

Heritage Christian Church

Participating Membership

Gifted Servanthood



*Connecting to God's Family
(Lesson 7 of 8)*

Gifted Servanthood

Developing Your Spiritual Gifts



It was the “perfect” church. God gave everyone in that church every spiritual gift – each person had them all!

“What a tremendous ministry they must have had,” you may think; no shortage of volunteers. If the pastor was sick one week, no problem – everyone had the gift of preaching, so anybody in the church could fill in. Every Life Group had a leader; every ministry vacancy had a number of potential directors to choose from. And what a music ministry! Everybody played every instrument and could sing any part. In addition, there were no financial problems because everyone had the gift of giving and gave way beyond the norm for other churches.

Heaven on earth, right?

Well, consider some of the downsides of that scenario. First of all, a constant mood of frustration pervaded that church, because everyone had abilities that weren’t being used – someone else got there first. People felt limited in their area of involvement because they were capable of so much more but no need existed for their unused gifts. In addition, individuals were frustrated that they could not develop their potential – they were unable to become the “experts” they were designed to be because many of their gifts weren’t being exercised, and so they didn’t improve.

An air of pride developed because, after all, nobody could say they needed any of the other members – whatever needed to be done, anyone could do it him or herself. Life Group meetings were a joke because no one needed to depend on anyone, so no one did – nothing of substance was ever shared. People didn’t feel cared for by others, people used their own gift of mercy and encouragement on themselves! Ministry stopped being a cooperative venture and became an activity that people used to show off their competency. People became critical of each other because they knew they could have done it better – which, in many cases, was true. There was unprecedented turnover in every ministry because nobody felt they “belonged” – there was always another place they could serve, something else they could do, a longing to fulfill the other passions God gave them.

After considering the above picture, God’s real plan for spiritual gifts in the church looks a lot more like heaven: God gave us different gifts, different abilities so we’d do different things – and need each other. He did not refuse to give us a particular gift because He does not like us; instead, He picks the gifts He gives us so that we have focus, so we can be truly fulfilled. Like a body with differing organs, our different roles and activities bring life to the church; if we become separated from each other, we suffer, like a limb out of joint within a body.

One caveat: when God gave us the gifts of the Spirit so we’d be different, He included the fruit of the Spirit so we’d all work as one. Gifts used properly always testify to our unity as well as our diversity.

Day 1

The Need For and the Privilege of Serving

Read Matthew 9:36-38. Now imagine Jesus visiting a weekend service at Heritage. After the service, you and He sit in the back and watch the hundreds of people walk out. He sighs as He sees the streams of attendees pass by – and then says to you the exact words from Matthew 9. Explain in your own words what you think is on His mind and heart at that moment.

What was Paul's attitude toward working in God's service in 1 Timothy 1:12?

What factors or attitudes have ever hindered your involvement at Heritage?

Day 2

Different Parts, One Body

The Bible compares the Church to a human body, with Christ as the head and all of us as different parts, or members, of the body. Summarize, in a sentence or two, what Paul is trying to convey in 1 Corinthians 12:14-26.

According to 1 Corinthians 12:4-7, what is the ultimate reason we each have differing abilities within the church?

Romans 12:4-8 also speaks of our differing functions in the body of Christ. What is Paul's appeal to us in regard to our gifts?

Day 3

Every Person a "Difference-Maker"

What do you think Jesus meant by "bearing fruit" in John 15:8, 16, 17?

Why would Jesus make such a close connection between bearing fruit and showing ourselves to be His disciples?

What is the application of this truth regarding involvement in a local church?

Day 4

What does 1 Corinthians 15:58 have to say about the standard for all believers of participation in ministry? What is a key motivating factor?

The Elders' Affirmation on "Gifted Servanthood"

Christ followers recognize that the church is composed of interdependent members, each uniquely gifted by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of building up the body and furthering the ministry of the church.

They therefore seek to discover, develop, and deploy those God-given gifts and to seek a place of service within the church, with the support and affirmation of the body.

Day 5

Personal Response Gifted Servanthood

(Please retain for your membership confirmation)

Are you responsibly using your spiritual gifts in a place within the church?

Yes
 No

If yes, in what area? If no, is there a specific reason? Do you intend to pursue some form of service in the near future? In what area?

Note: One of the core values of the New Testament and of Heritage is that the members of the body are the ministers. Practically speaking, the church cannot grow in a healthy fashion unless all of its core believers are sharing the ministry load. So, we ask all participating members to contribute to the body by using their gifts in some place of service. At the same time, we recognize that demanding seasons of life or other unusual circumstances may require reducing the amount of involvement or taking a "break" for a period of time. But, in any case, it should be their desire or intention to re-engage in some level of service – even if only on a periodic basis (e.g., children's Sunday School, help during special events such as our All Community Sunday, our Christmas program, etc.)