

Parts of the Body

We live in a consumer-driven society. The business world has for years tried to create a consumer-minded persona by which they can claim superior service, quality, and attention to detail. I hear ads all the time that promise a money back guarantee. Have you seen some of the commercials for Circuit City where the guys are trying to come up with a bogus reason for returning their electronic purchase? Circuit City promises a no-hassle return policy. Businesses have become so consumer friendly that they have started adding labels and instructions to their products that seem ridiculous to us.

Here's a list of recent product labels that are interesting:

On Sears hairdryer:
Do not use while sleeping.

On a bag of Fritos:
You could be a winner! No purchase necessary. Details inside.

On a bar of Dial soap:
Directions: Use like regular soap.

On some Swanson frozen dinners:
Serving suggestion: Defrost.

On a hotel provided shower cap in a box:
Fits one head.

On Tesco's Tiramisu dessert: (printed on bottom of the box)
Do not turn upside down.

On Marks & Spencer Bread Pudding:
Product will be hot after heating.

On packaging for a Rowenta iron:
Do not iron clothes on body.

On Boot's Children's cough medicine:
Do not drive car or operate machinery.

On Nytol sleep aid:
Warning: may cause drowsiness.

On a kitchen knife:
Warning keep out of children.

On a string of Christmas lights:
For indoor or outdoor use only.

On a food processor:
Not to be used for the other use.

On Sainsbury's peanuts:
Warning: contains nuts.

On an American Airlines packet of nuts:
Instructions: open packet, eat nuts.

On a child's Superman costume:
Wearing of this garment does not enable you to fly.

You know those instructions are there for a reason....someone probably tried each and every one of the warnings—back to the consumerism issue...in some ways people come to church expecting to bring a consumer mentality when it comes to the way they choose a church. Do they have a good....nursery, children's program, good coffee—or here's one close to home—good doughnuts? I'd like to look at the current culture of me—ism in America—what's in it for me-- and present a view of church life that seems to fly in the face of this selfish attitude. Consumerism in churches can lead to shallow commitments, a high number of spectators, and a lack of involvement in church life at the “buy-in” level.

Today I'd like to use a little symbolism to describe how a church can truly function when people join together in a committed way to make a difference for the Kingdom of God. Churches in some ways are like trumpets. Each of these trumpets on the stage is made up of dozens of parts that allow them to produce a clear sound when I blow into them. Just like these trumpets we have large churches, and smaller churches...I forgot to take this one out of the dryer on time... This trumpet has been disassembled into several pieces. If you were to look at Horizons today, we are a group of parts joined together under Christ. The Bible has some interesting passages that deal with how we should function together in community.

Over the past few weeks, as I've visited some of the journey groups and had other conversations outside of the groups, I've had several people discuss the issue of if it was important to actually join a church. As we go through the message today, I'd like to paint a picture of what a church could become and why it's important that each believer commit to a Body of believers and become active in doing their part.

The formality of membership and the culture of our generation have caused many church-goers to remain outside the grouping of full membership. There are particular steps involved in being a member here at Horizons—and I'm not going to spend a lot of time defining those steps now, but when I think of **membership in a church**, I think of:

A common commitment under God's direction, with submission to the leadership He has provided, that exhibits genuine relationships and participation in a community of believers.

Our consumeristic and spectator culture often keeps folks from taking the plunge into full membership. I'm really not speaking today on membership, but I wanted to provide a basis for the topic today on using your spiritual gifts to fulfill your place in the Body of Christ.

Some of you may be asking what I mean when I say "spiritual gifts". Some of you may be saying, "I don't have any spiritual gifts." A survey completed in the mid 90s found that:

- **Most people (71%) say they have heard of spiritual gifts.**
- **Among those who have heard of spiritual gifts, 31% can name a spiritual gift they believe they possess.**
- **12% of those who have heard of spiritual gifts claim they do not have a spiritual gift.**
- **The most commonly claimed gifts are teaching (7% believe they have this gift); helps/service (7%); faith (4%); knowledge (4%); mercy (4%); and tongues (3%).**
- **When those who have heard of spiritual gifts are asked to identify their spiritual gift, 31% listed characteristics or qualities which are not spiritual gifts identified in the Bible. The most common items mentioned as spiritual gifts which are not biblical gifts are love, kindness, relationships, singing, and listening.**

The Bible has three main texts in the New Testament that speak to the issue of Spiritual gifts. **Romans 12:1-8, I Corinthians 12—the whole chapter, and Ephesians 4:11-13.** We could spend weeks discuss the various aspects of each gift, but today, I just want to catch your interest on the subject and push you forward in discovering or using your spiritual gifts. I'd like you to spend some time this week reading these passages and considering their implications in your life. **According to Peter Wagner, a spiritual gift is:**

A special attribute given by the Holy Spirit to every member of the Body of Christ, according to God's grace, for use within the context of the body.

Let's pick I Corinthians 12 as a starting place for our look at Spiritual gifts. Verse one says:

1 Cor 12:1

12:1 Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant.

Slide down to verse 4.

4 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. 6 There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.

7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. 8 To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, 10 to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.

12 The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. 13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body-whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free-and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

14 Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. 15 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. 16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. 19 If they were all one part, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

21 The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" 22 On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23 and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, 24 while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, 25 so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. 26 If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

God desires us to understand our spiritual gifts and to apply them in the context of the Body of Christ—the church. Spiritual gifts are always placed in the context of a church body. You and I can not fully function in the gifts that God has given us unless we are in a community of believers. So each one of us is given a part to participate in the life of our church. Like the parts of the trumpet. If I took a few of these parts and decided they were not necessary and just threw them away. I'd have a hard time making the instrument sound correctly. Let's say I took away the tuning slide [play trumpet]. Doesn't sound complete does it? Or maybe if the spit valve was missing—[play trumpet]. Each part of this instrument has a purpose and removing it would change the potential of what sounds it could produce. The church is the same way. Each of you who have committed or will commit to the body here at Horizons have an important gift mix that allows the church to fulfill God's vision. Paul was addressing the Corinthian church about how they viewed their gifts. He was making sure to show that no one particular gift was complete enough in its own right to have the church flow as God intended. Romans 12 adds to the list of gifts

Rom 12:4-8

Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, 5 so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. 6 We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. 7 If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; 8 if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

God's plan in our church is for everyone to be flowing in the gifts that God has given them. Do you know your gifts? Some of the most fulfilled people that I know are people who have discovered what their gifts are and they are actively pursuing giving them in service to their church. If you're interested in some self-discovery in this area and in your temperament and personality, I invite you to join one of the discovery groups that will be kicking off again this fall. Rick Warren, a well-known pastor, identifies what he calls learning our shape and applying it to the Body to which we belong. He uses the word shape as an acronym.

How God SHAPES you for Ministry

S- Spiritual Gifts

H- Heart

A- Abilities

P- Personality

E- Experiences

A combination of all of these factors shape your fit in the body of Christ.

If you look at my trumpet and try to rearrange some of the parts, the functionality of the instrument is gone. Finding your shape and being released to fulfill God's mission for you is something that inspires passion for ministry.

Some of you have been at work using your gifts in the body, some of you are newer Christians or new to our church and haven't started getting fitted for ministry. I'd like to share a few stories from my days of playing the trumpet that I think will parallel some guidelines for the use of your spiritual gifts.

I started playing the trumpet in 5th grade.....

1. Start small and be patient

Too many people stop using their gifts after a short time because they seem to feel their contribution was insignificant or embarrassing. Spiritual growth takes time. The opposite of that is also true. Over my years in the church, I've seen too many folks blow in to a church and immediately want to take over a major ministry of the church—and then get offended or hurt when they are told they need to be established in the body or refined before they step into such a position.

As I went further into my playing days, I had several opportunities to be involved with orchestras and bands and in college I was chosen along with another trumpet player to play a duet at large concert on the college campus. It was college weekend.....

2. Look to God for affirmation and praise

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3. Accept Correction and Instruction

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4. Keep failure from stopping you

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5. Stay pure in heart and motives

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6. Consecrate the gift

I've talked today about spiritual gifts in a way that some of you haven't considered before. I'd like to leave you with a few practical steps that you can do now to move toward the goal of finding and using your gifts in this body.

Practical steps to using your Gifts at Horizons

- 1. Be thirsty to identify your giftings**
- 2. Take steps to get involved—attend Pastors Welcome Reception, Membership Class, Discovery Group, and speak to ministry leaders about trying some new things.**
- 3. Encourage others as you see the gifts in operation in their life**
- 4. Reflect on your spiritual development regularly**