



Personal Development

You Are God's Gift: Are you all wrapped up in beautiful paper with ribbons and all the trimmings to match? What is inside that beautifully wrapped gift? That's what really counts!! How can you be certain this gift of God — YOU — are fulfilling your purpose during your lifetime?

Our Aim: To help us in our personal development reach the potential God has in mind for us.

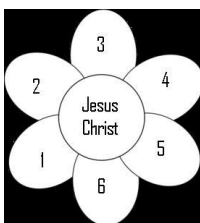
Our Goals: To learn what God says about the whole person — to set priorities for our total lives — to help us identify and develop our spiritual gifts.

You did not become what you are overnight — you developed — via stages in growth, a process that continues as long as you have your faculties. When we talk about PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT, we are talking about the growth or development of the whole person — spiritual, mental and physical — the kind of person God had in mind when He first created you, giving you a body, mind, and spirit. He expects you to expand or grow in all three areas of your life. (Eph. 4:15)

Stages of Growth

Imagine that you are a beautiful flower with six petals, each petal representing a stage in growth or development necessary before you can consider yourself a whole person spiritually, mentally, and physically.

The flower begins its growth from the center, where it is attached to a stem, representing Christ as the center of your life. The Christian Life Committee has been dealing with this basic concept of a personal relationship with Christ that is built on self-acceptance and growing in grace and knowledge of Christ, which is necessary before we can even begin proper development.



1. Identify and develop spiritual gifts and talents.
2. Increase and develop mental processes and skills.
3. Care for and sustain a healthy body.
4. Care for and sustain nature.
5. Grow in love and service to fellow Christians.
6. Grow in love and service to the world.

The skit, "Whole, In Body, Mind, and Spirit," deals with several of the above stages. (See page 3.) If this is a group Bible study, then discuss the skit, if time permits. Let us examine each of those stages a little more closely:

1. Identify and develop spiritual gifts and talents.

“How to Discover Your Gifts” is supplemental material (see page 7) that contains the seven principles (D’s) to help you discover and recognize your spiritual gift(s).

2. Increase and develop mental processes and skills.

Examples include understanding yourself, having a positive attitude, self-discipline, taking initiative, having an organized life, setting goals, developing communication and listening skills.

3. Care for and sustain a healthy body.

Have proper nutrition, exercise, get enough sleep and relaxation, and keep a good appearance. A Christian woman must reign over her body, which is disciplined and chaste, gracious, and controlled. (1 Pet. 3:1-4)

4. Care for and sustain nature, God’s creation. (Psalm 95)

We are affected by our environment: ecology, energy, pollution. God predicts in His Word that the earth will reach a point where it will no longer be the limitless source of blessings and comfort it has been for thousands of years. (Heb. 1:10-11)

5. Grow in love and service to fellow Christians. (Col. 3:12-14)

We are to live our lives in fellowship with other Christians, in continual openness and honesty. We should be loving, caring, and sharing with our sisters and brothers in Christ.

6. Grow in love and service to the world. (Matt. 22:39)

Enter into service to the world, with no strings attached — sacrificial ministry to others. We do not serve people in order to convince them of spiritual truth but because Christ loves them whether they know it or not.

Take a good look at your life. Are any petals missing in your personal development? Whether you are a wife, widow, mother, career woman, retiree, or single parent — are you building a life of eternal consequence?

Resources*

Lord, Make My Life Count by Raymond C. Ortlund ©1975

Success Through a Positive Mental Attitude by Napoleon Hill & W. Clement Stone ©1977

Psycho-Cybernetics by Maxwell Maltz ©2001

A Slow and Certain Light by Elisabeth Elliot ©1997

And God Gave Women Talents by Marlys Taeye ©1978

The Gift Within You by Ray Stedman ©1975

*Books are available at Amazon.com (11//12/10)

WHOLE, IN BODY, MIND, AND SPIRIT

Characters: Three women, each wearing a large name tag of BODY, MIND, and SPIRIT.

BODY: *(As she walks on stage alone, feeling very proud of herself)* I am the Body — I live in a physical world. I make sure I eat the proper food, get plenty of rest, and even spend an hour or two a day at the spa, getting my exercise. I make sure I'm always neatly dressed and I'm taking a class in ceramics, which I dearly love. I keep my home neat and clean and in my spare time I play bridge with my friends, do a bit of traveling, or watch TV. Yes, I live in a physical world.

MIND: *(Approaching BODY as she speaks)* Hello — I am the Mind. I couldn't help but hear what you had to say about your world. I'm afraid I would be terribly bored. Don't you feel the need to improve your mind? I have some very strong feelings when it comes to the brain. Did you know that the average person uses only a very small percentage of her brain? Yet, what a wonderful machine it is! It can help me get answers to problems, write poetry, invent, explore new horizons in science, develop a better personality, even achieve success! Now, that's what I call living!

BODY: Oh, but didn't you forget something? They tell me every living thing has a built-in guidance system or goal-striving device, put there by its Creator to help it achieve its goal, which really is in broad terms what it means to "live." And to my way of thinking, to "live" means doing what I'm doing — eating, sleeping, exercising, and enjoying life to its fullest.

MIND: Oh, but there's much more to it than that — even an animal can do that. Man has something animals don't have — Creative Imagination. Why, with my imagination, I can come up with a variety of goals. I have certain emotional and spiritual needs, which animals do not have. I can exercise my will, discipline myself, change my attitudes, improve my education, and organize my life so I can accomplish more.

BODY: Sounds like you're pretty busy person! Did I hear you say SPIRITUAL needs — just what do you mean? I think I am pretty complete!

SPIRIT: Did I hear my name mentioned? *(As she approaches the other two)* I overheard what you were talking about and I must say, you're both missing something very important. NO person is complete without the spiritual world. In fact, it should come first in your life. Every person wants to achieve in this life, but true achievement involves the development of inward qualities consistent with God's character. This world's standard dwells on the Physical and Psychological, but God's standard dwells on the Spiritual. This means exercising discipline, listening to conscience, being Christ-motivated, and comprehending God's Word to gain insight and sensitivity, but most of all, it means committing your whole heart and life to God and yourself to the service of others. *(Directing her attention to MIND)* Those strong in spirit will have spiritual wisdom. You can't gain wisdom through your intellect.

MIND: Wow, it sounds like I've really missed the boat. I know I have spiritual needs, but I haven't gotten myself that involved! I was quite content with my life until you came along!

SPIRIT: When your physical and mental drives are disciplined by spiritual standards, you have a proper balance, making it possible for you to live in closer harmony with God.

MIND: I begin to see how it all fits together. I can become a whole person only when I take the Physical as well as the Spiritual, making me what you might call "three-in-one." Then all I have to do is really work at it and try to reproduce my wholeness in others. BUT, that's not easy to do!

BODY: Sounds like a pretty big order! It looks like I'm going to have to make quite a few changes in my lifestyle and I don't know if that's possible after all these years!

SPIRIT: You both have it all wrong! You're not going to do it in the first place — God's going to do it through you. His Word tells us, "I can do ALL things through Christ who strengthens me." Once you become His child, He gives you that power through His Holy Spirit, who lives within you and equips you with Spiritual gifts.

BODY: That sounds pretty exciting! You mean I have one of those gifts as a Christian and don't even know it?!?

SPIRIT: If you don't believe me, read what Apostle Peter has to say in 1 Peter 4:10 and Paul says almost the same thing in 1 Corinthians 12:7. ALL God's people receive spiritual gifts, even the rebellious ones. When you came to Christ, the Holy Spirit gave you a supernatural specialty, just for you, to make your Christian life fulfilled and meaningful. It isn't spooky, my friend, it's practical!

MIND: That does sound exciting! But just how can we go about finding out what our spiritual gifts are? I know I have certain talents like artistic skills and musical ability. How do they differ from spiritual gifts?

SPIRIT: That's not always an easy question to answer because sometimes they overlap. Look at it this way: Everyone has certain talents or abilities, but the Bible tells us only Christians receive spiritual gifts. You, as a Christian, may be able to exercise your gifts by way of your talent or ability — but remember, spiritual gifts are given by the Holy Spirit for a special purpose, while talents are for many purposes, not all related to building up the church, or the body of Christ.

BODY: I still have lots of questions but you certainly have proved to me how important it is for me to know what my spiritual gift is so I can start using it in my church for the building up of God's Kingdom. Can you help us discover our gifts?

SPIRIT: There are several ways you can discover your gift or gifts. One of them is a list of seven principles or steps to help you discover and recognize your spiritual gift. Just remember that you may not discover all your gifts at once. Gifts, like talents, may lie undiscovered for years and then certain combination of circumstances may bring them to light.

BODY: I suppose that's why they always say we should be willing to try something new.

SPIRIT: You're so right! You need to be willing to explore the possibilities and to experience with as many spiritual gifts as possible. You need also to examine your feelings because you should feel good about using your spiritual gift. Look for things to happen in the church as you function as part of the body using your gift.

MIND: Who knows what the Spirit of God has put me on the very doorstep of a new endeavor for the express purpose of helping me discover gifts I never knew I had?!?

HOW TO DISCOVER YOUR GIFTS

A jeweler who wishes to recognize various precious gems must first become acquainted with all kinds of gems. So it is with Christians hoping to recognize and discover their spiritual gift(s). We must first become informed about the many New Testament gifts. St. Paul urges us to uncover and utilize our gifts. He exhorts every believer “*not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly*” (Rom. 12:3). So, a sensible estimate of our abilities is a spiritual necessity.

Here are seven Ds, principles to help you discover and recognize your spiritual gift(s):

1. ***Delineation*** — List and Study the Gifts

Four key passages of Scripture list spiritual gifts: Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 28-30; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Peter 4:10-11. Since we have to allow for duplications in the four passages, it is difficult to say whether there are 19 or 20 gifts listed. It is well to remember that while gifts of the Spirit are spoken of throughout the Bible, different gifts were given at different times in history, depending on the needs of the Kingdom.

The Christian must be informed about the gifts before hoping to recognize her own. Failure to recognize a gift does not mean it does not exist — nor does ignorance of a gift make it less valuable.

2. ***Doing*** of Service — Go To Work

We need to expose ourselves to various kinds of Christian service within our own congregations and wherever the opportunity presents itself. As we obey God’s commands to evangelize, exhort, show mercy, help, etc., the Holy Spirit gradually unveils certain gifts. Willingness to try something new may uncover a gift we never knew we possessed.

3. ***Desire*** — Note Your Inclinations

A gift usually will be preceded by a desire and followed by opportunity to use it. On the other hand, desire alone in an individual for a certain gift does not guarantee it. Final assignment belongs to the Holy Spirit who gives to every believer as He chooses (1 Cor. 12:11).

4. ***Dedication*** — Prayer

As you begin your search, pray for openness and understanding, asking the Holy Spirit to show you what gifts He has for you. Then as you proceed to uncover your gifts, it is important to dedicate them to the Lord. You must have the faith to believe that you are gifted and that the Holy Spirit will guide you as He leads you into obedience to Christ.

5. **Development**

We are instruments, not ornaments. The existence of a gift is a call to cultivate and exercise it. *Neglect not the gift that is thee* (1 Tim. 4:14). Evaluate the results of your efforts as you serve and minister to the needs of others.

6. **Delight**

There should be joy as a result of using your gifts in a divinely appointed ministry and this is subconsciously communicated to those who are served by your ministry. Others will be “turned on” as they see how you are “turned on.”

7. **Discernment** by Others — Confirmation

It is important to remain alert to the responses of your fellow Christians. Often others see a gift in you long before you yourself are aware of it, thus the need of discernment by fellow believers who surround you.

As we go about discovering our gifts, let us remember that no Christian is self-sufficient. Each one of us is an essential part of the Body of Christ, the church — a priest with a purpose. Scripture emphasizes the fact that spiritual gifts are given to edify the church and must be used for that purpose in self-sacrificing love.

Another important principle to remember is the fact that we, as believers, do not possess or control the Holy Spirit. Even though the Holy Spirit dwells in all believers, He is not our property or tool; He, by His grace, possesses us. When the Holy Spirit comes into our lives, it is not how much of the Holy Spirit we get but rather how much the Holy Spirit gets of us.

Brethren, (sisters), I would not have you ignorant concerning spiritual gifts.

(1 Cor. 12:1)

Resources

Enlightened With His Gifts by D.W. Hoover and R.W. Leenerts, Lutheran Growth, St. Louis, MO (Bible Study on Spiritual Gifts)

A Lutheran Approach to Biblical Picture of Spiritual Gifts by Walter W. Stuenkel, Board of Evangelism, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

Everyone a Minister by Oscar E. Feucht, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, MO

19 Gifts of the Spirit by Leslie B. Flynn, Victor Brooks, Wheaton, IL