Making The Most of Our Talent

Introduction:

Cornerstone is a signpost of what the new heaven and new earth will be like!

As we continue the series, **Your Best Yes**, we make the point that our *best yes* underscores our decision to use our time, talent, and treasure in light of *God's* priorities.

God's people are His handiwork, equipped with everything good for doing His will.

(Cf. Eph. 2:10; Heb. 13:20-21.)

Last Sunday we looked at how we make the most of our time. This morning we focus on how we make the most of our talent - all individual Christ-followers are valued to serve according to each person's unique contribution to live God's tomorrow today, to make echoes of eternity.

I have some great news and not-so-great news for Cornerstone:

> **Great news** – God has given us everything we need to pursue our mission!
>
> **Not-so great news** – we all can be better stewards of all the spiritual gifts and resources He entrusted to us!

Pastor-author Erwin McManus writes[1]:

All the material from which God builds his church exists and emerges from **the hearts of God's people. The church is a construct of human talents, gifts, intelligence, passions, skills, disciplines, experiences, and commitments energized by the Holy Spirit.**

With this in mind I want to suggest three essential practices to making the most of our talents:

- **Steward Spirit-enabled gifts and human resources.**
- **Cultivate interdependent ministry teams.**
- **Deepen our intercultural and intergenerational connections.**

Let us begin to look at the first practice.

Steward Spirit-enabled gifts and human resources:

We are developing *grace-filled, gift-enabled servants, not "charismatic superstars."*

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[1] *An Unstoppable Force,* p. 135.

[4]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 (χαρίσματα - charismata), according to the grace (χάριν - charin) given u***s. (Rom. 12.4-6 NIV)

Every Christ-follower is gifted and resourced – grace [charis]-transformed, grace-motivated, grace-filled, and grace-empowered to accomplish God's assignment, "as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms" serving "with the strength God provides" (cf. 1 Pe. 4:10-11). [2]

While God the Spirit may grant some individuals "supernatural" gifts such as prophesy, healing, performing signs and wonders as well as speaking in tongues, the other "ordinary/ordinary" gifts such as teaching, serving, caring, hospitality, administration and the likes are **no less "supernatural"!**[3]

So the term "spiritual gift" (charismata) covers both "supernatural, extraordinary" abilities and "natural, ordinary" abilities manifested in service-oriented ministries amongst God's people.

Spiritual gift is "a manifestation of the Spirit through an individual in an event or enabling for the service of God and/or his people."[4]

The teaching of this passage is crystal clear: while the Holy Spirit empowers every believer to serve, God does not intend to have bench warmers or to "shorten the bench," simply using a few "superstars" to advance His world restoring mission.

Now turn to the ones next to you and say, "No bench warmers; no superstars; you are needed!"

The metrics for ministry effectiveness and success is individual and corporate **stewardship of spiritual gifts and resources.**

Some of you might have strong hesitation, fear, anxiety, or self-doubt about serving or getting involved. Our brain loves comfort and craves predictability, minimizes risk, and rewards us for staying in safe, familiar patterns.

According to the latest research on brain science, we crave comfort, yet the very thing that holds us back is the same

[2] See also 1 Cor. 12-14; Eph. 4:4-12; 1 Thess. 5:19-21; 1 Pe. 4:10-11.
This is no different from what God did in OT when He empowered individuals to design and make the tabernacle (cf. Ex. 31.1-6).

[3] NT scholar Craig Keener has correctly explained (*Critical,* p. 107), "The Christian worldview acknowledges that ***everything*** in our lives is ultimately 'supernatural'."

[4]Max Turner, *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts: In the New Testament Church and Today.*

spot of growth where our brain is challenged—where fear, learning, and growth intersect.[5]

You may feel safe and secure to stay within your comfort zone, but by doing so, you are actually limiting your brain's capacity for learning and adaptation.

And more importantly, you deprive yourself of experiencing the powerful work of God the Spirit in and through you!

So I encourage you to get involved and, if you haven't already done so, begin by discovering your spiritual gifts and take the online spiritual gifts assessment that's available through our website:

Online Spiritual Gifts Assessment
www.cornerstonechurch.ca/spiritual-gifts-test

And this brings us to the second practice:

Cultivate interdependent ministry teams:

Everyone is unified and aligned to advance the mission.

[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. (Rom. 12.6-8 NIV)

The message is clear here: while every Christ-follower is uniquely gifted with different gifts,

> all must **work interdependently and collaboratively as a team;**
>
> and all the gifts must be ***exercised with care and consideration, grace and truth,*** as various parts working together in unity.

Ron Edmondson has written "**16 Things People Never See About the Role of a Pastor**": Counsellor, Career Coach, Business Advisor, Custodian, Arbitrator, Social Worker, Volunteer Coordinator, Event Manager, CEO, Fundraiser, Recruiter, Trainer, Scholar, Manager, Public Relation [bonus – Politician].[6]

So can you name any of the Cornerstone pastoral staff who has these "super-powers"?

But let's be crystal clear:

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[5]Bethany Peters, https://www.theleadershipcoachinglab.com/blog/brain-science-of-the-comfort-zone

[6] Ron Edmondson, https://churchleaders.com/pastors/pastor-articles/256062-16-often-unknown-roles-pastor.html/3

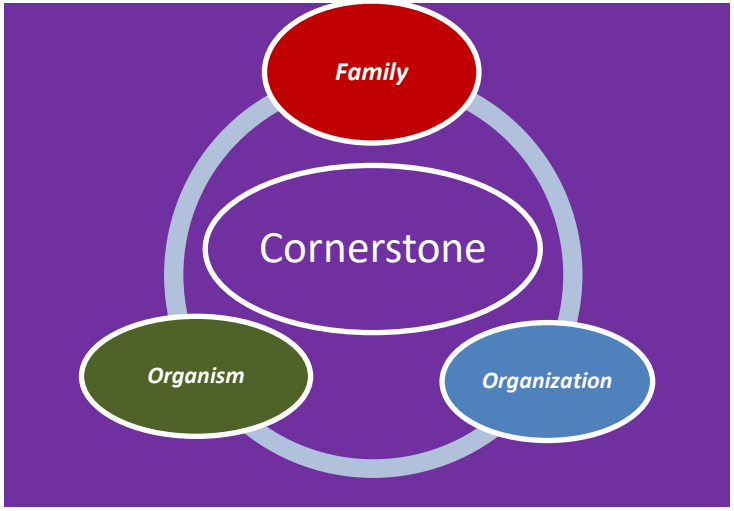
God doesn't want a one man band or a cookie-cutter faith community.

[7]But to ***each one*** of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it … [11]So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers,[12]***to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up … attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ***… [16]From him ***the whole body … grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work***. (Eph. 4.7, 11-13, 16 NIV)

God embraces creative ministry teams of Spirit-enabled individuals who live out loud their unity-in-diversity and are growing toward spiritual maturity.

God's people are a kingdom of priests;[7] the body of Christ is malnourished and poorer if even just one of us is not stewarding our God-given gifts, talents and abilities.

[7] Cf. 1 Pe. 2:9-10.



This is a high calling because the church is a family, organism, and organization; we have to live in these interpersonal and corporate tensions.

[3]For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do ***not*** think of yourself ***more highly than you ought,*** but rather think of yourself with ***sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.*** (Rom. 12:3 NIV)

No gift exists for its own sake and no personal agenda overrides church unity and mission advance. All must serve according to sober judgment, humility, and appropriate measure of faith.

The key takeaway here is this: Make every effort to pray and ask the Lord how we can contribute and better reflect **beauty of Christ -** to live such good lives together so that

people may see our good deeds, be drawn to Jesus, and glorify God.

And this leads us to the third practice to making the most of our talent.

Deepen our intercultural and intergenerational connections:

We develop Christ like characters and wholesome kingdom influencers.

Paul's admonition for appropriate use of spiritual gifts is in view of **God's compassion/mercy and the believers' living sacrifice and holistic worship/service (Rom. 12:1-2).**

Eugene Peterson's translation captures well the comprehensive scope of what Paul teaches about a grace-driven, love-motivated worshipful life:

Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. (Rom. 12:1 *The Message*)

Since believers have experienced God's transforming mercy and grace, the inner change will generate a rippling effect in our relationship with God, His people, and our neighbours (12:3-15:13).

Paul's teaching about spiritual gifts is often **bathed in and governed by the love of God and others (Rom. 12:9-10; 13:8-10; cf. 1 Cor. 12-14).**

In fact, Paul teaches elsewhere,

Every Christ-follower is

to set the mind on what the Spirit desires,

to be taught and set apart by the Spirit,

to be filled with the Spirit,

to be controlled by the Spirit,

to produce the fruit of the Spirit,

to keep in step with the Spirit.[8]

The manifestation of spiritual gifts, self-giving service, and power in the church is aimed at **drawing people closer to God,** as our neighbours experience the multi-dimension of Christ's love.

The missional purpose of spiritual gifts is **not** producing impressive programs **to attract seekers and transferred members from other churches to join a self-serving club;** it

[8] Cf. Rom. 8:1-16; Gal. 5:19ff.; Eph. 5:18ff.

is to **build a loving mosaic in a broken world for the glory of God.**

The Apostle Peter expresses a similar admonition:

10 … once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy … **12** Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God … (1 Pe. 2:10, 12 NIV)

Impressive programs and grand projects ***without*** a Spirit-infused love and Spirit-filled community perpetuates **a consumer driven congregation which forever *drains* human resources and never *trains* God's people to be living-sacrifices.**

If *the cross and the empty tomb* are indeed *the marks* of God's people, then Cornerstone's *emblem of success is self-giving sacrifice and life-transformation, not comforts and convenience.*

Cf. Michael Bonner has written the article, **"Multiculturalism has lost its meaning"[9],** for the Macdonald-Laurier Institute. He asserted that Canada's official multiculturalism policy which was championed by Pierre Trudeau's vision of "unity in diversity" as a means of integrating newcomers into the Canadian mosaic.

Bonner argues that it has deviated significantly from its original intent and is irrelevant to contemporary needs. Bonner suggests that multiculturalism has since shifted to **celebrating diversity for its own sake, often at the expense of national unity, a clear Canadian identity, and effective social integration.**

If that's the case, in my perspective, Canada is just a hotchpotch pile of disparate, ethnocentric fragments instead of a beautifully woven mosaic.

Then one important social implication is that individual ethnic communities become self-serving and utilitarian silos, building up walls of separation.

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[9] https://macdonaldlaurier.ca/multiculturalism-has-lost-its-meaning-michael-bonner-for-inside-policy/
The document outlines three main positions on multiculturalism in Canada:

1. **Idealistic View**: Represented by academic Will Kymlicka, this perspective sees multiculturalism as a transformative force that has made Canada uniquely virtuous and successful. The slogan "diversity is our strength" reflects this view.
2. **Critical View**: Canadian writer Neil Bissoondath critiques multiculturalism as a "cult" and an "illusion." He argues that it perpetuates the foreignness of newcomers, prevents national cohesion, and focuses on superficial aspects like festivals and food rather than meaningful intercultural understanding.
3. **Indigenous-Centric View**: John Ralston Saul contends that Canadian multiculturalism is rooted in Indigenous practices and ideas, asserting that Canada is a "Métis nation." However, this view has been criticized for its incoherence and circular reasoning.

These positions reflect a continuum of opinions on the meaning, purpose, and outcomes of multiculturalism in Canada. (This summary is generated by Gemini.)

Cornerstone should be modelling “a Canadian unity-in-diversity mosaic” – living out a kingdom identity that showcases the power of God’s multi-dimensional love that brings out the best in all peoples and breaks down walls of separation!

Conclusion: Let me summarize: the three essential practices to making the most of our talents are:

- **Steward Spirit-enabled gifts and human resources.**
- **Cultivate interdependent ministry teams.**
- **Deepen our intercultural and intergenerational connections.**

Cornerstone is made up of ordinary people, redeemed and gifted with supernatural resource/ability, offering our best yes and representing Jesus to continue the extraordinary task of sharing God’s love in a broken world.

Every disciple is called to **discovering, developing, and deploying** our God-given talents, abilities, and gifts to accomplish the mission our Heavenly Father entrusted to us!

This is the second of two Ministry Fair Sundays here at Cornerstone. On Ministry Fair Sundays, we give you space to listen to how God may be inviting you to join the mission of this local church by serving in a ministry role that suits you.

A card has been placed on each chair today. It says, “Current Serving Opportunities.” Would everyone grab that card please?

Listed on this card are a variety of opportunities that are available for serving here at Cornerstone. In just a moment, we’ll give you a quiet space to prayerfully reflect on and fill that card out as the Lord leads you.

After service today, you will find representatives from various ministries at booths in the lobby-- specifically Worship, Children's Ministry, Youth Ministry, Outreach, and Operations (which includes Communications, Facilities, Culinary and IT).

I encourage you to visit those booths, ask your questions, and learn more about ways you can give your “best yes” to

God by getting involved in serving here at Cornerstone in a way that fits your giftings and capacities.

At this time, I invite you to take your Current Serving Opportunities card, and flip it over to the side where it says, "Areas of Need" at the top. There, you will find a full range of serving opportunities currently available at Cornerstone. For those who are worshipping online, there is a web page where you will find current serving opportunities and indicate your interest in getting involved: **www.cornerstonechurch.ca/serve**.

For those here in-person, I invite you to grab a pen from one of the seat pouches. Or, you can get one from one of the ushers who are making their way around the worship hall with extra pens.

I'm going to give you a couple of minutes to sit with this card. As you look it over, ask Jesus, "Lord, is there any particular area of service that you're calling me to?" Then, check off the opportunities on the card that you feel most drawn to— probably not more than a few at the most.

Note that in checking any box, you're not committing to serve in that ministry. Rather, you are simply saying that you're interested in possibly serving in that area, and are willing to have someone in that ministry area follow up with you and give you more information.

Last but not least, please don't forget to write in your name and contact information on the bottom of the card.

Please take a couple of minutes now to prayerfully fill out those cards, and afterwards, we'll give you instructions on how those cards are going to be collected.