

No Limits to What We Can Do for God



SABBATH—AUGUST 1

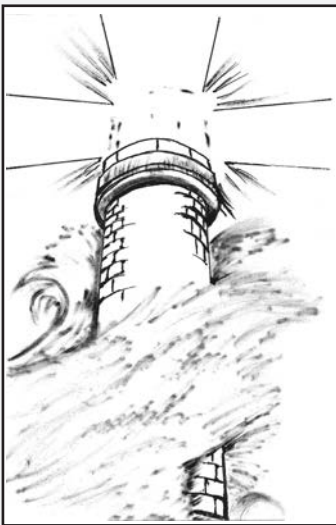
READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: 1 Corinthians 12:12, 13, 18–22; Mark 13:34; 1 Corinthians 12:7; 1 Corinthians 1:4–9.

MEMORY VERSE: “All the gifts are produced by one and the same Spirit. He gives gifts to each person, just as he decides” (1 Corinthians 12:11, NIV).

GOD COMMANDS US to tell people about Him (Acts 1:8; Isaiah 43:10). Sharing Jesus is not a special spiritual gift that only a few people have. God asks all Christians to share the message about the Cross.

The Bible uses different word pictures to talk about our work as witnesses for God. Jesus says we must be the same as “the light that shines for the world [all the people on the earth] to see” (Matthew 5:14, ERV). Paul tells us that “we have been sent to speak for Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:20, ERV). Peter says we “are a chosen group of people. You are the King’s [Jesus] religious leaders” (1 Peter 2:9, NIV). This same God who commands us to tell people about Him also helps us to do it. God gives spiritual gifts to each believer. God does not choose people with a lot of education. He educates the ones He calls to serve Him. God freely gives salvation to all people who believe. In the same way, God gives His spiritual gifts freely to everyone.

So, we must give ourselves fully to God. Then there will not be any limit to what we can do for God. “There is no limit to what a person can do when he puts self away. But first he must allow the Spirit to work on his heart. And he or she must live fully for God.”—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, page 159, adapted. This week, we will study all that we can do when God’s Spirit lives in us.



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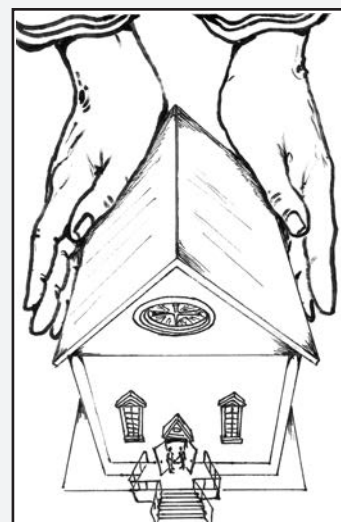
DIFFERENT SPIRITUAL GIFTS (1 Corinthians 12:12, 13, 18–22)

Have you thought about how different Jesus' followers were? They had different personalities and spiritual gifts. But this was not a bad thing. It made the church stronger. Matthew was a tax collector. He was very careful with counting money. Then there was Peter who often talked before he thought about what he should say. Peter also was a natural leader. John also talked without thinking. At the same time, he had a soft heart. Andrew was a people person. He was always aware of what was going on around him. Andrew also cared deeply about people's feelings. Thomas asked questions, and he often doubted. Each of these followers had different personalities and gifts. But God used each one in a powerful way to tell people about Him.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12, 13, 18–22. What do we learn from these verses about the need for people with different gifts in the church?

God loves to take people with different skills and talents and give them gifts to work in His church. The church is the body of Jesus Christ. The body of Christ is not a group of people who think the same way. The church is not a club with people who all come from the same place and act the same way. The church is a living group of people with different gifts. This group is joined as one in their love for Jesus and the Bible. The church wants to share Jesus' love and truth with other people (Romans 12:4; 1 Corinthians 12:12). The members of Christ's body have different gifts. Each person is important. The church needs all its members to work together. Then the church will be healthy. The eyes, ears, and nose have different jobs. But the body needs all its parts. In the same way, all gifts are necessary to the church too (1 Corinthians 12:21, 22).

Think about the human body and how it works. Even the smallest parts have an important role, right? Think about our eyelashes. What if we did not have them? Then dust will hurt our eyes. Awful things can happen to our eyes when we have no eyelashes. We may become blind. In the same way, there may be a church member who is not very important in other people's eyes. But this person is a necessary part of Christ's body. The Holy Spirit has given this person a gift or gifts. When we use our spiritual gifts fully for God, then each of us can help God save other people.

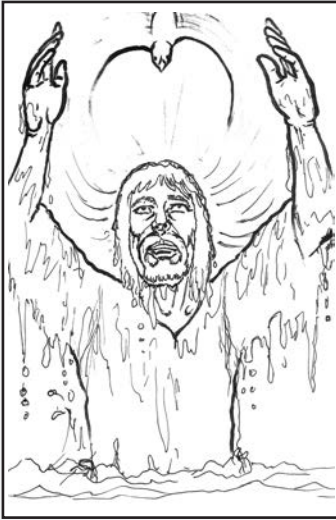


The church is the body of Jesus Christ.

GOD: THE GIVER OF ALL GOOD GIFTS (Mark 13:34)

1 Corinthians 12:11, 18; Ephesians 4:7, 8; and James 1:17 tell us that God is the Giver of all gifts. “Every perfect gift” (James 1:17, ERV) comes from God. So, we can trust that God will give to us the spiritual gifts that are the best ones for our personalities. God will best use our skills to serve His holy cause and bring glory to His name.

Read Mark 13:34 and 1 Corinthians 12:11. As these verses show us, who does God give spiritual gifts to?



The Spirit got Jesus ready for His work on earth. In the same way, God promises us the Holy Spirit at our baptism.

The Bible is clear. God has special work for each one of us. He wants us to share the Good News about Jesus with other people. We see this lesson when we read Jesus' picture story about the house owner in Mark 13. The house owner puts his servants in charge of his house and then leaves. Each servant has a job to do (Mark 13:34). So, we see from this picture story that God gives each person a special job to do in His church. God also gives spiritual gifts to each of us for that work. When does that happen? When we give our lives fully to Him and become baptized members of His body, the church. Then the Holy Spirit gives gifts to us so that we can serve the church and share God with people on the earth.

In 1903, Ellen G. White wrote a letter to a man. She encouraged him to use the gifts that God gave him to serve God. She writes, “We are all members of God's family. God gives us talents. We are responsible for what we do with them. Maybe our talent is big. Or maybe it is small. Whatever it is, we must use our talent to serve God. We also must accept that God gives gifts to other people too. We must let every person use his gifts for God.

“God gives us gifts of the mind, body, and spirit. We must not ever think that any of the gifts we get from God are not important.”—Letter 260, December 2, 1903, adapted.

Read Acts 10:36–38; Matthew 3:16, 17; and Acts 2:38–42. What do these verses teach us about the promise of the Holy Spirit when we are baptized?

God poured the Spirit on Jesus at His baptism. The Spirit got Jesus ready for His work on earth. In the same way, God promises us the Holy Spirit at our baptism. God deeply wants us to believe that He will keep His promise.

GOD'S PLAN FOR SPIRITUAL GIFTS (1 Corinthians 12:7)

Read 1 Corinthians 12:7 and Ephesians 4:11–16. Why does God give spiritual gifts to each Christian? What is God's plan for these gifts?

God gives spiritual gifts to the church for several important reasons. He gives them to the church to make it stronger to do His work. God gives His gifts to the church to join the church as one so that it can finish His work on earth. The Bible writers give us examples of the spiritual gifts that God gives to His church. These gifts include helping others, serving, preaching, teaching, encouraging, and giving. The Bible also tells us about the spiritual gifts of feeding and being kind to guests, showing mercy, being helpful, and being cheerful. These are only a few of the gifts the Bible talks about. For a more complete list, read Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12.

Maybe you wonder about the connection between spiritual gifts and natural talents. How are these two things different? The Holy Spirit gives each Christian spiritual gifts to help him or her do God's work in the church and on earth. Spiritual gifts also may include natural talents that are made holy by the Holy Spirit and used to serve Jesus. All natural talents come from God. But not all natural talents are used to serve Jesus.

"In the picture story, we read about special gifts. Not all special gifts come from the Holy Spirit. Special gifts may include gifts and skills that we are born with or that God gives us. Whatever we have, we must use all our gifts to serve Jesus. When we become Jesus' followers, we give ourselves to Jesus. We give Him all that we are and have. Jesus takes the gifts we give Him. He makes them holy. Then He gives them back to us. Now we must use these gifts to give Him glory and bless other humans."—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, page 328, adapted.

Also, God gave special gifts to the church, including the gift of prophecy. The gift of prophecy is God's special way of communicating with His church by His chosen messengers. God's special gifts also include gifts of leadership. These gifts include being pastors, elders, and teachers, who help members grow strong so that they can serve God (read Ephesians 4:11, 12). Leaders help all members learn what their gifts are. Then they teach members to use these gifts to make the church strong.



The gift of prophecy is God's way of communicating with His church by His chosen messengers.

DISCOVERING YOUR GIFTS (1 Corinthians 1:4–9)

Compare 1 Corinthians 1:4–9 with 2 Corinthians 1:20–22. What do these verses teach us about the promises of God and spiritual gifts right before Jesus comes back?

God promises that His church will show all the gifts of the Holy Spirit just before Jesus comes back. God's promises are sure. He gave us the Holy Spirit in our hearts to lead us into an understanding of the gifts we have from Him. It is God who gives the gifts. By His Spirit, God shows these gifts to us.

If we want to learn more about our gifts, what does God invite us to do? For the answer, read Luke 11:13; James 1:5; and Matthew 7:7.



Pray that the Holy Spirit will lead you to a ministry where you can use your gifts to lead other people to Jesus.

We get the gifts of the Spirit when we give ourselves to God. Then we must ask Him to show to us the gifts He gave us. Our hearts must be empty of self and pride. Our number one wish must be to serve Jesus with our whole hearts. Then His Spirit will tell us what spiritual gifts He has for us. "Jesus' followers gave their lives fully to God in faith and in prayer. Then God poured His Spirit on them. In a special way, God gave heaven's gifts to Jesus' followers at that time. . . . The gifts are already ours in Jesus. But if we want to have them, we must first accept God's Spirit."—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, page 327, adapted.

God gives us spiritual gifts (read 1 Corinthians 12:4–6) so that we may serve Him more fully. A ministry is the special work that God gives us to do for Him. He gives us the spiritual gifts to do this ministry. Activities or special tasks are the jobs that God gives us that allow us to use our gifts. Spiritual gifts do not come fully grown. We must use them. As we use them, they grow. The Holy Spirit will show you the work He wants you to do. Pray that He will lead you to a ministry where you can use your gifts in an activity, or task, that will lead other people to Jesus.

What are your spiritual gifts? More important, how can you make your gifts grow stronger in the Lord's work?

GROWING OUR GIFTS (Matthew 25:29)

Read the picture story about the talents in Matthew 25:14–30. What idea stands out the most to you in this story? Why does God praise the first two servants but not the last one? What does this picture story teach us about using our talents? Pay careful attention to Matthew 25:29 as you answer the last question.

The master “ ‘decided how much each servant would be able to care for’ ” (Matthew 25:15, ERV). Then he gives each servant a different amount. One servant gets five talents. Another servant gets two talents, and another servant gets one talent. Each servant has a choice about how to use the talents that he or she gets. It is important to see that what they are given does not belong to them. It belongs to someone else who puts them in charge of it.

The master is not interested in who has the best or the most talents. He cares only about what each person does with the talent or talents he got.

In 2 Corinthians 8:12 (ICB), Paul says, “If you want to give, your gift will be accepted. Your gift will be judged by what you have, not by what you do not have.” In God’s eyes, the most important thing is not what we have or how much we have of it. What is important is what we do with it.

God praised the first two servants because they show their faith in the way they use their talents. So, their talents grow as they use them. The “evil” servant does not use the talent that the master gives him. So, his talent does not grow. It is an everlasting truth that “when we serve God, the work we do connects us to God and to other humans.”—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, page 326, adapted. The servant who had no faith in God lost his chance to serve. Then he also lost his talent, as well.

We must use the gifts God gives us. Then we will bring glory to His name. Our gifts will grow too. How can you discover what gifts God gave you? Empty your heart of all pride. Then ask God to show you where He wants you to serve Him. As God shows you His plan, start working for Him! Your gifts will grow as you use them. Then you will find joy in serving Him.

Think about this story and what lessons it teaches you about your life. What does this story say to you about what you are doing for God with the gifts He gave you?



Your gifts will grow as you use them.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “Talents,” pages 325–365, in *Christ’s Object Lessons*.

We need a correct understanding of the Bible teaching about spiritual gifts. Then we will have peace and agreement in the church. We also must understand that each one of us has value in God’s eyes. Every member of the church is necessary for finishing God’s work on earth. That is why God gives every member a spiritual gift to serve Him.

“God gives everyone work to do for Him. He gives each of His servants special gifts or talents. ‘He decided how much each servant would be able to care for. The man gave one servant five bags of money. He gave another servant two bags. And he gave a third servant one bag’ [Matthew 25:15, ERV]. Every servant is responsible for some amount. God decides how much to give us because of the skills we have. God does not have favorites. He does not give more to one person and less to another because He likes one person more than another person. He gives us talents that match our skills. He expects us to use our skills for Him.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 2, page 282, adapted.

Remember, God gives us the gifts of the Spirit for His glory, not our own. God gives them to us to bring glory to His name and to help us finish His work on this earth.



Every member is necessary for the finishing of God’s work on earth. That is why God gives every member gifts to serve Him.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1 God gives each one of us gifts. How will this make your church better? How does this idea help us to become better workers for God?
- 2 Have the gifts of another church member been a blessing to your life? If yes, share with the class how you have been blessed. Also, share with the class how you discovered your own spiritual gifts. What do you think your gifts are? How do you use them to bless other people?
- 3 Our spiritual gifts grow as we use them. Look back over your own life. How have your gifts grown as you used them for God? At the same time, have you used your gifts to serve God as much as you should have?

A MAN KNOWN ONLY AS CARLOS

J. Carlos Sanchez Ruiz is president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Uruguay in South America. In his own country, Peru, people say “Hello, pastor-president,” to a man with Carlos’s job. But things are different in Uruguay. There, Pastor Ruiz is known only as Carlos.

It was in 2011 when Pastor Ruiz became a president of the Adventist churches in Uruguay. It took him about a year after that to get used to people calling him by his first name. “Uruguay is different from other countries in South America,” Ruiz says. “Uruguayans respect leadership. But in their eyes, a leader is the same as everyone else.”

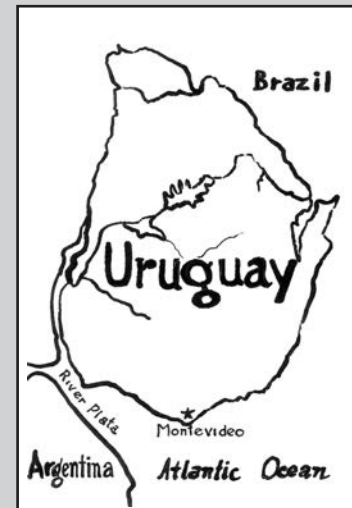
What makes the Uruguayans this way? They are very European in their thinking. Church leaders say that this helps make the country a wonderful place for sharing the Good News about Jesus. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has only 7,358 members in Uruguay. 3.5 million people live there. So, there is only one Adventist for 470 people. Uruguay is one of the countries in South America with the smallest number of Adventists. About half of the people in Uruguay live in the capital city, Montevideo.

In 2019, Ted N. C. Wilson visited Uruguay. President Wilson is the president of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church. He asked, “How will we help the people in Montevideo and other cities on this earth know who Jesus is?”

Then President Wilson opened his Bible to Jeremiah 32:26. He read, “ ‘I am the LORD. I am the God of all people. Is anything too hard for me?’ ” (Jeremiah 32:27, NIV). President Wilson said, “God answers His own question in a powerful way.” Then he turned to Jeremiah 33:3 to read the answer: “ ‘Judah, pray to me, and I will answer you. I will tell you important secrets. You have never heard these things before’ ” (Jeremiah 33:3, ERV).

“Ask God to answer this promise for Uruguay and for your work in the cities,” President Wilson said. “You face many difficult things. People who do not know Jesus care more about earning money and buying stuff than they do about learning Bible truth. But nothing is too hard for the Lord.”

God is working miracles to touch people’s hearts in Uruguay. People are getting baptized after going to meetings run by the church. One new member is Fernando Aguirre. He gave his heart to Jesus in 2019 after taking a class about how to manage stress. Please pray for Uruguay and for other promising places for witnessing in cities all over the earth.



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