



GUIDELINES for Christian Stewards

PART TWO

The Fruit of the Spirit, God-given Abilities, Roles and Spiritual Gifts

The Church, the “body of Christ,” the “people of the Covenant,” disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ, is also a “family of stewards” managing, developing and dispensing all of God’s gifts in a life designed to serve God and all God’s people.

“...you are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (1 Cor. 12:27).

The stewardship of God’s gifts: Some major biblical references. Please read and discuss:

- 1 Corinthians 12
- Romans 12
- 1 Peter 4
- Ephesians 3 and 4
- Galatians 5

“... as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ” (Rom. 12:4–5).

1 Why we function as a body ... *our corporate and individual stewardship* (Rom. 12:1–2).

“I appeal to you ... by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service!”

The growing, maturing, pattern of a steward: Living a new life in union with Jesus Christ!

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good, acceptable and perfect.”

There are developing, changing commitments, priorities, beliefs for and among God’s stewards. How does this happen? When? Why? Who is affected? Please share some of your journey!

Consider Titus 2:11–14

“The grace of God has appeared ... training us to live ... as we wait for... our Savior who gave himself for us and redeemed us ... to make for himself a people of his own who are eager to do good.”

Christian stewards are people:

1. Belonging to Christ—adopted, claimed, named as God’s own in Holy Baptism;
2. Desiring to mature in faith and life with Christ (2 Peter 3:18);
3. Believing God has given gifts and abilities to develop/use/manage; and
4. Prayerfully seeking God’s guidance for the life of discipleship through the fellowship of the Church, for the sake of the whole world.

2 God’s stewards are blessed with “the fruit of the Spirit” in a life-long maturing process (Gal. 5:22–23).

“The fruit of the Spirit is:

- love,
- joy,
- peace,
- patience,
- kindness,
- goodness,
- faithfulness,
- gentleness and
- self-control,”

The Spirit of God uses the “tools” of God, the “Means of Grace,” the Gospel and the Sacraments in the fellowship of God’s people to enable the fruit to grow, blossom, mature and re-produce.

Consider:

- John 3:16
- 1 John 4:19
- Matt. 22:36–40
- Gal. 5:13–14

There are tensions and struggles faced by growing, maturing Christian stewards.

Consider:

- Gal. 5:16–26
- Col. 3:9–10
- Rom. 7:19, 24–25

The “old” and the “new” continue to struggle. Vigilance is needed. Simple solutions are seldom found. Growth is a process. God blesses His stewards with His grace, help and encouragement!

3 Stewards use their God-given abilities and skills to honor God and serve all God’s people. God continues to create and preserve through His people. Each one, created “in the image of God,” redeemed in Jesus Christ, has a unique personality, a significant family and personal heritage and yet is a part of the “body of Christ” (1 Corinthians 12).



Consider the record of some talented, skillful stewards:

- Dorcas.....Acts 9:36, 39..... a skillful seamstress
- Paul.....Acts 18:3..... a tentmaker
- Bezalel.....Ex. 35:3 a craftsman, intelligent, knowledgeable
- Oholiab.....Ex. 36:1 a craftsman, capable, gifted
- CorneliusActs 10:1, 22..... military leader
- Peter, James and John.....Luke 5:1–11 fishermen
- JosephGen. 41:46, 42:6 governor, administrator
- Seven deaconsActs 6:1–5..... administrators, enablers
- Erastus.....Rom. 16:23..... city treasurer
- LydiaActs 16..... businesswoman
- PhoebeRom. 16:1–2..... deaconess
- DeborahJudges 4:4 leader
- PriscillaActs 18:1–4..... tentmaker, leader

What interests, skills, abilities or talents has God given you to use/develop in your role as a part of the body of Christ in the congregation and community?

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| visiting/informing fellow believers | sponsoring new believers |
| child care | listening, encouraging others |
| singing/choir | play musical instrument |
| help provide food | help provide clothing |
| plumbing, electronics | cleaning, painting |
| making posters/signs, web sites | finances, accounting |
| sculpture | photography, movie making |
| yard, land care | publicity/writing/media work |
| helping the young/old | teaching God’s Word |
| assist a teacher | organize gatherings of people |
| inviting people to your home | visit the sick |
| electrical work | carpentry |
| greeting and welcoming others | praying for others |

What other ideas do you have about your role as God’s steward in the church and community?



4 Practicing the life of a disciple ... Remember the grace of God in Jesus Christ! (Rom. 12:1–2)

Consider Romans 12. Read it aloud.

- v 1–2 start with the mercy of God.
 - v 3–4 develop the practice of good self-judgment.
 - v 4–5 remember you are part of the body of Christ. There is both an individual and a corporate nature to the church and to faith.
 - v 6–8 Reconsider the previous listing of specific spiritual gifts.
 - v 9–21 Developing personally, spiritually, ethically, morally in relation to Christ.
- love genuinely ... hate evil ... hold to the good
 - show affection ... honor one another
 - be aglow with the Spirit ... serve the Lord
 - rejoice in your hope ... be patient in tribulation ... be prayerful always
 - contribute to the needy ... practice hospitality
 - bless others ... do not curse them ... rejoice ... and ... weep with others
 - live in harmony with others ... associate with the lowly
 - repay no one evil for evil ... consider what is noble
 - live peaceably with all you can
 - never avenge yourself ... God repays vengeance
 - feed the hungry, thirsty, enemy ... overcome evil with good.
- Read Romans 12 again and again!

Discuss this:

“The fruit of the Spirit guides the use/development of the gifts of the Spirit in the life of the disciples of Jesus Christ.”

How does it happen? Who is involved? When?

5 “Concerning spiritual gifts ...” (1 Cor. 12:1). Stewards of God’s gifts are accountable ... “It is required of stewards that they be found faithful” (1 Cor. 4:2). “To whom much is given, much is required” (Luke 12:48).

A definition: “A spiritual gift is a particular ability given by the Spirit of God to each member of the body of Christ, according to God’s own will and design, for the common good of all, to fulfill God’s purposes.”

Bible references for spiritual gifts:

Romans 12:6
prophecy/proclaiming, inspiring speech
service/ministering to others
teaching
exhortation/encouragement, urging
contributing
giving aid
acts of mercy

1 Cor. 12:7 “... to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.” “... as He [God] wills” (v. 11).

wisdom
knowledge
faith
healing
miracles
proclamation
discerning spirits
speaking in tongues
interpretation of tongues

1 Cor. 12:28 “God has appointed ...”

apostles
prophets
teachers
workers of miracles
healers
helpers
administrators
speakers in tongues

Eph. 4:11–16 “and his [God’s] gifts were that some should be ...”

apostles
prophets
evangelists
pastors (pastor-teachers)
teachers

... and all of this “to equip God’s people for the work of ministry ...

to build up the body of Christ ...
to attain to the unity of faith
to mature to the stature of Christ
to make bodily growth possible and be built up in love.”

6 “**Make love your aim ...**” (1 Cor. 14:1). Read 1 Corinthians 13 and then prayerfully consider the spiritual gifts God has given you for your life as a steward.

As you read the Scriptures, pray and talk with other Christians:

1. Think about God’s gifts given to you; examine the options in using them.
2. Try on some of the gifts “for size.” Do they “fit” you?
3. Do you enjoy using/sharing the gift? How does that make you feel?
4. Does the gift appear to be useful in the lives of others?
5. Do other Christians in the congregation affirm your use of your God-given gifts?

Some choices in discovering/developing the spiritual gifts God has given include:

1. Regular reading and study of God’s Word.
2. Regular prayer for God’s guidance.
3. Asking Christian friends for guidance, counsel and observation of growth.
4. Practice memorizing significant Scripture verses.
5. Practice regular receiving of the Lord’s Supper.
6. Renew your baptism as God’s child each day by repentance of sin and faith in Christ’s promise of forgiveness.
7. Participate regularly in the work of your congregation aiming to develop/discover your gifts.

“**Make love your aim ...**” (1 Cor. 14:1)

7 Some words of caution:

1. Beware of self-deception ... insisting you have a gift you don’t.
2. Beware of rationalizing your gift(s) ... and excusing yourself from other areas of loving service when needed.
3. Beware of confusion ... assuming you must have one or more particular gifts that you desire most strongly.
4. Beware of self-righteousness ... comparing oneself with others who cannot do, or do as easily, what you can do.
5. Beware of depression, despondency, despair, thinking that your gifts are not as important, visible or needed as much as others ... or that you might not even be a believer in Christ because your growth is slow.



8 Consider using a helpful “tool” for discovery or development of your God-given gifts.

You may want to use a “spiritual gifts inventory” ... in a prayerful and meditative setting. Discuss your findings and feelings with some Christian friends and / or with the pastor.

REMEMBER: The development and deployment of God’s gifts is a life-long process!

9 Summary and Review: Being aware of one’s own humanity/frailty and “old nature” helps all Christians live by the grace of God in Jesus Christ. In spiritual growth we are not perfectionists! We live by the grace of God (2 Cor. 12:9)! We marvel at God’s grace and respond because of the mercy shown to us (Rom. 12:1–2).

We learn from Peter who denied and was restored (Luke 22 and 24), from Thomas who doubted and then worshipped (John 20), from Paul who persecuted the Church (Acts 9) and then proclaimed the Christ! We learn from fishermen, common folks (Acts 4:13) and martyrs (Acts 7). Mostly we learn from our Lord, but always we learn with one another in the family of God’s stewards in the fellowship of the Church!

We are “earthen vessels” (2 Cor. 4:7–5:21) but we are privileged to make known the marvelous grace of God in Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:9–10) by word and deed! We are among the “walking wounded” of the world, yet privileged to be “wounded healers” bringing the love and help of God to many!

Belonging to Christ we are stewards of life ... stewards of the variety of gifts God gives for our good and the good of the world in which we live! Our privilege and purpose is to be God’s stewards ... individually and collectively!