 11.

the concept of gifts to be in the title. I did not want people to think this was not relevant to "spiritual gifts". Since the focus was on carrying out the theme verse and helping Christians embrace their places in the body, I chose a title that reflected the goal of the workshop. (A quick online search revealed many churches hosting a generically titled "Spiritual Gifts Workshop.") The workshop title during the project phase was "One Body Workshop" with a tag line "Helping Churches Help Christians Find their Place in the Church." The title for this dissertation more accurately reflects reality: "Spiritual Gifts or Ministry Roles? Helping Church Members Embrace their Places in God's Kingdom."

### **Congregational Preparation**

The congregation had two avenues of preparation in advance of the workshop. Participants would be able to benefit from the workshop alone, but these two items were to jump start their reflection in advance. First, I provided a sample sermon from Ephesians 4 to help the preacher establish a foundation of each church member's playing a role in the health and growth of the church (see Appendix I). If the congregation chose to use it, someone could preach the sermon as I had written it (inserting

their own stories); or they could write a new sermon.

I also created a prayer guide for both the congregation and the individual members (Appendix II). Since God created us and wants us to serve in the congregation where he has placed us, then naturally he wants to help us to recognize our places in the kingdom. The prayer guide invited both the congregation and the individual to commune with God on this topic with a series of prayer themes.

The local leadership participated by verbally empowering the members to carry out their God-given roles or functions in the church. I worked with them to help them create a list of opportunities specifically for their context for members to fulfill their roles and functions (see sample, Appendix III).

Congregational leadership also had to be prepared for the likelihood that some members would find roles that would take them outside the current opportunities in the congregation. This would possibly happen with one ministry dying and a new one beginning at the church or with a member partnering with an agency outside the church, such as an adoption agency or homeless shelter, to fulfill her or his calling. The leaders needed to be prepared to empower members and to accept the consequences of that

decision.

### **Workshop Content**

The workshop, as indicated in Chapter 1, had four basic parts. The first part was the biblical teaching regarding gifts of ministry and how the individual Christian fits in the body of Christ. The goal of this portion was to counteract the influence of the conventional view and to provide a clearer understanding of the biblical view. Appendix IV contains the script for the lesson and the PowerPoint slides of the teaching part of the workshop.

Following the teaching portion, participants entered a time of personal reflection. As spiritual gift inventories are not a reliable guide for this process (see Chapter 1), this workshop did not make use of one. Participants in the workshop began by reflecting on a series of open-ended questions designed to help them think about what they already knew about themselves and what they had already experienced in life. This allowed them to align their ministry service with the person God had created them to be rather than trying to uncover hitherto hidden parts of themselves.

Personal reflection for ministry is similar to that for career or life planning. Similar to career guidance,

the questions were based on the career planning work of Dan Miller and the "Inward Questionnaire" from Clinton. These questions and statements guided the introspection of the participants:<sup>3</sup>

1. What was I born to do? What makes me feel most alive?
2. I feel that I make the biggest difference when I \_\_\_\_\_.
3. What are recurring themes I find myself drawn to? What opportunities does it seem that God keeps putting in my life?
4. Do I have a sense of being called or chosen for a particular work?
5. What have been the happiest, most fulfilling moments in my life?
6. Do I have an inner conviction that I should be serving in a particular way or meeting a particular need?
7. Am I in a situation where a particular role is needed? Am I willing to be a channel for that role? Could God do that work in me?
8. Who are one or two Christians whom I really admire and would like to be like? What roles or functions do I see in them that I would like to fill?

In addition to the questions, participants had an outline of some of the biblical roles. This list was from Wilkes' *Spiritual Gifts Survey* (see Appendix V).<sup>4</sup> Although we did not use the associated survey, Wilkes' summary of

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<sup>3</sup> Dan Miller, *48 Days to the Work You Love* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2005), 17-18; Clinton, 103-04.

<sup>4</sup> Gene Wilkes, *Spiritual Gifts Survey* (Nashville, Lifeway Christian Resources, 2003), accessed August 3, 2017, [http://www.lifeway.com/lwc/files/lwcF\\_PDF\\_Discover\\_Your\\_Spiritual\\_Gifts.pdf](http://www.lifeway.com/lwc/files/lwcF_PDF_Discover_Your_Spiritual_Gifts.pdf).

these sixteen roles provided a framework for people to think about their own ministry skills. This list was not a complete list of functions from the New Testament but included only functions listed in the New Testament. I anticipated that the group process would likely lead to additional ministries, including some not found in the Bible.

- Leadership (Rom. 12:8)
- Administration (1 Cor. 12:28)
- Teaching (1 Cor. 12:28; Rom. 12:7; Eph. 4:11)
- Knowledge (1 Cor. 12:28)
- Wisdom (1 Cor. 12:28)
- Prophecy (1 Cor. 12:10; Rom. 12:6)
- Discernment (1 Cor. 12:10)
- Exhortation (Rom. 12:8)
- Shepherding (Eph. 4:11)
- Faith (1 Cor. 12:9)
- Evangelism (Eph. 4:11)
- Apostleship (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11)
- Service/Helps (1 Cor. 12:28; Rom. 12:7)
- Mercy (Rom. 12:8)
- Giving (Rom. 12:8)
- Hospitality (1 Pet. 4:9)

Following the time of introspection, members who knew each other fairly well gathered around tables for a period of community affirmation. Community affirmation was an important method of role identification for this project. The community could discern and affirm ministries that a Christian may or may not have seen in himself. The community could also challenge self-perception either to question a proposed gift or to uncover gifts that a person

may not have recognized in herself. The community could hold each partner accountable to use that gift for the glory of God.

Clinton describes eight conditions under which outside confirmation proves useful (emphasis his).

1. A body-life ministry is practiced by the church.
2. The church has a dispersed-church mentality as well as a gathered-church mentality.
3. There are a number of small group activities in which members help each other grow.
4. There is a plurality of leaders with complementary gifts directing the organic growth of the church.
5. Gifts are taught in the church.
6. Members are *not* only free to use their gift(s) but are strongly exhorted to do so. In fact, there is training along gift-oriented lines.
7. The reciprocity commands (... one another commands) are a norm for the church.
8. Members participate vitally *not* superficially in the gathered church functions of prayer, teaching, worship, sharing, and discipline.<sup>5</sup>

Clinton provides a form for outside confirmation on which ministers and friends who know the person indicate gifts that they are certain (C) the person has, gifts they think the person potentially (P) has, and gifts they have observed the person use fruitfully (F).<sup>6</sup> Rather than using

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<sup>5</sup> Clinton, 108. Where Clinton underlined for emphasis, I use italics to maintain consistency with current convention.

the form, participants at this workshop verbally affirmed what they saw in individuals following Clinton's three categories. Depending on the number and distribution of participants, this could be done in one group, but for the workshops, the participants were invited to form groups of their own choosing. Affirmation took the form of these three statements:

1. I see \_\_\_\_\_ (function, role) in you. Here is an example. (Clinton's C)
2. I think you may have \_\_\_\_\_ (function, role). Here are specific reasons why I think that. (Clinton's P)
3. Your service builds the body of Christ in this way. You function this way in the body. Your role helps the body in this way. In other words, we need you! (Clinton's F)

I concluded this portion of the workshop with a few cautions and disclaimers adapted from Carter.<sup>7</sup>

1. Your role may change from time to time and place to place.
2. You may have difficulty discerning your ministry if you are not in a spiritual frame of mind.
3. Your function may not be evident if you are in an unhealthy church or an unhealthy personal state.
4. Your calling may not be evident if you do not feel needed or see a place to serve.

The final portion of the workshop was leadership

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 109. Clinton uses the word gifts in the traditional sense. I am adapting this to the "gifts of ministry" paradigm.

<sup>7</sup> Carter, 46.

empowerment. In most congregations, there are many opportunities for members to serve even if they or the leaders are not aware of it. There are service slots that must be filled to carry out the regular meetings of the church, such as greeting and working in the nursery. Congregations usually have planned ministry activities that represent commitments from the congregation, such as working in a food pantry or visiting shut-ins.

With a relatively small group of volunteers, there may be limited flexibility to begin new ministries, which could be a challenge if the results show that a congregation is heavily invested in ministry areas that do not match up with the members. A second, similar challenge would be addressing roles and functions that point to completely new areas of ministry. Church leadership needed to consider the church's willingness or ability to change as needed to carry out God's mission and calling.

Therefore, church leadership needed to match members to ministries as much as possible and to be creative in connecting members to existing ministry opportunities. An empowered church serving in areas where individual Christians feel able and called has the potential to breathe new life into the work of the congregation.

Three key principles may guide the deployment of the

church. First, there are many ministry areas where members can learn the skills needed.<sup>8</sup> The church should not be limited by only carrying out the parts of the mission requiring passionate, talented people. Talent will help in these ministries, but skills can build on and broaden those ministries. For example, a congregation may not have an evangelist, but leaders and members can learn how to share their faith to help further the mission of the church. Likewise, if better equipped through skills-based training, members may be more willing to teach the children.

Second, members may feel talented and called to new areas of ministry that the congregation is not presently practicing. Members should be free to explore various areas of ministry rather than being constrained to opportunities already in place. As members of a body, this needs to be done in prayer and consultation with church leaders. This is not a matter of asking permission as much as it is a matter of body life; what one part of the body does impacts the rest of the body. Will this new area take resources away from church commitments? Are there resources that could be used to help in this new area? Are there creative

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<sup>8</sup> Carter, 52.

ways to engage in the ministry outside the local body (e.g., working with a non-profit or a government agency)?

Third, "the launch isn't the voyage."<sup>9</sup> Although we may have a reinforced vision of our ministry roles and renewed passion for serving, the journey from this point will take time. Ministries may begin and end. Corrections and adjustments will be necessary. To strengthen the resolve of the church, leaders need to lead with vision. Leaders need courage to try new methods and, after patient endurance, to abandon ineffective efforts.

### **Workshop Logistics**

I presented the workshop personally at three congregations during the project. Here I provide details about time, location, church selection, requirements, personnel, and cost.

#### **Time**

The workshop took approximately three hours. The first hour was the teaching time, the second hour the introspection time, and the third hour community affirmation. Some sections took place over a meal. Once, the workshop was done on a Sunday morning, filling the

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<sup>9</sup> Mallory, 116.

Bible class hour, the worship hour, and a fellowship meal. Twice, the workshop took place on Sunday afternoon after worship.

### **Location**

The workshop location was determined by each participating congregation. The teaching portion was in the church auditorium for one presentation, and the reflection and community affirmation portions were around tables.

### **Church Selection**

I chose Churches of Christ with willing leadership who empowered members for ministry. I communicated to the leadership the general content and expectations. See Chapter 4 for information about participating churches.

### **Requirements**

I used a projector during the teaching time, and members needed tables for the second and third sections. Each congregation made handouts both for the prayer guide and for the workshop. Leadership was willing to empower the congregation's members to fulfill their roles and helped create a list of opportunities to share with the participants.

**Personnel**

I presented the teaching portion and guided the other portions of the workshop. Leadership led the empowerment section. Each of the two churches in Georgia provided one person to serve as an inside observer for their own location and as an outside observer for one other location. Cordova Community provided an inside observer from the group and an outside observer who was an elder who was not part of the young adult group. These observers also participated in analysis of data collected and suggested modifications of the workshop.

**Cost**

For this project, there was no cost beyond covering the items mentioned above (location, handouts). The observers and I covered our own travel expenses.

**Assessment**

The inside and outside observers made field notes based on an observation guide that I provided for them (see Appendix VI). The field observers looked for signs that participants were engaged or disengaged; critiqued the presentation for content, clarity, and delivery; and reported comments from conversations with participants, overheard conversations, and follow-up discussions with

church members. I reflected on, but chose not to provide the observers with, a copy of Tim Sensing's tips for taking field notes.<sup>10</sup>

The second data collection point for assessment was a website, <http://onebodyworkshop.com>. The website offered a place where people could share their stories of finding their fits and functions in the church. This served two purposes. First, it allowed people to acknowledge that they had found ministry places and to be encouraged to live out those roles. Second, it encouraged others who read these stories to seek out their own roles and carry them out. Participants could complete a form on the website (see Appendix VII) that asked them to share their experience and how their lives and the church had changed because of the workshop. For assessment purposes, by collecting these stories I hoped to be able to see evidence that some Christians had found their places in the church.

The third method for data collection was follow-up conversations between participants and me. I provided my

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<sup>10</sup> Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2011), 185. Sensing adapted and supplemented tips found in Natasha Mack et al., *Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector's Field Guide* (Research Triangle Park, NC: Family Health International, 2005), 24.

contact information to all participants and invited them to telephone, video-conference, and in-person meetings. The goals of these meetings were to help them process their experience and to provide data for assessment. The conversation guide (see Appendix VIII) followed the semi-structured approach.<sup>11</sup>

To accomplish both of these goals, I wrote open-ended questions. Basic questions opened each part of the discussion. I planned to use my judgment to determine when to probe more deeply and when to move on to the next question. The open-ended questions included the following:

1. How did the workshop impact your understanding of the biblical concept of gifts?
2. Do you have any questions from the teaching portion of the workshop?
3. What was your experience during the personal reflection time of the workshop?
4. What feedback did you receive during the community affirmation period?
5. What role would you like to fill? What possibilities do you see for yourself?
6. Is there anything you would like to add?

I presented the workshop at a church in Tennessee in October and two churches in Georgia in November and December. Between the presentations, I met with the assessment team to assess the data as collected at that point. There were two key questions in this assessment.

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<sup>11</sup> Sensing, 107.

First, do the church members report a better understanding of their places in the church? Second, are the members following up by taking on the roles they discern? Using the data, the team suggested changes to implement for the second run of presentations. The following chapter presents the results of the workshop and these conversations.

## CHAPTER 4: SUMMARY AND EVALUATION

This project began with an assignment in my first Doctor of Ministry seminar, *Spiritual Formation for Congregations*. An assignment for that class was a project that would help our congregations with spiritual formation. Cordova Community had just completed the Natural Church Development process, and an identified area of growth was gift-based ministry.<sup>1</sup> I created a retreat to help our members in this area. Church leaders were concerned that those who needed the training most would not attend a retreat, so we converted it to a three-hour workshop, which I presented to the church on Sunday, September 28, 2014.

There were two specific areas for growth at this event. First, at this event, I had participants complete a spiritual gifts inventory with appropriate warning about the lack of reliability and validation of the instrument.<sup>2</sup> They took the inventory during the reflection time, and my encouragement was to use it as a starter if helpful. During

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<sup>1</sup> Christian A. Schwarz, *Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches* (St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 2006). The strength and growth areas are identified by feedback from members on a survey.

<sup>2</sup> Wilkes.

the affirmation time, my perception was that people put more stock in the inventory than in their own reflection; so I did not use an inventory in the workshop after that time.

Second, during the teaching portion I taught about the Greek work χάρισμα (*charisma*). One of the ministers (who encouraged me that this teaching is valuable) advised me that it helps the listeners to have a transliteration of Greek words. Therefore I included transliteration on my slides in subsequent presentations.

Between that workshop and the project portion of the dissertation, I also presented versions of this material at the Northern Mississippi Youth Retreat (November 2014), Campus Encounter (Stillwater, Oklahoma, campus ministry conference, February 2015), Senatobia (Mississippi) Church of Christ (June 2015), Park Avenue (Memphis) Church of Christ (July 2015), a Harding University ministry capstone class (October 2016), and the Harding University Lectureship (September 2017). At some of these events I presented the teaching and merely discussed the reflection and affirmation sections since time did not permit a full workshop. In those cases, I encouraged participants to spend time in reflection and then to seek trusted Christian friends for affirmation.

With an outline for the workshop in place, I tweaked the workshop as I learned from additional presentations. At some locations (e.g., the youth retreat), I had no projection. I made a couple of different handouts to use without projection, and the handouts seemed to help people follow the teaching. For the project phase I used both slides and a handout.

For the project phase of this dissertation, I conducted workshops for the Cordova Community Church of Christ Young Adult Ministry (Memphis area), Gwinnett Church of Christ (Metropolitan Atlanta, Georgia), and Campus View Church of Christ (Athens, Georgia). This brought the total number of workshops to ten. At each of these three workshops, an inside observer from the group, an outside observer, and I each made field notes and debriefed from these notes after each workshop. I used these notes and debriefings to adjust the workshop for the next event.

### **Cordova Community Church of Christ**

The first workshop was for the young adult ministry at Cordova Community Church of Christ (see Chapter 1 for information about this congregation). The twelve participants were not at the workshop I conducted for the church in 2014, and some do not attend Cordova at all. The

event took place in a leader's home on a Sunday afternoon. This group leader (Observer 1, O1) served as inside observer, and an elder from the congregation (Observer 2, O2) served as the outside observer. We gathered in the living room, and I taught as they ate lunch. The reflection and affirmation took place throughout the house. Since this group does not function as a church with a leadership structure, there was no leadership empowerment. The following observations were submitted to me via email.

### **Inside Observer**

Overall, I think it went well. Perhaps even better than I thought. Here are a couple of observations and thoughts I had about the afternoon.

First, I want to give my own personal reflections. Your thesis is definitely a paradigm shift for me. I grew up in an era with "Spiritual Gift Inventories" and arguments over "miraculous gifts" and how to discover them. I've generally been skeptical of that thinking because the dividing line between natural (albeit God given) talents and abilities and spiritually imparted gifts seemed so small and vague. Even though skeptical, it's been a lifetime of consumed teaching and it has been my paradigm. It honestly took me a while to switch gears to where I could finally follow your paradigm of our giftedness being how we plug into a role/office/function in the church. For a while, it was even confusing. By the end of the afternoon I finally came to the point where I could distinguish the two lines of thought and language, but it was initially a struggle. Listening to the comments and questions of the two generations represented, it was clear that this particular problem--at least in our case--is indeed a generational issue; the younger generation wasn't carrying that baggage. This might be something for you

to think about as you encounter generationally specific audiences or inter-generational groups.

Second, to the larger audience, kudos on keeping everyone's attention. The college kids, especially after a Saturday of late-night fun, an early Sunday morning of worship, and a bellyful of food are prone to falling completely asleep. I think P1 [a person mentioned by name in the report] was a little bleary-eyed at one point, but everyone seemed engaged with the material.<sup>1</sup> You had a good use of slides and passages and just enough humor to keep everyone plugged-in.

Third, the reflection times were useful. The personal reflection questions jogged several thoughts in me, and from the few conversations I overheard, appeared to do the same in others. It was useful to have people recognize what they already knew about themselves, rather than answer 100 questions trying to "discover" what was hidden inside. I didn't get to participate fully in the community affirmation time, but from the comments afterward, it seemed that P2 and P3, and P4 and P5 made good use of the time. To me, that indicates that you reached both audiences. I was glad that P4 helped P5 make the connection to his ability to serve. P5 has a hard time feeling good about himself; having someone else vocalize the good that God has put in him will be valuable to him, I'm sure.

Finally, and still regarding the community reflection time, along with the conclusion, I'm wondering if we didn't rush it a bit. We started late and were pushing up against our end time, the three-year-old had just woken and was quickly becoming the center of attention, and I think it made us all a bit restless. I wish we could have had just a bit more time.

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<sup>1</sup> P and a number represents a participant mentioned by name in the observation. O and a number represents a particular observer.

**Outside Observer**

My first observation is the depth of your presentation that was so limited by time. The ability to cover the main passages that announce and discuss the gifts of the Spirit was important and well done. It assured everyone that observations were not being limited. It also provided the opportunity of revealing more truth.

Your presentation was very well organized and made the much-debated topic much easier to understand.

Your slides and handouts also served well in understanding and remembering the key points.

The age of your audience was somewhat challenging. The group was made up of more than half at the age of 20 and under. The remaining group members seemed to be over the age of 50. However, you held the attention of all the attendees very well. I was pleased to see the young members of the group maintain their thoughts as well as they did on a topic that they probably have not had a great deal of concern. The remaining group members were totally immersed in what you had to say.

I was also grateful for the opportunity you provided for comments and questions. Even on such a tight timetable you were very receptive and composed in making the response.

Great job! Your presentation would be welcomed and appreciated in most churches.

**Presenter Observations**

I felt a good connection with the participants. They made eye contact and took notes during the teaching time. They actively participated in both the reflection time (reading and writing) and the affirmation time (engaging one another in the conversation).

P4 approached me during the reflection time dejected because he did not have any "abilities." We discussed his life of service and how what seems normal to him is actually a blessing to the church.

As there was no leadership empowerment portion of this workshop, after the affirmation time we spent a few minutes processing the experience. This group seemed to need this processing time, which is not typically a part of the workshop. I was not prepared for this, and had not prepared to process, so the ending felt awkward to me, as though I were ready to end and they were not yet there. There are some important points in the empowerment module that I neglected to make. This likely contributed to the rushed feeling mentioned by both observers.

### **Adjustments**

To address making the shift from the "gift as ability" paradigm, in the next two workshops, I emphasized multiple times during the teaching time that the biblical view is gifts as ministries and roles, not abilities. I also acknowledged that this is a difficult change in thinking and encouraged them to monitor their language to help with their thinking. Focus on 1 Corinthians 12:18 (God placed each of the members in the body just as he wanted) helped

ask the question, "Why did God put me in this church here and now?" I also reviewed the leadership empowerment session and improved the graphics to make a stronger ending.

### **Gwinnett Church of Christ**

The second workshop was at the Gwinnett Church of Christ in metropolitan Atlanta. This congregation has a full-time preacher, a full-time youth minister, and three shepherds. The congregation is multi-ethnic and has both blue- and white-collar members. The inside observer described the leadership as delegating and empowering deacons and other members for service. Average attendance is above 200 each week.

For this event, the preacher preached a sermon adapted from a sample I had provided. Following worship, I taught as the participants ate lunch at tables in the back of the auditorium. The reflection, affirmation, and leadership empowerment took place at the same lunch tables. About 70 people participated in the workshop. A deacon (Observer 3, O3) served as the inside observer, and a member of the Ministry Advocacy Team (MAT) from Campus View Church of Christ (Observer 4, O4, see below under Campus View Church of Christ for information about the MAT) served as the

outside observer.

### **Inside Observer**

The inside observer made detailed notes, which are summarized here.

People are listening attentively. They are taking notes and filling in the form. There is good laughter. P6 smiled at the story about worship leader training, and the educated people loved the Greek jokes.<sup>2</sup> Most of the people who are here are folks who already minister.

For the reflection time, the people seem engaged. The young marrieds are together at a table and doing it together. They may be jumping ahead to affirmation. P7 is really processing--I see a pensive look followed by energetic writing.

There was lots of engagement for the affirmation and everyone seemed involved. Many of the people did not realize how they were important.

In general, there was good energy and a wide age group. The red word on the one slide is invisible to colorblind people. The middle part of the worksheet got left blank--perhaps there was a disconnect?

### **Outside Observer**

I feel that the presentation flowed well and was presented in a way that led to a clearer understanding of what spiritual gifts are and how to best define and recognize them. I feel like the audience was engaged during most of the presentation. The only distracted time seemed to be during the meal.

One point that could have been elaborated on a bit more is encouraging individuals to explore areas even if it is out of their comfort zone or an area

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<sup>2</sup> P6 replaces a specific name given by the observer.

they haven't been involved in before.

Also, possibly being a little clearer on what you were intending on the bullet points under each of the scripture references on your outline would be helpful (for us slower folks).

It seemed that there was very good participation during the personal reflection time and the community affirmation time. They read and answered the questions but finished a little early on the reflection time. Could have been a few minutes shorter.

I only noticed one person texting and one person dozing so that is pretty good odds! Good job!

### **Presenter Observations**

The energy was good. The participants were pleasant and welcoming. There was a lot of laughter and conversation during the breaks, showing the close relationships within the congregation. The group was welcoming, and the church leadership talked up the program in advance to encourage people to participate. With the setting in the back of the auditorium, I felt close enough to the group for communication; and eye contact was good throughout the workshop.

The reflection time was shorter than the allotted half hour because the group had become restless and begun talking among themselves. Some affirmation groups had pulled up chairs from other tables and thus were larger groups. The affirmation time could have gone on longer for these tables, but we ended when the bulk of the groups had

finished. The feedback I got immediately afterward from participants and observers was that the affirmation time was the most valuable part of the workshop.

The preacher read the empowerment statement that I had provided. The inside observer told me verbally that the leaders of the congregation already had a posture of empowerment, so this statement fit in well with the church culture.

### **Adjustments**

Part of the issue with the handout may have been because I misspoke a couple of times, saying "Romans 12" when I meant "1 Corinthians 12". Another challenge was that we were a long way from the screen, so the slides were difficult to see. Based on this feedback, I adjusted the slides to clarify which words filled in the blanks of the handout. I also changed the red text mentioned by Observer 3 to blue.

### **Campus View Church of Christ**

The third workshop was at the Campus View Church of Christ in Athens, GA, a college town. This is my home church, but it has been over twenty years since I lived in the area. The church building is across the street from the University of Georgia, and the church has a long history of

involvement in campus ministry. The congregation has a large number of highly educated members--the five elders are a physician, an attorney, an engineer, an EPA scientist, and a man who was ABD when he left school to work in more blue-collar fields. The history of the church includes long-tenured preachers, the past three of whom have either held Doctor of Ministry degrees or earned them while at Campus View.

The preacher is the only paid ministry staff, but in the past few years there were two other ministers (youth, campus). A Ministry Advocacy Team is charged with handling the administration of the church, leaving the elders free to shepherd. Various ministries such as college, youth, benevolence, and adult education are led by teams of members.

There has been recent controversy over expanded roles for women in the public assembly. Attendance dropped after this decision and began to build again, but is not back to its former level. Current attendance is 170-180. The church is racially and culturally diverse.

O4 from Campus View became excited about the project at the Gwinnett Church. She saw how this workshop fit with some needs at Campus View and became a motivating force to make sure the church participated fully. The elders divided

the directory and called all members to encourage them to attend. She served as the inside observer, and O3 from the Gwinnett Church was the outside observer.

For this workshop, I taught in the auditorium during the morning worship after a brief communion service. The congregation gathered for lunch afterward; then the reflection, affirmation, and leadership empowerment took place in the fellowship hall after lunch. The church reported that approximately 105 participated in the afternoon sessions out of approximately 160 in morning worship. This represented a significant portion of the core membership.

### **Inside Observer**

Thank you for coming to Campus View to present the One Body Workshop. Here is the assessment for my viewpoint as the inside observer:

I feel that the power point, the worksheet, and the presentation meshed well and was easier to follow [than at Gwinnett].

The personal stories/examples enhanced the points made during the presentation.

The setting in the auditorium for the first lecture section seemed to work well and the audience seemed engaged but quiet, possibly because of it being in the auditorium.

The refection time and the affirmation time went very well with everyone participating. I think the affirmation time was the most engaging.

The audience seemed to finish or not spend as

much time on the self-reflection (only 10-15 minutes or so).

The percentage of the congregation that participated was very good. I think the way the workshop was structured, offering lunch midway, helped.

I heard several comments that it was very helpful and you are interesting to listen to. I agree!

### **Outside Observer**

It would have been nice to have people move toward the front. People were spread out. We needed more handouts. The connection improved throughout the teaching time. People took more notes as time went on and were more engaged with the humor. Perhaps it took some time for participants to move from a "sermon" to a "workshop" mindset in the formal auditorium setting? They really seem awed by the conclusion: 'You're here for a reason!' Amen!

There was good participation in the reflection and affirmation times. The informal setting in the fellowship hall really changed the perspective. During the reflection, one teen was working seriously through the questions with her mother. Some were not really doing it. There were some very pensive faces and lots of folks were actually writing. It might be helpful to have some way to occupy those who finish early so their conversations do not interfere with the others.

It got loud really quickly during the affirmation. People looked serious, and the young people were really engaged. I saw smiles of appreciation in response to affirmation. Some of the people who did not seem to take the reflection seriously took the affirmation seriously. There was great emotional range in the conversations from laughter to deeply serious. At my table, P8 planted some good seeds with P9 about new roles in a new season of life.

I am curious if not mentioning the informed consent would improve feedback?

**Presenter Observations**

The teaching time felt more formal in the auditorium setting. The audience was farther away since I was on the stage and pews stretched to the back of the auditorium. I did notice that the person working sound in the very back was attentively taking notes. Rather than a projector with a large screen, the auditorium had two television screens mounted behind the pulpit. It was clear that the text on my slides was too small for these screens.

The reflection and affirmation time in the fellowship hall had a livelier atmosphere. During my comments prior to each section, the participants were verbally responsive and laughed at my jokes. As in Gwinnett, some larger tables needed more time than the smaller tables. This was a source of irritation to one participant who urged me to continue even though two tables were still processing.

As I was preparing for the leadership empowerment section, one of the elders did not know exactly what we were doing next, so he asked to speak for a minute. He told the congregation that the elders take this seriously and wanted to give everyone permission to fill their role. This fit perfectly with the empowerment statement another elder read.

## Adjustments

During the debriefing with the observers, the preacher, and an elder, the preacher asked what to do next with this teaching. The Campus View group discussed using it with the women's ministry, college ministry, and other groups. The preacher specifically asked me, "What do we do next?" I had not prepared for this perfectly logical question. As we talked around the table, we came up with these six ideas:

1. Language--remember how hard it is to shake the common usage of gifts as talents. The New Testament usage is "gift as present." Don't be pedantic about it, but watch your language and try to remove the word "gifted" from your vocabulary. Make the phrases "Why did God bring you here?" and "This is why God put you here" part of the language of the church. Rather than focusing on "gifts," focus on roles, functions, and ministries. It is much easier to see these as why you are here. Make this part of the culture of the church.
2. Mentors--people who are leading various ministries should constantly look for people to mentor in their respective ministry areas. This is a part of the Ephesians 4 process of equipping Christians for service. Young people in particular may not know where they can serve, so letting them try ministries with mentors is a great way for them to see what they have to offer. A mentoring culture (including marriage mentoring and spiritual growth mentoring, for example) can give the members the opportunity to live out why they are here.
3. Membership Process--make the material from the workshop part of the new member/convert process. The key question is "Why did God bring you to Campus View?"

4. Regular updates--let people know about opportunities to serve. When speaking of some of these events, connect them to roles. Example: We have an opportunity to provide Big Brothers and Big Sisters for the upcoming year. If the "shepherd" role at the workshop resonated with you, here is an opportunity to live that out.
5. Highlight Less Visible Roles--every part of the body is important. We give more honor to those parts deemed less honorable. To combat any ideas of spiritual elitism, highlight roles that are less visible. Make sure those folks who are less visible but so vital to the life of the church are given honor, appreciation, and encouragement (1 Cor. 12:22-24); but I wouldn't tell them they are less honorable! At Campus View, this could take place with a new tradition of introducing a church member at the beginning of worship assemblies.
6. Ministry Outside the Church--as a church, bless those who are ministering on behalf of the church "outside the camp." Thank them publicly on behalf of the church. All the saints are to be equipped for the work of service. The serving any Christian does is service as the church. The examples I gave in the workshop were foster parenting and feeding the homeless, but there are many other examples. (When I was church planting, we visited a supporting church. I was very touched when someone sought me out and said, "Thank you for going to Chapel Hill for us.")

### **General Observations**

Each group received the workshop well and provided positive feedback. Each group found this view of gifts to be different from how they had thought and to be more helpful in understanding and appreciating their places in the church.

The slides were the right size for every venue except Campus View. The auditorium has two big screen televisions at the front of the auditorium, so the slides with the Bible text were too small to be viewable from far back in the auditorium. I need to confirm technical specifications for future venues.

The teaching venue was different at each of the three workshops. In the living room with an audience of twelve (Cordova), it was much more intimate. At Gwinnett, the group was larger but also felt informal as they sat at tables close to me. At Campus View, the congregation was in pews; and I was up front on a stage. This added a level of distance and formality. My teaching style for the workshop was conversational and informal, and I could tell that I was having more trouble connecting at Campus View. I can adjust my style to be more formal as needed, and this may have been evident only in comparison to the other workshops.

At each workshop, participants engaged in the personal reflection time, writing on the reflection form. Rather than using the time allotted, at each event I ended this time when the people began talking amongst themselves. Going forward, the reflection time could be as short as 15 minutes.

At all three workshops, the time of affirmation received the most feedback. The feedback from each meeting was that the affirmation was particularly meaningful for those who serve in less visible roles. At Gwinnett and Campus View, some tables had more people than other tables had, so some groups completed the affirmation and were chatting while others were still in the affirmation stage. In the future, the tables need to be more evenly distributed. I also need to remind them that this is not the only opportunity they have to affirm, and I need to encourage them to make affirmation a part of their church culture.

#### **Other Data Collection Points**

There were two other methods of evaluation besides the observers. First, I offered to meet with participants for follow-up conversations. The handout that I provided had my phone number and email address. A major goal of the workshop was to teach those who knew each other to affirm their friends' roles in the church, so I did not anticipate many would ask for my help as a relative stranger. Nevertheless I included this offer at each workshop, assuming some might feel more comfortable speaking with a stranger. None of the participants contacted me for such

help.

Second, I built a website at [onebodyworkshop.com](http://onebodyworkshop.com) and invited participants to share their stories there. The goal for the website was to have anecdotal evidence of individuals telling how they had found their places in the church and how the workshop had influenced the entire congregation. As of December 16, 2017, there are four stories shared. Two themes show in these stories. One is that the affirmation time was the most helpful. The other is the importance of affirming "mundane" or "less visible" roles.

There are two data points that indicate that at least some participants either did not understand or did not retain the understanding of χάρισμα (charisma) as gift of ministry. One of the website comments expressed:

I used to think God would have to give me a gift when I got saved but learned He had already given me a gift even before I became a Christian. . . . This class made me realize I was using my gift because I was a part of God's Church and a willing member of the Church's body.

I also received a thank-you card in the mail from a participant. In her gracious message, she reflected the conventional view of spiritual gifts as well.

The fact that not many people followed up with either option could mean a variety of things. As O3 noted, the

informed consent may have put people off. Possibly they were not interested in taking steps outside how they were engaging the material in the local church. It may also mean that they had nothing to say and did not think they had stories to share. It would be impossible to know without asking, which is beyond the scope of this evaluation.

One of the elders from Campus View told me that they are again dividing up the directory and calling everyone for follow-up from the workshop. They believe that this event gave them some needed momentum that they do not want to lose. They particularly want to move passive participants to active workers.

The preacher from Campus View followed up with a letter expressing appreciation (Appendix IX). The letter shows that he understood the message of gifts of ministry. He reinforced the value of the community affirmation time. He is intentionally using some of the language that we discussed and clearly states that the congregation is taking responsibility to apply what they have learned.

### **Evaluation of Data**

There is no evidence to answer whether or not the workshop helped congregation members find their places of service. The feedback has revealed that it especially

helped those serving in less visible ways to recognize their service and to be appreciated. The feedback has also indicated that the affirmation time was important in helping members articulate what they see in each other. To determine whether the workshop helped people find their place of service would likely need to stretch a year into the future, which is beyond the scope of this project.

### **General Principles for Application**

The feedback has been positive from each of the ten times I have conducted versions of the workshop. These settings have ranged from urban to suburban congregations, teen groups, and college and young adult ministries. Although this project could influence only a small number of congregations, the following are some comments and general principles that may benefit others seeking to help churches help Christians embrace their roles in God's mission.

First, the workshop is helpful in a variety of settings and with a variety of ages if, for the affirmation section, the participants know each other well. There may need to be tweaks to the teaching format to fit specific groups, but the core of the workshop is repeatable in virtually any adult setting and even for mature teenagers.

The affirmation section, however, can work only if there are people who know each other well enough to have seen how God uses each of them. Legitimate feedback requires such intimacy.

Second, it is difficult for some Christians to make the shift from the conventional view (gifts as abilities) to the biblical view (gifts as ministries or roles). Even if Christians do not completely grasp the shift, however, they can understand and benefit from the 1 Corinthians 12:18 questions, "Why am I here? Why did God put me in this congregation at this time?" Answers to these and similar questions helps accomplish the goal of Christians embracing their fits and functions in their congregation.

Third, congregations need to teach the members to affirm the ministry roles they see in one another. In these three groups the members were able to express what they saw in each other. They appreciated and valued this time. They just had never thought do it. Affirmation should be encouraged to continue beyond the workshop and to become a part of the congregational culture (e.g., "At this church, when we see someone serving, we tell them we notice and appreciate them.").

Fourth, it is especially meaningful and helpful to communicate to those who serve in less visible roles that

what they do is noticed, needed, and appreciated. There were specific observations at Cordova and Gwinnett about members who had not recognized the value of their own service until trusted brothers and sisters pointed it out to them.

### **Personal Spiritual Growth**

A key component of a Doctor of Ministry program is the integration of knowledge with increased ministerial competence and spiritual maturity. My studies throughout the program as well as through this project have helped me to grow significantly in several ways. The first area of personal growth is affirming my own role and calling. As I studied and presented this workshop, I became more convicted about the truth of this teaching. The image of God purposefully placing Christians in congregations is both exciting and humbling as it applies not only to the participants in the workshop but to me as well. This has helped affirm my own work in the church and pushed me to seek input from trusted Christian friends about my role in the church. I have been challenged to preach more frequently in my congregation and to consider additional leadership opportunities as a result of this work.

Second, it is challenging to counter assumptions that

are so fundamental that people are not aware that they are assumptions. As I wrestled with the new understanding of χάρισμα (see chapter 2), I struggled to communicate it to others. As I discussed my project with professors and peers, I repeated myself a lot. This forced me not only to delve into the topic more deeply but also to craft my language more clearly. As I worked to internalize this principle, I was reminded that saying something once does not mean that the congregation understands it or will remember it. This also motivates me to listen to new ideas more carefully to ensure that I understand the concepts before responding to them.

Third, it is humbling and scary to put an idea out in front of friends and strangers. I thought that this project would be beneficial for churches; but until I put it forward, I could never know. The excitement of ministers and church members about the workshop was both affirming and relieving.

It is also humbling to realize that I may not be able to answer the question I intended to ask (Does this workshop help people find their fits in the church?), but God used the workshop to provide something that these congregations needed (affirmation and appreciation of those who serve in less-visible roles). It has been encouraging

to see how these groups have embraced the teaching and are working to make lasting change. How often has God taken my intentions and efforts and used them to accomplish his will whether it matched my goals or not! Through this process I have grown in trust and confidence in God's work through me.

### **Future Considerations**

My plan is to continue to offer the workshop to congregations and other church groups. The response from the churches where I presented is that this is a valuable program for congregations. In addition to these three groups, several other ministers expressed interest in having the workshop during the project phase of my research, but for whatever reason it was not the right time. This demonstrates that there is need and interest for continuing this ministry.

In moving forward with the workshop, I will continue to work on more precise language. At one point, I considered dropping the "gifts" language altogether and just working from the "embrace your function" mindset. I do think the gifts of ministry paradigm has value, so I will work to frame the discussion more helpfully so participants do not get bogged down in abilities versus ministries.

At the Campus View workshop, someone asked if the workshop was available on video and another asked about a book. Either of these formats could make the workshop available to a wider audience. Alternate delivery methods have the advantages of not needing to fit into one gathering and allowing those who miss a session to catch up. This opens the possibility of using the material in Sunday school classes or small group meetings. Follow-up material would also fit into these alternate methods. I will consider making the workshop materials available in other formats.

The workshop as I presented it ended with the leadership empowerment section. I need to help the people build on what they learn and put it into practice. To this end, I will create a unit of material to help the congregation follow up on the workshop. This material will include steps for the leadership to take (as in the ideas for Campus View listed above). It will also include some follow-up for the members, reminding them of what they have learned and of the need to put this into practice, filling the roles God has prepared for them.

### **Conclusion**

God has placed each member in the body just as he wanted. The body is healthy and functions best when each individual part is doing its work. This Doctor of Ministry project allowed me to think deeply about how individuals discern and embrace their roles in the body. The result has been a new-to-me view of gifts and the provision of a greater role for the community in helping individual members see and embrace their functions.

I look forward to seeing Cordova Community, Gwinnett, and Campus View continue to bless the members with opportunities to serve. I also anticipate continuing to offer the workshop in more congregations and opening more avenues to share this material (as discussed above). May God accept this offering and use it to help people embrace their roles in his kingdom mission.

## APPENDIX 1: SAMPLE SERMON FROM EPHESIANS 4

Our text today is Ephesians 4:11-16, and there is a wealth of information in these few verses. However, we're going to focus in on one train of thought that flows through the section. In the first six verses of this chapter, Paul focuses on unity. He commands the Ephesian Christians to be purposeful in doing whatever it takes to maintain Christian unity. He stresses in verses 4-6 seven major things that all Christians have in common. He wants the Ephesians, and by application, us, to know that Christians are one.

Let's pick up now in verse 11:

<sup>11</sup> So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup> 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.

<sup>14</sup> Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup> Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. <sup>16</sup> From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. (NIV)

Do you see what's happened here? Paul moved from emphasizing the sameness about Christians to emphasizing

the individuality of Christians. He says there is one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God. We are united! The "one Spirit" looks back to the unity of the Spirit from verse 3.<sup>1</sup> The "one body" is looking ahead to the rest of the passage.<sup>2</sup>

In verse 7 Paul writes, "But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it." *But* (watch for a contrast), *but* to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. *But* to each one of us.

I find this beautiful and fascinating. There is so much that every Christian shares in common with every other Christian, and there is rightfully a strong emphasis on unity and commonality; it's easy to feel like we're fading into a crowd. But Paul moves from what all Christians possess in common to that which the individual Christian possesses uniquely. In verse 7, Paul boldly states that each and every Christian has received a gift of grace from Christ that is personally measured and fitted to that

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, 42 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 238.

<sup>2</sup> Earnest Best, *Ephesians: A Shorter Commentary* (New York: T & T Clark, 2003), 179.

individual.<sup>3</sup> This is a deliberate process, flowing from Christ's intimate knowledge of us as individuals; each of us receiving the appropriate gift.

In verse 11 the gifting begins, but Paul goes in a different direction from what you might expect.<sup>4</sup> You may think of God's gifts as special or even miraculous abilities. But here, the gift isn't special abilities given to individuals, the gift is individuals given to the church. Paul says that Christ has given church leaders as a gift to the church!

Paul mentions four different leadership positions that Christ has given the church: apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor/teachers. Apostle literally means "one who is sent out", or, "messenger". If you have read your Bible, you know about Jesus' twelve apostles, but in our day we might also think of missionaries as apostles.

Next, Paul writes of prophets. Prophets are those who speak directly from God with a message to his people, a message sometimes, but not always, containing a prediction

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<sup>3</sup> Although some commentators believe that this is referring only to the leaders of v. 11, I along with most commentators take v. 7 to refer to all believers. See Best, 191-92.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 197.

of the future. In these early years, with the New Testament yet incomplete, there was great need for the prophetic ministry in the churches. In Ephesians 2:20 and 3:5, Paul closely links apostles and prophets.

The third group Paul mentions is evangelists. By definition, an evangelist is someone who proclaims (or, preaches) the good news. Some work with local congregations, such as Timothy in Ephesus, and others are traveling preachers, such as Philip in the early chapters of Acts. An evangelist was vital to a church, but did not have the authority of an apostle or inspiration of a prophet.

The fourth group that is mentioned is the pastor-teacher. Grammatically in Greek, this is one group, which may or may not show in your English translation. The word pastor here is actually the word "shepherd", so these men are shepherds and teachers. They are adept at nurturing the members of the congregation spiritually and instructing them in the ways of Christ.

Now, this is not an exhaustive list of leaders in the church. In fact, Paul himself mentions other types of leaders in other Scripture. But he says that Christ gave these leaders to the church for a specific purpose, and this is the fascinating part: Christ gave these leaders to

the church (v.12) for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.<sup>5</sup>

Anyone else find this interesting? This goes completely against what I learned by observation growing up. I thought God gave leaders to the church to DO the work of service and to BUILD UP the body of Christ. But that's not what Paul says here. He says that these leaders are to equip the saints to do this work. Who are the saints? The saints are the members of the congregation. The role of church leaders is to equip members of the church to do the work of the church.

Maybe you're like me, maybe not. I remember as a new Christian thinking evangelism went something like this: if

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<sup>5</sup> O'Brien supports this view but also describes an opposing viewpoint: that the leaders are given "for the equipping," "for the work," and "for the building up." Even if one adopts this second view (which I do not believe), the leaders are still given for equipping the saints, which implies that the saints are being equipped for some purpose. Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 302.

you find someone who is interested in the gospel, you take her to the evangelist for Bible study. Fishers of men? No, we were sort of fish-herders, driving the fish toward the Great Fisherman.<sup>6</sup> It was his job to catch them! Some churches even hired a minister whose title was "personal worker"--about which a student once commented, "Great, does that mean he'll invite my friends to church so I don't have to?" Okay, I was pretty naïve, and you probably didn't make the strange assumptions I did--I'm sure the church would have been horrified to know how I thought things worked.

But you see what Paul is getting at here. Who does the work of the church? Not the appointed leaders, their job is to be equippers. It is the church members who do the work of the church.

So, when we acknowledge leaders in our congregation, we are making a commitment to them that we will submit to their equipping us. We're stating that we are willing to grow in Christian maturity under their leadership. We're open to learning and growing, but even more than that, we're willing to work. Whatever the church should do, we're willing to do.

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<sup>6</sup> This analogy is not original with me. I cannot remember where I heard it years ago.

The church is not a retail outlet with the customers in the pew and always right. The Christian in the pew isn't a consumer, but a worker. Selfish Saints and Consumer Christians remain immature and stunt the growth of the rest of the church, sucking up vital resources that would be better spent serving those in real need, both inside and outside of the body.

But, when each individual part of the body is working properly, the result is that the body as a whole is built up in love. Rather than Consumer Christians, we become Body Building Believers. Through this growth and maturity, we're no longer sitting ducks for any bad teaching or deception that comes along. Because we know the truth, it is harder for anyone to trick us with a lie. Because we have a mature knowledge of Christ, we won't fall for some fake Christ. And because we have a mature knowledge of Christ, as we grow up in all aspects into Christ, we will be like the real Christ - the ultimate Body Builder.

What does this look like in real life? The first time I led a song in worship I was about eight years old, and for some reason, my dad wanted me to lead "I Was Sinking Deep in Sin" - he may have had a premonition about my teen years! So at eight years old, I wanted to wave my hand all over the place, but my father instructed me how to beat a

"2 pattern." The worship leader blew the pitch on the pitch pipe, and I started singing. Although I did not help them at all, the church really sang out to encourage me!

What does this look like in real life? I was a campus minister for many years and worked to incorporate this into the life of our ministry. I trained students to plan retreats, lead small group Bible studies, preach and teach. I made a list of everything I did that someone else could do and tried to give everything away so that I could focus on the things that it was more important for me to do.

Was it scary? Yes. I took the heat for mistakes that students made. Some things were not done as well as I would have done them. But you know what? Other things were done much better than I would have done them. And for the rest, the value of having others engaged in ministry was higher than the value of having a particular task done "right."

What does this look like in real life? If you think the church isn't evangelistic enough, go out and lead someone to Christ. If you think this church doesn't support enough missionaries, support missionaries. If you think we don't do enough for the poor, help the poor. For whatever you do, that's what the church does, you are the church. Go and do the work of service. Go and build up the body. Grow in your faith and in your knowledge of the Son of God. Go

love.

I challenge each Christian here this morning to take the grace that Christ has personally measured out to you and work for the body. Let's take a moment of silence and make or renew that commitment this morning ... AMEN.

Where do you find yourself in this passage today? Is God calling you to some sort of leadership? Are you a spiritual infant, being tossed about in a state of Christian confusion? Are you a mature Christian, working properly to build up the body? Did you feel uncomfortable? Did your mind offer 100 reasons why this shouldn't apply to you? Are you a Consumer Christian, eating up the energy and effort of the church, but holding out on what you supply to the body?

The church is described here (as in other places) as a body, and this is a terrific analogy. Just as the body only performs at maximum capacity when each part works properly, so the church can only accomplish our work effectively when each member functions properly. No part gets to just sit back and enjoy the ride. The invitation this morning is to take your rightful place in the body of Christ.

If you have never committed yourself to Christ, then you are not a part of his body. If you have faith that Jesus is the Son of God and commit to living life on his

terms, then the Bible says that you can be baptized into him - and become a member of his body. We're ready to help you take those steps today.

Perhaps you are in the body, but for whatever reason have not been functioning properly. You haven't taken the grace God has personally measured out to you and spent in for the kingdom. If you need to confess this publicly, or you need to re-commit yourself to the body, we're ready to help you with that, as well.

In any way that we can help you, we're all here this morning, members of one body, ready to build the body up in love. If we can serve you now, please come to the front and talk with me as we stand and sing.

## APPENDIX 2: PRAYER GUIDE

### **Prayer Guide for One Body Workshop**

#### **Day 1**

Read Psalm 139:13-18.

Reflect on how God created you - his personal care and concern for you. He made you a unique individual and has a special place in the church for you.

Prayer: Creator God, so wise and powerful. I am fearfully and wonderfully made. You know me intimately--my thoughts, my hopes, and my dreams. You are always with me. Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.

#### **Day 2**

Read Romans 5:6-11.

Reflect on God's great love and reconciliation. He valued you at a high price and paid that price. Christ died for you while you were enemies--what does he have in store for you now that you are friends?

Prayer: Sovereign Lord, you are the Almighty and none can stand against you. I thank you for your deep love for me, and the high value you placed on me. Thank you for

redeeming and reconciling me when we were enemies. Thank you for giving me a place in your family and in your kingdom. I commit to joyfully living in friendship with you, following whatever path you set before me.

**Day 3**

Read 2 Timothy 1:1-7.

Reflect on those who passed their faith on to you, and the influence they have had on your life. Reflect on the spirit God has placed in you, and on his call on your life.

Prayer: Loving Father, I am grateful to be a part of your family. Thank you for my ancestors in the faith, those who taught me the faith. Thank you for my sisters and brothers who have helped me learn to live as a Christian, grow as a servant, and live out my calling. Thank you for the community of faith that gives me a place to serve.

**Day 4**

Read 1 Peter 4:10-11.

Reflect on the opportunities God has given you to serve others. How has he made you a steward or manager of his grace? Reflect on how God has provided you words to speak and with strength to serve.

Prayer: God of Grace, thank you for entrusting your grace to me. I promise to be faithful with the grace you have

entrusted to me. Help me to speak your words. Help me to serve through your strength. In everything may you be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

**Day 5**

Read Romans 12:6-8.

Reflect on people you know who fill these roles (encouragers, givers, etc.).

Prayer: God, giver of every good gift, thank you for blessing the church with [name the people you thought of]. You knew how much each of them would mean to this congregation and to my life personally. The body of Christ is a better place to be since you gave them to us.

**Day 6**

Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-7.

Reflect on how God creates us all with different abilities and roles, and how we are all to work together for the common good. You may think of how you have seen people work together for the good of the church.

Prayer: Lord, in your wisdom, you gave each of your people different abilities and different ways of serving. I see that your spirit is at work in everyone. You are the same God at work in each member of your community. You have

given each of us your spirit for the good of the community.  
Help me to know how I may serve the congregation.

**Day 7**

Read Philippians 1:1-8.

Reflect on your partners in the gospel. How do you work together with others to carry out the work of the church?

Reflect on the good work that God has begun in you, and that he will carry out to completion.

Prayer: My God, I thank you for the partners you have given me in the gospel [pray for some of them by name]. I thank you for the role you have given me in the partnership.

Please help me to see my role clearly. I thank you for the good work you have begun in me and that you will carry to completion.

### APPENDIX 3: OPPORTUNITIES FOR SERVING

Cordova Community Church of Christ partners serve in many ways--some are obvious and some are almost invisible. If you are looking for a place to fulfill God's calling on your life, we pray that you'll find it here.

- Hospitality
  - Growth Group Host
  - LiFT (youth ministry) Host
  - Greeters
  
- Worship Gatherings
  - Audio-Visual Team
  - Worship Planning Team
  - Public Prayer
  - Lord's Supper Meditation
  - Preachers
  - Nursery Workers
  - Set up/tear down
  - (see also under "arts")
  
- Teaching
  - Adult Bible Class Teacher
  - High school class
  - Middle School Class (rotating)

- Elementary Class (rotating)
- Pre-school Teachers (rotating)
- Nursery Teachers (rotating)
- LiFT (Teen Ministry)
  - Teacher
  - Group Leader
  - Worship Leader
- Shepherd
  - Shepherd
  - Growth Group Leader
  - Growth Group Co-Leader
  - Growth Group Leader Apprentice
- Administration
  - Adult Bible Class Coordinator
  - Church Health Team Leader
  - Coordinate Mentoring Ministry
  - Lead carnivals (2x/year)
  - Coordinate building cleaning (2x/year)
  - Coordinate Special Events
  - Plan mission/service projects
  - Worship Planning Team
- Prayer
  - Intercessory Prayers
  - Prayer groups

- Encourager
- Mercy/Serving
  - HopeWorks meals
  - Thanksgiving Turkeys (Raleigh Church)
  - Christmas Gifts (Agape, Operation Christmas Child)
  - Building Cleaning
  - Cards ministry
  - Visiting the sick
  - Catering/cooking (holiday) meals
- Generosity
  - Church offerings
  - Agape
  - HopeWorks
  - Member Care
- Arts
  - KidZone (children's program)
    - Actors
    - Singers
    - Story-tellers
    - Stage Workers
  - Praise Team Singers
  - Drama for worship
  - Flowers/Centerpieces (events)

- Graphic design
  - Worship
  - Advertising cards
- Cordova Missions
  - Missionary Support/Encouragers
    - Christmas for missionaries
    - Cards for missionaries
  - HopeWorks Faith Encouragers
  - Carnival Workers w/Community Center
- Personal Missions
  - Prison Ministry Volunteer
  - Foster Parent
  - Coach
  - Scouting Leader
  - Neighborhood Watch
  - Block Parties
  - School, work, shopping, life!

#### APPENDIX 4: WORKSHOP LESSON

What do you think of when you think of spiritual gifts? Do you hear people talk about this a lot? Whenever we talk about spiritual gifts, there are always a lot of preconceptions. Some of us think of gifts as sudden miraculous abilities, but this is not the normal biblical picture. Often, we think of them as something "hidden" that you have to "discover." You see this in the titles of books such as "Discover Your Gifts," but this is not really what we see in the Bible, either.<sup>1</sup> Still others wrestle with the difference between spiritual gifts and natural abilities, and some books have complicated ways to explain the difference.<sup>2</sup> As we begin today, I encourage us to lay aside our preconceptions as best we can, and try to give the Bible a fresh hearing.

The goal for our time today is to understand the

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<sup>1</sup> See the titles, for example, "Discover Your Spiritual Gifts" in Gene Wilkes, *Spiritual Gifts Survey* (Nashville: Lifeway Christian Resources, 2003); David Allen Hubbard, *Unwrapping your Spiritual Gifts* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1985); Don Fortune and Katie Fortune, *Discover Your God-Given Gifts* (Grand Rapids: Chosen Books, 1987).

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, chapter ten, "Gifts and Talents and Genes" in Hubbard, 105-114; Bruce Bugbee, *What You Do Best in the Body of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 62-64.

biblical concept of gifts. After a time of study, we will have a time of personal reflection on how God has created each of us followed by community affirmation of one another. We will conclude with empowerment for ministry.

We will be looking at four passages beginning with Ephesians 4:11-16. The first thing to note in this text is that Jesus' personal gift to the church here is leaders (v. 11). See also his purpose in giving the church leaders: to train Christians for the work of ministry (v. 12). The ultimate goal is that Christians will grow to maturity (vv. 13, 15). When this happens, when each individual part is working properly, the church is built up in love and grows (v. 16). When leaders train the members of the church for ministry and those members carry out their role, the church is built up in love and grows as a body.<sup>1</sup>

What might this look like in real life? I was about 7 or 8 years old when I got to lead my first song in worship. My father is a wonderful song leader, and he taught me how to do it. I really wanted to wave my hand all over the place, but the song he chose for me was one where I only got to move my hand a little. The real song leader that day

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<sup>1</sup> Sue Mallory, *The Equipping Church: Serving Together to Transform Lives* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 15.

blew the note on the pitch pipe and I started singing, totally not understanding the pitch pipe and the note I should have started on. The congregation really sang that song well in spite of me to encourage me, and I have been leading worship ever since--and hopefully improved a little! You probably have stories of equipping as well, and I encourage you to share them. Look around you for people you might equip. If you want to be equipped in an area, look around for someone to equip you. We are all in this together.

Our next passage is 1 Peter 4:10-11. Peter builds on this idea of every Christian's role in serving God in 1 Peter 4:10, where he connects the ideas of grace (*charis*, χάρις) and gifts (*charisma*, χάρισμα). It makes sense that if something is truly a gift, that it is an expression of grace; if you give me a gift, it is not because I deserve it, but it comes from the kindness of your heart.

In this passage, Peter assumes that each Christian has a gift and that each is aware of it. Peter's list only includes speaking and serving as general categories that can cover many specific gifts.<sup>2</sup> You can see that these

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<sup>2</sup> Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter: A Commentary On First Peter*, Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary On the Bible (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 298.

gifts, speaking and serving, are actually roles or functions in the church. He also insists that the purpose of these gifts is to serve the community as stewards of God's grace.<sup>3</sup> God in his mercy established the church as the body of Christ. Each member of the body of Christ has a role to play in the healthy functioning of the body.

Χάρισμα (charisma) is the Greek word translated here as *gift*. This may get a little complicated, but we need to spend a few minutes discussing this Greek word. You can hear that is related to the English words *charisma* and *charismatic*.

Typically, scholars have taken the word to be based on the word χάρις, (*charis*, grace), and call gifts something like *grace-gift* or *signs of grace*.<sup>4</sup> It turns out that the root of χάρισμα is not χάρις (grace), but is χαρίζομαι (*charizomai*, to give graciously).<sup>5</sup> For Paul to use χάρισμα

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 297.

<sup>4</sup> D. A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit: A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12-14* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 19; William J. Carter, *Each One a Minister: Using God's Gifts for Ministry*, rev. ed. (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2003), 6.

<sup>5</sup> Max Turner, "Modern Linguistics and Word Study in the New Testament," in *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*, 2nd ed., ed. Joel B. Green (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 198-208, especially 202.

instead of other "gift" words emphasizes the graciousness of the gift.<sup>6</sup> In English, the word "gift" can refer to a present (a birthday gift) or to an ability (a "gifted" pianist). In this context, the idea is a present, given graciously.

Paul uses this word sixteen times, twelve of them in Romans and 1 Corinthians. Although Paul did not likely coin the term, it is uncommon in outside the Bible.<sup>7</sup> It is clear from the different appearances of the word χάρισμα that it does not inherently mean *spiritual gifts*. The word appears in Romans 1:11 in reference to mutual encouragement, where it is actually modified by the common word for spiritual (*pneumatikon*, πνευματικὸν). Paul also uses χάρισμα to refer to "the gift of eternal life" (Rom. 6:23), the ability to live as a single or a married person (1 Cor. 7:7), and the blessing of escape from trials (2 Cor. 1:11). It is clear from these examples that the word χάρισμα does not

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<sup>6</sup> Max Turner, *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts*, rev. ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), 264; cf. Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed., rev. and ed. Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1081.

<sup>7</sup> Kenneth Berding, "Confusing Word and Concept in 'Spiritual Gifts': Have We Forgotten James Barr's Exhortations?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 43, no. 1: 40.

inherently mean special abilities imparted by the Spirit. We must look at the word used in context to discover the intended meaning.

Although Ephesians 4 and 1 Peter are relevant to this discussion, the two major texts regarding gifts are Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12. These are the passages that people turn to in investigating gifts. What we will find in these texts is that Paul is not talking about special abilities, but rather about ministry roles and functions. You can see this idea already in the two passages we looked at. In Eph. 4, the roles are apostle, prophet, evangelist, and pastor-teacher. In 1 Pet. 4, the roles are speaking and serving. We will see this even more in the next two passages, where Paul emphasizes the distribution of "gifts" among the members of the body.

In Romans 12.6-8 and 1 Corinthians 12 there are two gift lists. There is some overlap between the lists, but there is also diversity. It may be that Paul and the early church recognized some well-defined, widespread ministry roles and functions for members as well as other less well-defined roles that did not occur in every congregation.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans, New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 764.

Each of these passages addresses specific needs of specific congregations, so it is not surprising that they are not identical.

In Romans 12, Paul's list includes prophecy, service, teaching, exhorting, giving, leadership, and showing mercy. He does not mention the more obviously miraculous abilities of 1 Corinthians 12 (e.g., tongues). The context of the discussion is clearly laid out in v. 3: do not think more highly of yourself than you ought to think.<sup>9</sup> Paul urges this humility because God has given Christians a measure of faith (v. 3) and gifts that differ according to grace (v. 5). As these gifts are truly given by God and received by individual believers, there is no room for pride, and the gifts are to be fulfilled according to grace. The focus is one of function (v. 4) and action (v. 6). Christians using gifts, or fulfilling their role, (v. 6-8) is a description of the body of Christ functioning properly (v. 4-5).<sup>10</sup> Notice that the Spirit is not mentioned in this passage.<sup>11</sup>

In this context, with the understanding in mind that

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 760.

<sup>10</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, Word Biblical Commentary, 38 (Dallas: Word, 1988), 725.

<sup>11</sup> Berding, "Confusing Word and Concept", 41.

the gifts are the ministries or functions, the distinction between "spiritual gifts" and "natural abilities" becomes a non-issue. Natural abilities (which we as Christians understand as coming from God) are a part of qualifying a Christian to fill a role. God has graciously given to the church Christians who can proclaim God's message, serve, lead, teach, encourage, give generously, and help the needy. This may remove some pressure to "discover" a gift, but rather empower you to be the person God created you to be in serving the body. God brought each one of you to this congregation to help this congregation (the body) function properly.

I have a friend who is an encourager. He is God's gift to whatever church he is a part of, and I cannot remember a conversation with him in which he did not encourage me even when I was feeling sorry for myself. This will not sound like much now, but it meant something twenty years ago; my friend always came to worship with his shirt untucked. The reason he did this was so that no matter who else came through the door that day, they would be able to say, "At least I am dressed better than that guy." He genuinely and naturally encouraged people.

Now, if you know me, you may think that I am an encourager. I am not. I have learned the ministry skill of

encouraging people, but it is not a natural part of who I am. Now, just because I am not an encourager does not give me a license to discourage! But my friend opened my eyes to this text in Romans 12, and what a gift an encourager is to a congregation.

God has graciously placed in the body just the right people to carry out the work and life of the body. He is filling needs with people. God has graciously given to the church Christians who can proclaim God's message, serve, lead, teach, encourage, give generously, and help the needy. Individual Christians (you and I!) do not have to "discover" a gift, but rather be the person God created us to be in serving the body. God brought each person to the congregation to help the congregation (the body) function properly. God gives the church encouragers so that we can be encouraged. God gives the church teachers so that we can teach and be taught.

I worked in a campus ministry with a co-worker years ago. One day he was doing something at his desk and I asked what he was doing. He told me he was making a seating chart for a concert he was taking a group of students to. He bought a block of tickets and was trying to determine which seat to give each of the people going in order to maximize the experience for everyone. He put those newer to our

ministry next to their friends. He put extraverts on the outside edges of the block of seats. It would never have occurred to me to do something like that. He was different from me. But together, God used us for some pretty neat ministry.

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul lists wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discernment, tongues, interpretation, apostleship, and teaching. Here Paul includes the more obviously miraculous abilities of tongues, interpretation, healing, and miracles. The gift discussion of 1 Corinthians 12 is part of a section (chapters 12-14) about worship and is foundational to Paul's teaching on the use of tongues and prophecy in public worship settings in chapter 14.

The issue he is addressing in Corinth is an elitist view which elevated the spiritual status of tongue-speakers.<sup>12</sup> Paul's emphasis here in chapter 12 is that all of the gifts come from the same giver (v. 4-11) and all are equally indicative of the Spirit's presence in the recipient of the gift. Paul is telling this congregation that no matter what your role or function is in the church,

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<sup>12</sup> Turner, *The Holy Spirit*, 267-268.

you are all of equal value. The church (body) needs each of you in order to be healthy and fulfill her function.

1 Corinthians 12.12-20 highlights the issue of an elitist view of gifts. A key verse for Paul's view of Christian life is 12.18: But now God has placed each one of the parts in one body just as He wanted. In case you do not get it there, he says it again in v. 24, God has put the body together. The questions for every Christian, then, are "Why are you here? Why did God put you in this congregation at this time?" God brought you to your congregation at this particular time on purpose. Why?

And contrary to their high view of the miraculous gifts, Paul gives priority to what may be viewed as less miraculous, but spiritually vital roles in leadership. The "greater gifts" (12.31) are those roles that benefit and build up the church: apostles, prophets, and teachers.<sup>13</sup>

I hope that this has been helpful for you and has demystified some of this for you. As you look at a list of the gifts from these four texts, you will see that all of them require some ability. Some of them seem more miraculous than others. (I know a woman who can do

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 269-270.

Microsoft Access.)

From our study of the text today, I hope that you can see that your gift is not some miraculous or secret ability. Your gift is your place to serve in the kingdom. God has provided the church with Christians to carry out the work of the church. In fact, you are God's gift to the church. Christians rejoicing in God's grace at work through them cannot help but use their gifts or roles in an expression of love. And when the church is filled with members living out who God called them to be in the church, the result is the spiritual maturing (formation) of the individuals and the congregation (Eph. 4.16).

Rather than looking for a special ability, we will spend some time asking what our role is here in the church. Your natural abilities are a part of how God made you. Those abilities equip and qualify you to serve in the church. Your role is based on who he created you to be.

In addition to your natural abilities, you also have some learned skills and some experiences. It may be carpentry, graphic design, or spreadsheets. Your learned skills and experiences also equip and qualify you for a role in the church.

### Introduction to Personal Reflection

During this time of reflection, do not expect a huge surprise. Depending on your level of life experience and self-awareness, you probably have some idea of how you best serve. This handout is a tool to guide your personal reflection. There is a list of some roles on it, but this list is not exhaustive, it is just to prime the pump of your reflection.

There is also a list of questions and statements for you to answer. This is not a test or a quiz. As you prayerfully think through these questions and statements, take what is helpful and leave the rest behind.

I know that this type of reflection can be difficult, but I believe that God put you in the body just as he wanted. Before we break for our time of reflection, here are a few words of caution.<sup>14</sup>

1. Your role may change from time to time and place to place. Today we are asking why God put you in this body at this time.
2. You may have difficulty discerning your ministry role if you are not in a spiritual frame of mind.
3. Your role or function may not be evident if you are in an unhealthy church or an unhealthy personal state.
4. Your calling may not be evident if you do not feel needed or see a place to serve. This is why the community affirmation is so important.

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<sup>14</sup>Adapted from Carter, 46.

### **Introduction to Community Affirmation**

Community affirmation is also an important part of this process of discerning your role in the kingdom. We do not always see ourselves clearly. Sometimes this plays out in the person who thinks he has a prophetic word, but really he is just a jerk, or the person who thinks she has the gift of teaching, but has the gift of curing insomnia! More often, it plays out in the life of a humble Christian who does not recognize the value she brings to the kingdom. We need each other to help us see ourselves and our role clearly.

Community affirmation works only as much as the members of the community know one another. In order to affirm one another, we must have experienced life with one another and seen one another enough to appreciate what each of us brings to the table.<sup>15</sup> So for this next part, we are going to group at tables by [small group, Bible class, etc. depending on the congregation].

As you think about each of your fellow Christians, use these statements (printed on your handout) to affirm the ministry that you see in them.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Clinton, 108.

1. "I see \_\_\_\_\_ (function, role) in you." Please give a specific example of how you see this in that person.
2. "I think you may have \_\_\_\_\_ (function, role)." Please give specific reasons why you think this person may have that ministry opportunity even though you have not specifically seen them carry out that role.
3. "Your ministry builds the body of Christ in this specific way. You function this way in the body. Your role helps the body in this way. You not only have this role; you are using it to bear fruit. In other words, we need you!"

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<sup>16</sup> Based on Clinton's form for outside confirmation on which ministers and friends who know the person indicate (1) gifts that they are certain the person has, (2) gifts they think the person potentially has, and (3) gifts they have observed the person use fruitfully. Clinton, 109.

### **Introduction to Ministry Empowerment**

Based on the ministry roles listed on your handout, the congregation's leadership developed this list of opportunities based on those roles. As I said earlier, this list is not exhaustive, so if you find yourself in a role not on the list, that is fine. We are not trying to fit you in a box.

Your leaders<sup>17</sup> are also aware that this congregation does not necessarily have ministry opportunities for every single role - in fact, no congregation does. You may need to partner with another agency in the community to carry out your function on behalf of the church. For example, you may want to bless children through foster care or work with a homeless shelter. Your leaders want to bless you in that and charge you to work for the Lord representing the church.

Finally, before your leaders speak a blessing on you, I want to say that having a role or function does not let you off the hook for filling other needed roles. Some things just need to be done whether anyone sees it as their calling or not. I had a ministry partner once who had a

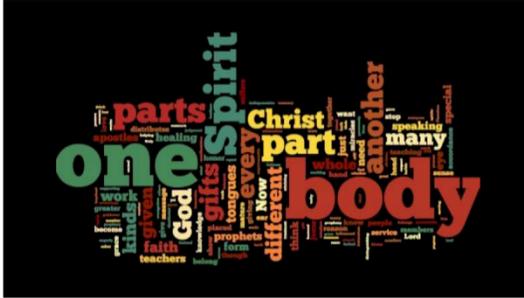
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<sup>17</sup> I am using the word leaders here as a placeholder. I used the language that each church uses, such as elders or shepherds.

very specific calling, and he was good at it. But there were other things the church and I needed him to do as well, and the church suffered because of that reluctance.

Leaders: As the leaders of this congregation, we believe that God has placed each member in the body just as He wanted. We believe that he brought you here for a reason. And so we empower you to fill the role that God has given you, and we bless you in your service. We trust that God has given us as a body what we need to fulfill the ministry that he has called us as a body to complete. We rely on you to work alongside us as we do that.

We always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. Amen.



## Spiritual Gifts

- Sudden miraculous ability?
- Hidden until you “discover” it?
- Unrelated to abilities?

**One Body**

## Ephesians 4.11-16

And He [Jesus] personally gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the training of the saints in the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God's Son, growing into a mature man with a stature measured by Christ's fullness. Then we will no longer be little children, tossed by the waves and blown around by every wind of teaching, by human cunning with cleverness in the techniques of deceit. But speaking the truth in love, let us grow in every way into Him who is the head—Christ. From Him the whole body, fitted and knit together by every supporting ligament, promotes the growth of the body for building up itself in love by the proper working of each individual part.

(I'm using the Holman Christian Standard Bible today.)

**One Body**

## Ephesians 4.11-16

And He [Jesus] personally gave **some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers**, for the training of the saints in the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God's Son, growing into a mature man with a stature measured by Christ's fullness. Then we will no longer be little children, tossed by the waves and blown around by every wind of teaching, by human cunning with cleverness in the techniques of deceit. But speaking the truth in love, let us grow in every way into Him who is the head—Christ. From Him the whole body, fitted and knit together by every supporting ligament, promotes the growth of the body for building up itself in love by the proper working of each individual part.

**Jesus gave the church leaders...**

**One Body**

## Ephesians 4.11-16

And He personally gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, **for the training of the saints in the work of ministry**, to build up the body of Christ, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God's Son, growing into a mature man with a stature measured by Christ's fullness. Then we will no longer be little children, tossed by the waves and blown around by every wind of teaching, by human cunning with cleverness in the techniques of deceit. But speaking the truth in love, let us grow in every way into Him who is the head—Christ. From Him the whole body, fitted and knit together by every supporting ligament, promotes the growth of the body for building up itself in love by the proper working of each individual part.

**...to equip us for ministry!**

**One Body**

## Ephesians 4.11-16

And He [Jesus] personally gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the training of the saints in the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God's Son, growing into a mature man with a stature measured by Christ's fullness. Then we will no longer be little children, tossed by the waves and blown around by every wind of teaching, by human cunning with cleverness in the techniques of deceit. But speaking the truth in love, **let us grow in every way into Him who is the head** — Christ. From Him the whole body, fitted and knit together by every supporting ligament, promotes the growth of the body for building up itself in love by the proper working of each individual part.

**One Body**



1 Peter 4.10-11

Based on the gift each one has received, use it to serve others, as good managers of the varied grace of God. If anyone speaks, it should be as one who speaks God's words; if anyone serves, it should be from the strength God provides, so that God may be glorified through Jesus Christ in everything.

One Body

1 Peter 4.10-11

Based on the gift each one has received, use it to serve others, as good managers of the varied grace of God. If anyone speaks, it should be as one who speaks God's words; if anyone serves, it should be from the strength God provides, so that God may be glorified through Jesus Christ in everything.

One Body

1 Peter 4.10-11

Based on the gift each one has received, use it to serve others, as good managers of the varied grace of God. If anyone speaks, it should be as one who speaks God's words; if anyone serves, it should be from the strength God provides, so that God may be glorified through Jesus Christ in everything.

Ministry Roles One Body

Χάρισμα (charisma)  
Charisma  
Charismatic

One Body

Χάρισμα (charisma)  
Χάρις (charis) - grace  
Χαρίζομαι (charizomai) – graciously give

One Body

χαρίζομαι = **graciously** give

Χάρισμα = **gracious gift**

One Body

χάρισμα

- Uncommon word outside the Bible
- Paul used it 16 times, Peter once

One Body



One Body

For I want very much to see you, so I may impart to you some spiritual **gift** to strengthen you, that is, to be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.

Romans 1.11-12

But the **gift** is not like the trespass. For if by the one man's trespass the many died, how much more have the grace of God and the gift overflowed to the many by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ.

Romans 5.15

One Body

Ministry abilities

One Body

**Ministries**

One Body

**Ephesians 4:** apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastor-teachers

**1 Peter 4:** speaking, serving

One Body

Romans 12.6-8, 1 Corinthians 12

- “Gift lists”
- Some overlap
- Exhaustive?
- Specific contexts

One Body

Romans 12.3-8

For by the grace given to me, I tell everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he should think. Instead, think sensibly, as God has distributed a measure of faith to each one. Now as we have many parts in one body, and all the parts do not have the same function, in the same way we who are many are one body in Christ and individually members of one another. According to the grace given to us, we have different gifts:

If prophecy, use it according to the standard of one's faith;  
 if service, in service;  
 if teaching, in teaching;  
 if exhorting, in exhortation;  
 giving, with generosity;  
 leading, with diligence;  
 showing mercy, with cheerfulness.

One Body

humility, Romans 12.3-8

For by the grace given to me, I tell everyone among you **not to think of himself more highly than he should think**. Instead, think sensibly, as God has distributed a measure of faith to each one. Now as we have many parts in one body, and all the parts do not have the same function, in the same way we who are many are one body in Christ and individually members of one another. **According to the grace given to us, we have different gifts:**

If prophecy, use it according to the standard of one's faith;  
 if service, in service;  
 if teaching, in teaching;  
 if exhorting, in exhortation;  
 giving, with generosity;  
 leading, with diligence;  
 showing mercy, with cheerfulness.

gifts and grace

One Body

Focus Romans 12.3-8

For by the grace given to me, I tell everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he should think. Instead, think sensibly, as God has distributed a measure of faith to each one. Now as we have many parts in one body, and all the parts do not have the same **function**, in the same way we who are many are one body in Christ and individually members of one another. According to the grace given to us, we have different gifts:

If prophecy, use it according to the standard of one's faith;  
 if service, in service;  
 if teaching, in teaching;  
 if exhorting, in exhortation;  
 giving, with generosity;  
 leading, with diligence;  
 showing mercy, with cheerfulness.

Action Function

One Body



encouragement

One Body

## Romans 12.3-8

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 leading, with diligence;  
 showing mercy, with cheerfulness.

**God fills needs...  
 with people  
 One Body**



**One Body**

## 1 Corinthians 12

### 1 Corinthians 12-14 - worship

Now there are different gifts, but the **same Spirit**. There are different ministries, but the **same Lord**. And there are different activities, but the **same God** activates each gift in each person.

**One Body**

## 1 Corinthians 12

A demonstration of the Spirit is given to each person to produce what is beneficial:

to one is given a message of wisdom through the Spirit,  
 to another, a message of knowledge by the same Spirit,  
 to another, faith by the same Spirit,  
 to another, **gifts** of healing by the one Spirit,  
 to another, the performing of miracles,  
 to another, prophecy,  
 to another, distinguishing between spirits,  
 to another, different kinds of languages,  
 to another, interpretation of languages.

But one and the same Spirit is active in all these, distributing to each person as He wills.

**One Body**

## 1 Corinthians 12

A demonstration of the Spirit is given to **each person** to produce what is beneficial:

to one is given a message of wisdom through the Spirit,  
 to another, a message of knowledge by the **same Spirit**,  
 to another, faith by the **same Spirit**,  
 to another, gifts of healing by the **one Spirit**,  
 to another, the performing of miracles,  
 to another, prophecy,  
 to another, distinguishing between spirits,  
 to another, different kinds of languages,  
 to another, interpretation of languages.

**Focus:  
 All roles come from  
 the same spirit**

But **one and the same Spirit** is active in all these, distributing to each person as He wills.

**One Body**

## 1 Corinthians 12

For as the body is one and has many parts, and all the parts of that body, though many, are one body—so also is Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. So the body is not one part but

**Problems: disunity; elitism** belong the ear sho in spite of this it still belongs to the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? **But now God has placed each one of the parts in one body just as He wanted.** And if they were all the same part, where would the body be? Now there are many parts, yet one body.

**One Body**

## 1 Corinthians 12

For as the body is one and has many parts, and all the parts of that body, though many, are one body—so also is Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. So the body is not one part but many. **If the foot should say, "Because I'm not a hand, I don't belong to the body," in spite of this it still belongs to the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I'm not an eye, I don't belong to the body," in spite of this it still belongs to the body. If the whole body were an eye,**

**But now God has placed each one of the parts in one body just as He wanted.**

would the body be? Now there are many parts, yet one body.

One Body

## 1 Corinthians 12

So the eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" Or again, the head can't say to the feet, "I don't need you!" But even more, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are necessary. And those parts of the body that we think to be less honorable, we clothe these with greater honor, and our unrepresentable parts have a better presentation. But our presentable parts have no need of clothing. Instead, **God has put the body together**, giving greater honor to the less honorable, so that there would be no division in the body, but that the members would have the same concern for each other. So if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

One Body

## 1 Corinthians 12

Now you are the body of Christ, and individual members of it. And God has placed these in the church:

**first** apostles, **second** prophets, **third** teachers, next miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, managing, various kinds of languages.

Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all do miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in other languages? Do all interpret?

But desire the greater gifts. And I will show you an even better way.

One Body

## Ministry Roles/Functions

### Ephesians 4

- Apostle
- Prophet
- Evangelist
- Pastor-teacher
- 1 Peter 4
- Speaking
- Serving

### Romans 12

- Prophecy
- Service
- Teaching
- Exhorting
- Giving
- Leadership
- Showing mercy

### 1 Corinthians 12

- Wisdom
- Knowledge
- Faith
- Healing
- Miracles
- Prophecy
- Discernment
- Tongues
- Interpretation
- Apostleship
- Teaching

One Body

## Get to the Point, Matt!

- Your gift is not some miraculous ability
- Your gift is your place to serve in the kingdom
- God has provided the church with Christians to carry out the work of the church
- You are God's gift to the church!

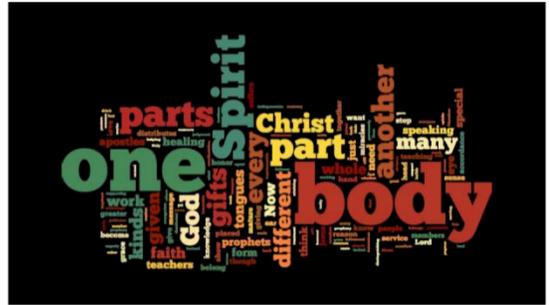
One Body

## So what does it mean?

- Your natural abilities equip and qualify you to serve in the church. (That's how God made you!)
- Don't stress over some hidden gift you have to discover.
- Understanding God's gifts as grace leads to humility.

One Body





## APPENDIX 5: PARTICIPANT HANDOUTS

Handout for teaching time

Preconceptions

- 1.
- 2.

Ephesians 4.11-16

- What did Jesus give the church?
- Why does the text say he did this?

1 Peter 4.10-11

- Connects gifts and grace
- Ministry roles: \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

χάρισμα (charisma)

- Uncommon word outside the Bible
- Paul used it \_\_\_\_\_ times, Peter once

"Gift" vs. "Gifted"

"Ministry" vs. "Ministry Ability"

Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12

- "Gift lists"

- Some \_\_\_\_\_
- Are these lists \_\_\_\_\_?
- Specific \_\_\_\_\_

Romans 12.3-8

- Miraculous gifts?
- Context = \_\_\_\_\_
- Focus = \_\_\_\_\_ (v 4) and \_\_\_\_\_ (v 6)
- God fills \_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_

1 Corinthians 12

- Context = \_\_\_\_\_
- Focus = \_\_\_\_\_
- Problem = \_\_\_\_\_
- Verse 18 is the key!

~~Gift Lists~~ **Ministry Lists**

**1 Peter 4**

Speaking  
Serving

**Ephesians 4**

Apostle  
Prophet  
Evangelist  
Pastor-  
Teacher

**Romans 12**

Prophecy  
Service  
Teaching  
Exhorting  
Giving  
Leadership  
Showing mercy

**1 Corinthians 12**

Wisdom  
Knowledge  
Faith  
Healing  
Miracles  
Prophecy  
Discernment  
Tongues  
Interpretation  
Apostleship  
Teaching

Get to the Point, Matt!

- Your gift is not \_\_\_\_\_
- Your gift is \_\_\_\_\_
- God has provided the church with Christians to carry out the work of the church
- You are \_\_\_\_\_!

So, what does it mean?

- **Your natural abilities, skills, knowledge, and experience equip and qualify you to serve in the church.** *That's how God made you!* (1 Corinthians 12.18)
- Don't stress over some hidden gift you have to discover.
- Understanding God's gifts as grace leads to humility. (Romans 12.3)
- Rejoice in God's grace at work in you.
- When we all do this, we all grow to be like Jesus (Ephesians 4.16).

## Handout for reflection and affirmation

# POTENTIAL ROLES



Where do you see yourself  
in these descriptions?

**Leadership**—Leadership aids the body by leading and directing members to accomplish the goals and purposes of the church. Leadership motivates people to work together in unity toward common goals (Rom. 12:8).

**Administration**—Persons with the gift of administration lead the body by steering others to remain on task. Administration enables the body to organize according to God-given purposes and long-term goals (1 Cor. 12:28).

**Teaching**—Teaching is instructing members in the truths and doctrines of God's Word to build up, unify, and mature the body (1 Cor. 12:28; Rom. 12:7; Eph. 4:11).

**Knowledge**—The gift of knowledge manifests itself in teaching and training in discipleship. It is the God-given ability to learn, know, and explain the precious truths of God's Word. (1 Cor. 12:28).

**Wisdom**—Wisdom is the gift that discerns the work of the Holy Spirit in the body and applies His teachings and actions to the needs of the body (1 Cor. 12:28).

**Prophecy**—The gift of prophecy is proclaiming the Word of God boldly. This builds up the body and leads to conviction of sin. Prophecy manifests itself in preaching and teaching (1 Cor. 12:10; Rom. 12:6).

**Discernment**—Discernment tests the message and actions of others for the protection and well-being of the body (1 Cor. 12:10).

**Exhortation**—Exhorters encourage members to be involved in and enthusiastic about the work of the Lord. Members with this gift are good counselors and motivate others to service. Exhortation exhibits itself in preaching, teaching, and ministry (Rom. 12:8).

**Shepherding**—The gift of shepherding is seen in persons who look out for the spiritual welfare of others. This gift is not limited to an elder or staff member (Eph. 4:11).

**Faith**—Faith trusts God to work beyond the human capabilities of the people. Believers with this gift encourage others to trust in God in the face of apparently insurmountable odds (1 Cor. 12:9).

**Evangelism**—God gifts his church with evangelists to lead others to Christ effectively and enthusiastically. (Eph. 4:11).

**Apostleship**—The church sends apostles from the body to plant churches or be missionaries. (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11).

**Service/Helps**—Those with the gift of service/helps recognize practical needs in the body and joyfully assist in meeting those needs. Christians with this gift often work behind the scenes (1 Cor. 12:28; Rom. 12:7).

**Mercy**—Cheerful acts of compassion characterize those with the gift of mercy. Persons with this gift aid the body by empathizing with hurting members. They keep others aware of needs within the church (Rom. 12:8).

**Giving**—Members with the gift of giving give freely and joyfully to the work and mission of the body. Cheerfulness and liberality are characteristics of individuals with this gift (Rom. 12:8).

**Hospitality**—Those with this gift have the ability to make visitors, guests, and strangers feel at ease. They often use their home to entertain guests and help integrate new members into the body (1 Pet. 4:9).

This list and the definitions are from Lifeway Christian Resources "Discover Your Spiritual Gifts" by Gene Wilkes, ©2003.

Don't trust spiritual gifts surveys. Use them only as a conversation starter. Wilkes does not include the more obviously miraculous items – if you have such an ability and don't know it, a survey won't help you find out! The personal reflection and community affirmation are crucial. Community affirmation helps keep us from kidding ourselves or selling ourselves short.

Matt Carter

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[onebodyworkshop.com](http://onebodyworkshop.com)



## APPENDIX 6: OBSERVATION GUIDE

Don't stress about this. I am looking for observations that may help in two ways:

1. What do you see that can confirm or deny that this workshop is helping people find their place in the church?

2. What do you see that can help improve the workshop?

You may give both general impressions (everyone seemed to be learning a lot) or specific comments (Brother Jones stayed awake!).

Here are some general categories to think about:

Critique of Presenter/Presentation (It seemed like people had trouble grasping x point)

Do people seem to be engaged? (heads nodding, appropriate laughter, taking notes)

- Do participants appear to be doing the assignment during reflection time?
- Does it look and sound like meaningful conversation is happening during the community affirmation time?

Do you observe any evidence to tell you whether this workshop helps people find their role in the church?

## APPENDIX 7: WEB FORM

If you attended a workshop and want to share your story, this is the place to do it. Your submission is anonymous and you will not be contacted. Carter reserves the right to not include any submissions that are not in keeping with the purpose and tone of the project.

Name as you want it to appear. (required)

Share your experience with the workshop.

How has your life and your church changed because of the workshop?

Which church did you participate at? (This information will not be reported, but is to help insure the legitimacy of responses.) (required)

## APPENDIX 8: FOLLOW-UP CONVERSATION GUIDE

1. How did the workshop impact your understanding of the biblical concept of gifts?
2. Do you have any questions from the teaching portion of the workshop?
3. What was your experience during the personal reflection time of the workshop?
4. What feedback did you receive during the community affirmation period?
5. What role would you like to fill? What possibilities do you see for yourself?
6. Is there anything you would like to add?

APPENDIX 9: LETTER FROM CAMPUS VIEW

Matt Carter  
Harding School of Theology  
Memphis, TN

January 12, 2018

Matt:

First, thanks for taking the time to spend a weekend with us this past December. Your time with us was a great encouragement to our church. The seminar continues to have reverberations with us and has served as a catalyst to renew our commitment to the body of Christ here at Campus View.

As you know, our attendance was outstanding with over 70% of our adults attending. This alone was encouraging for us as leaders.

Your teachings and presentations helped us understand that we don't just offer a gift, but we are a gift to each other. What we have to bring is our own lives, redeemed by Christ and encouraged by the Holy Spirit as we offer ourselves to each other and the work of God. This message came out clearly in your didactic sessions. The last session, where our members had the opportunity to hear each other and gain a sense of how God was using them through the testimony of other people taught us the importance of communal discernment and encouragement. This, in my thinking, was unique and crucial to any process of this type.

The long-term effects of this seminar are contingent on us. Currently, leaders are assigned to follow up with each person that participated and determine how we can further help them to offer their lives in more meaningful ways to each other and the mission of God among us. Your coming helped us to prepare and identify the needs that we have. The work of taking your teaching and approach is ours. Please also know that follow up conversations and emails from you have been helpful to us. I am intentionally using

some of the vocabulary you suggested each week as we build a culture of offering rather than consumption.

Another idea that has come to me is to use our smaller group gatherings as places to follow up and challenge. These conversations can be very affirming and encouraging, as well as creating more discernment about work that God might have us to accomplish with Him.

Again, thank you for your love for the church!

Blessings with God's grace and peace,

Jerry Neill

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