



CHRISTIAN SCHOOL



Expanding One's Gift to Gifts... By Becky Ramsey

I have read Romans 12: 6-8 for years. This passage tells about the gifts that God has called us to implement in our daily walk. I would quickly hop, skip, and jump over this passage, thinking, "I know what God wants me to concentrate on—it's teaching!" Isn't that what other teachers would assume as well?

An in-depth study on the Parable of the Talents changed my thoughts. There are talents that God gives to us, and then there are talents that God expects me to develop. I decided to

slow down my reading of that passage to meditate on the other gifts mentioned.

Maybe some of these verses could hold areas that God intended for me to develop in my life to add to or enhance the gift of teaching. The first detail that I noticed in this passage was that the gifts that we have are ours "according to the grace given us" (12:6a, NIV). We cannot claim any part of the "gift" because it does not come from our abilities. It comes from the grace of our Savior.

While even our abilities come from the Lord, sometimes we take ownership of our areas of competence. I determined that, as I began to isolate each gift, if it was one that God encouraged me to develop, I would remember that the aptitude for the particular gift came totally from Him. The first gift mentioned was the gift of prophesying. I felt very safe in thinking that this particular skill would not be one toward which the Lord would direct me. I associated this gift with ministry. (Continued on page 7.)



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Yet I felt led to pray about each of these gifts and seek the Lord's direction. As I was praying over the ability to prophesy, I felt God begin to lead my thoughts through questions. He asked, "Do you ever direct your students to areas of their abilities? Do you remind them of how I can use that particular ability in My Kingdom?" The answer was a definite yes, because that type of direction is definitely a part of teaching—recognizing and developing abilities within our students. I began to realize that He wanted me to develop that gift more in my field by "using it in proportion to my faith" (12:6b, NIV). I needed to have the faith that the Lord would lead me to direct students in a greater measure.

The next gift mentioned is serving. Oh my, teachers serve; but they need to serve as our Savior did, with great sacrifice. Our assistance must also be done with the joy that Christ had.

Hebrews 12:2, NIV, reminds us of the importance of "fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame." Too

many times in the classroom we do more scorning and disparaging of incidents than exhibiting the joy of the Lord. It was not the developing of this gift in my classroom that needed to happen. It was the way He wanted my service to happen. I needed to develop the joy of service.



Then comes the gift of teaching—the one we willingly claim. However, it is followed quickly by the gift of encouraging. Now that tool is one every teacher wants to happen every day. We want to be encouraged by our students' progress, the completion of objectives, and the accomplishments of our goals. However, the real gift that teachers need to develop is the ability to encourage the people who surround us, whether it is a student, parent, or even a fellow teacher. God began to run the movie reel of people who could benefit from encouragement that I could easily give. And when I began to consciously share that encouragement, I found that Luke 6:37, NIV, was true. "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." Encouragement is contagious.

The next gift is one we often use from the context of the church, but we often forget it in the classroom—contributing to the needs of others. Teachers need to be aware of the needs of our students. Many times learning will not be possible until we reach out to the glaring needs that these children have. Whether these needs are physical or emotional, we need to intercede for the children whom God has entrusted to our care. Some people might say that a teacher cannot

overlook the needs they have, because those needs often become stumbling blocks to learning. Some people might say that a teacher cannot concern herself with the non-academic problems that her students may face. As Christians, we must give with a generous spirit, and there are many resources available to help in this area.

Leadership is another quality that teachers should seek to develop. As the Apostle Paul suggested, we should be able to tell our children "to follow us as we follow Christ" (1Cor 11:1, NIV). Children will follow what we do much easier than what we say.



The last two gifts coordinate well. Leading or governing must be linked with showing mercy. As teachers, we must go into our classroom daily to offer new mercies. Each day teachers must give the children the ability to begin the day with a fresh start. We want mercy for our mistakes and failures. However, teachers often deal only with justice. Understanding, forbearance, and compassion are qualities that we need to develop as teachers. These qualities must be administered with cheerfulness.

All of these gifts are fundamental to the focus of education. They are pivotal as the basis on which a teacher builds effectiveness. Maybe the reason the gift of teaching is in the midpoint of this passage is that it must be surrounded by these other gifts, growing and developing, for our teaching truly to be effective.

