

# Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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## Teamwork

by Dan Trygg

“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. <sup>4</sup> Now as we have many parts in one body, and all the parts do not have the same function, <sup>5</sup> in the same way we who are many are one body in Christ and individually members of one another. <sup>6</sup> Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, use them accordingly...” Romans 12:3-5

“But speaking the truth in love, let us grow in every way into Him who is the head-- Christ. <sup>16</sup> From Him the whole body, fitted and knit together by every supporting ligament (or ‘connection of provision’), promotes the growth of the body for the building up itself in love by the proper working of each individual part.” Ephesians 4:15-16

“As each has received a gift, be-serving unto one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.” 1 Peter 4:10

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. <sup>5</sup> And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. <sup>6</sup> There are varieties of inworkings, but the same God who works all things in all persons. <sup>7</sup> But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit toward the joint teamwork.” 1 Corinthians 12:4-7

**We have spent some time talking about spiritual gifts, ...special motivations or empowerments for service prompted and supported by the Holy Spirit. It is easy to get preoccupied with the gifts themselves, and lose sight of what they are for, ...what their intended purpose is meant to be.**

Romans 12 tells us that we each have a unique apportionment of grace, a measure of faith which God has crafted into us by His design. **We are like parts of a body. Each of us has a special purpose and function that is specific to us.** There are many parts that make up this body, and we do not have the same function. **We are designed to work together in order to provide what is needed so that all the parts thrive, ...so that each part gets what is needed. In order for that to happen, we need a clear perception of our own strengths, as well as our own limitations.** We need to understand what we do well, and what we need others for. **It is important not to think more highly of ourselves than is realistic, so that we don't ignore or miss out on the way God has designed the body to work together as a team.** This is especially an issue for us in the USA, because we have this myth of “rugged individualism”. We subscribe to the idea that “I can do this myself”, ...when the truth is that we really *can't*, ...especially not without the capability that God has put into some *other* members of the body. **God's plan is not for a loose association of mediocre “all-purpose” Christians. His design calls for us to be a tightly knitted, interactive and responsive community of specialists,** where each one can bring his or her unique gift to serve in their area of strength, ...and they can also be helped by others serving *them* with their unique abilities. **We need to have a clear understanding of our own abilities, and limits, ...so that we will invest ourselves in the areas of our special strengths, and so that we will be open to receive the ministry and help that God would supply to us from others.** We also must make room for others to develop and utilize their gifts, when God seems to be working through them in ways that are empowered and effective. **As we work together, life and support are passed along to energize and direct the growth of the body, and to supply the needs of each part.**

Ephesians 4 describes the same kind of interactive, interrelated combination of members. Certain “word gifts” (vs. 11) are given to the body in order to teach, clarify, equip and direct the members to do interactive ministry together, ...in order to “build up”, strengthen or edify the body of Christ. **The goal of this interactive process is described in vs. 13, ...a unity or common-understanding of the faith, an intimate, experiential-knowledge of Jesus, and a maturity of character so that our lives come to look like Jesus in noticeable ways.** The way this is accomplished is as **we interactively express the truth to one another in love (by word or deed) so that we increasingly grow up all things into Jesus,** i.e., we align everything in our lives up with Him more and more. He is the head, ...the source, the origin, the One who brings us to completion..., and **out from Him the entire body,** being-jointly-fitted-together and being-knitted-together (or, possibly “fitting-ourselves-together and knitting-ourselves-together”) by means of every connection of supply (or support), according to the inworking in measure of each individual part, **makes the growth of the body** unto the building up of itself in love. **This is a classic, complicated, Pauline sentence construction. In the Greek, from verse 11 to verse 16 is all one sentence!** This forces us to slow down and ponder the sentence structure. When you do that **you cannot miss the powerful interactive, interconnective, inter-relational nature of God's plan for church life.** The body as a whole produces the growth of the body, ...but it is through the inter-relational activity of God's people, ...ministering to one another, each according to his or her own gifting. The other thing that becomes very clear is that, **what Paul is describing here looks nothing like what is happening in most church meetings that have descended from Western church history since the third century!** This interactive,

interdependent, inter-relational ministry does not easily take place in large group settings, unless those involved are well-established in participating in this manner. **Such body life requires *each one to participate*. It requires that people grow their lives *into* Jesus, and minister to one another *out from* the directions that come from Jesus. This means that they must learn to discern and respond to the leading and instruction that comes from Him.**

Peter describes a similar “every person a minister” dynamic in 1 Peter 4:10,11. **He clearly assumes that each person *has received* a special spiritual gift. These gifts are described as either “speaking gifts” or “serving gifts”, and they are to be used to serve one another in the body of Christ. *The spiritual gifts we receive from God are given to us as a trust, a responsibility or stewardship.* We, you and I, are given the capability to put them to work, or we could choose to neglect our responsibility. **Using our spiritual gift requires our cooperation and conscious choice. It does not usually just “happen” by itself.****

In 1 Corinthians 12:4-7, Paul seems to describe spiritual giftings in three separate categories: **There are varieties of *gifts*, there are varieties of *ministries* or “practical service”, and there are varieties of “*inworkings*”.** The point of this delineation seems to be twofold: ***It emphasizes variety.*** There is a wide range of expression of Spiritual gifting, Spirit-led ministry and Spirit-empowered working. It is the Spirit who produces and distributes these gift-expressions as HE desires. The second point again is that **the Spirit gives such expressions and inworkings to each person, as He intends.** No one is ignored. No one is left out. No one is left with nothing to give or contribute to the interactive body life that we are to participate in as the body of Christ. **All of these Spirit-expressions are for the common good, ...literally toward the “*carrying-together*”. *This word picture seems to indicate teamwork, ...a working together in a contemporaneous fashion to “bear”, “carry” or even “produce” something.*** The point is that we work together to accomplish something, and the expressions of the Spirit are given for that purpose, ...to help us with that joint endeavor.

**The listing of gifts in verses 8-11 are noticeably different than the other listings of gifts we had seen in the other passages mentioned above.** In those passages, spiritual gifts were spoken of in terms of past completed action, i.e., you “*were given*”. Here, in 1 Corinthians 12:8-11, Paul uses the present tense. These are giftings that “*are being given*”. Also, aside from prophecy, none of the gifts mentioned here are mentioned in any of those other listings of spiritual gifts. These two distinctions have led many scholars to conclude that **these gifts seem to be temporary, circumstantial impartations of God’s power granted to believers** meeting under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. These particular gifts seem to be available to *anyone*, apart from their past experiences, or their more typical dominant spiritual gift. **It seems that Paul is saying that the Holy Spirit is *distributing* the gifts he describes as *they meet*, ...and they are expressed or made visible for what is advantageous *at the time*. These “*manifestations*” are also clearly “*supernatural*”.** That is, there can be no confusion about these being natural abilities. These are not things that people could do on their own. They are *not* just unusual or heightened natural abilities. **They are *meant to be clear manifestations of the power and presence of God as a sign and encouragement to us, and to bring Him glory.***

From verse 12 on, the verb tense changes to past completed action. We *were* baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ (vs. 13), and God *did* place the members or parts of the body, as He desired (vs. 18). This language seems to agree with Paul’s other writings, and 1 Peter 4, as well. We *have been* given a gift, and we *have been* placed in the body as God has determined. **The point of verses 12-27 is that every part, every person, is valuable and important. They all have a unique and significant role to play in the health and functioning of the entire body of Christ.** God is the One who determines our giftings and role assignments. ***We should be concerned about the health, functionality and inclusion of every person in the body of Christ.***

The recurrent theme is that **every person in Christ receives the inworking power of the Holy Spirit to minister to other members of the body of Christ. The focus of a Christian gathering in the first century was *not* primarily a worship service. *It was a gathering to train, serve, heal and equip the other believers in the body.*** The purpose of the spiritual gifts is *not* God-directed, ...that is, the focus of the gift is *not* to worship and magnify God. **The spiritual gifts *originate from God, and are expressed through His people, in order to benefit and build up one another.*** The focus of the spiritual gift is not on God, ...it is on people, ...building up one another. This is a very important realization. The purpose for the Christian gathering is *to build up the believers. We are to *circulate* the grace and power of God through the *inworking* of the Holy Spirit expressed through the gifts to heal, restore equip and train one another.*

**The Reformation rediscovered the priesthood of all believers, in that it taught that we all can approach God directly, and have a relationship with Him. It fell short, however, in that it lost sight of the truth of what God Himself has designed the church to be, ...an interactive healing, helping, equipping time of investment in one another, ...a time when we come together to be the channels of expression through which God desires to build up His people. **We are *not* called out to meet God; we are called out to meet *one another* in the power of God!**** To this end we work *with Him* as a team of specialists, each one bringing to the meeting what He *has put, or does put*, within us to serve and build up one another.