

The Women's Resource

CONNECTING THE STAFF WOMEN OF CAMPUS CRUSADE FOR CHRIST



A Very Special Gift

I am a fan of gifts. I love to give them—one of my great joys in life! And of course receiving gifts is such fun. Sometimes God sends us something—or someone—that surprises us. We may not always recognize what He sends as a gift, and it may take time for us to realize how truly generous He has been.

Seventeen years ago, God sent us a son. He was 9 years old when he came into our family. His first years had been very difficult and challenging. And he brought many challenges into our home.

We sought to love him, provide for him, accept him, encourage him—and we saw some good things happen in his life. But as he entered his teen years, he increasingly made choices that countered all our efforts and put him at great risk.

The years that followed were difficult and painful. Nothing we did seemed to convince him of our love and acceptance nor help him to make positive choices for his life. We were driven to our knees in prayer as the only help for our son.

Over the next years, as we spent many hours and days beseeching the Lord, God slowly brought changes in his life. He finally began to believe that we loved and accepted him. He began to make more responsible choices and to comprehend the serious consequences of the path he was on. He is still paying the price for some of those choices. He is not yet where we would like to see him, but he is moving in a good direction. We are grateful for the better path, though often impatient to see even greater transformation. We are eager to see all that God has in store for him.

But for me, as difficult as it has been, this journey has been an incredible gift. God has used our son to

reveal weaknesses I didn't know I had—and strengths I didn't realize I possessed.

And God has used him to show me so much more of Himself. I understand unconditional love at a much deeper level—and that unconditional love doesn't demand love in return. In urging me many times not to give up on my son, God has reminded me that He has never given up on me. And certainly I have made many stupid and sinful choices that merit grave consequences, but His mercy has prevailed. When my feelings turned to anger, God reminded me that He has redeemed me with tender mercy and wooed me with lovingkindness.

In earlier days, in my thwarted desire for my son to love me and the pain that created, I got a glimpse of the pain I have often caused my Savior. When I have preferred someone or something else, when I have thought something else would satisfy my longings or when I have put another higher in my affections than Jesus, He has felt the rejection. Yet still He lovingly welcomes me back and delights in me.

So I wouldn't trade all the struggle and pain, for the gifts I have received through this prodigal are of far greater value. I am so grateful to God for him.

Judy





Judy Kifer | Haymarket, Virginia, United States

*A*s the daughter of Presbyterian missionaries, I grew up in the midst of the equatorial rain forests of Cameroon, West Africa. Although I was securely immersed within the persistent and passionate spiritual nurturing of my parents, being a Missionary Kid involved a painful rite of passage: being dropped off at the Mission's boarding school for MKs. Numerous were the times I stood outside the large brick dormitory, waving a vigorous goodbye, as the sound of my parents' Jeep faded away into the distance. I was 5 years old when I first experienced the wrenching pain of separation and the longing *just to go home*.

Separation became a dreaded, yet inevitable word in my vocabulary, as it followed me through high school and then into college. Finally, marriage and children created for me a place I could call my own—a place to feel *safe*.

However, early adulthood revealed I had a progressive hearing loss disease. In time it was as if a mute button isolated me once again. Emotionally, it was the haunted sound of my parents' jeep fading away. In spite of coming to Christ as a child and years of being grounded in my faith, in tears I pleaded, "Lord, please, please not this silence. Not this separation AGAIN! Where are You?"

Where am I, My child? I am right there waiting for you in that world of silence. Your world is far from silent ... it is reverberating with struggle and turmoil. Be still and know that I AM GOD. My grace is enough for you. I AM all you need. (Psalm 46:10, Amplified Bible, and 2 Corinthians 12:9, Living Bible)

God's Gift of Himself

Discovered in a most unlikely place

Somehow I had not read those words before with quite the same authority.

When all is silent around you, as you venture out into the outside world, I will be there. When you feel left out not understanding the conversations of others, I will be there. When you lie down within your deep silence to sleep, I will be there.

"I will be there."

As I began to acquiesce to His gentle nudging, a calmness began to fill the frantic spaces of the dreaded silence. With that silence came a lot of time to reflect. Familiar Scriptures took on new nuances. I realized that Moses, also, was forced to leave home as a little kid and grow up in a strange place away from family. He learned to be alone with God and was brought into a life-changing experience of being made privy to actually listening to the Almighty pour out His Heart—just as a man speaks to his friend.

In time my silence became a secret place, where God was waiting just for me to show me deeper things about Himself and the presence of His Holy Spirit.

What irony that the place of separation I dreaded most fearfully proved to be the safe, immovable home I had been longing for.

Be still, My child ... and know that I AM God! I AM all you need.

Your Home, God's Gift

*"Do what you can with what you have, where you are."
—Corrie Ten Boom*

Quite often we staff women feel inadequate for ministry. Perhaps we are too busy with mundane details, or perhaps we feel sidelined with family needs. But we all have one thing in our hands—the homes that God gave us. No matter how humble they may be, our homes can be used for the Lord.

Most of the time over my years on staff, I chose to make the best of God's gifts that were right in front of me and

Nan McCullough | Washington, D.C., United States

use them for evangelism. Quite often those gifts were my simple home, my neighbors or my children's friends.

Let me challenge you to use your home, no matter how simple it may be. Try some of the ideas found online at **www.EntertainingForEternity.com** (and become a fan of Entertaining for Eternity on Facebook). God has multiplied my efforts and blessed me. I have seen dozens come to know our Lord through my ministry at home. And my hope is that God will open new gifts of ministry for you as well in the years ahead through your ministry at home.



Ingredients of Giftedness

by Andrea Buczynski

When I think of giftedness, Moses comes to my mind. God had seen the plight of His people, and He chose Moses to be the one to lead His people out of Egypt. He was sending Moses to Pharaoh to tell him to let His people go. However, Moses' response was so hauntingly familiar—"Who am I that you should send me?"

Where have I heard that before? Don't we approach the challenges God lays before us in a similar way? To quote staff member Jan Beal, "Moses said he wasn't eloquent in speech, but he had already been eloquent with God! He just didn't realize his giftedness!"

While at a conference, I was sitting with a staff woman who was questioning some of her involvement in a particular initiative. She turned to me and said, "One of the highlights of my week was with a group I was leading. When I asked them what a highlight of the time was for them, two people replied, 'It's you!' But I didn't feel that I was doing a good job at the time."

So often we get discouraged because we cannot see what God has built into us, nor our impact on others. Sometimes it can be a mercy to us that we are not aware. Yet, if we want to make the best of what God has entrusted to us, we would do well to be aware of the gifts He has given us.

I like the definition of giftedness that Dr. Robert Clinton uses: Giftedness is a combination of natural abilities, spiritual gifts and acquired skills. Together they form a powerful combination that God can use for His own glory.

Natural abilities are what you are born with—mental abilities, social skills, physical dexterity, etc. Psalm 139:13 says, "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb." There is nothing random about you!

Exodus 31:3 describes Belazel "... and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts..." God used him to oversee the building of the tabernacle according to the pattern God showed to Moses.

Howard Gardner, in his book *Frames of Mind* (1983), developed the theory of multiple intelligences. He hypothesized that people had other kinds of intelligence not expressed through the normal assessment of IQ. He cited seven areas of intelligence:

1. **body-kinesthetic** (body movement control)
2. **interpersonal** (awareness of others' feelings)
3. **verbal-linguistic** (words and language)
4. **logical-mathematical** (logic and numbers)
5. **intra-personal** (self-awareness)
6. **visual-spatial** (images and space)
7. **musical** (music, sound, rhythm)

Giftedness is a combination of natural abilities, spiritual gifts, and acquired skills.

Whether you call these areas intelligence or not, we cannot deny that individuals are born with talent in different areas. My brother's two sons are examples of this. One son has visual-spatial and verbal-linguistic talents. His favorite toys were always building blocks and video games. He loves movies and can remember the scripts of entire comedy shows. The other has body-kinesthetic talent. He is a natural athlete—anything physical he attempts, he is able to do well. He also has interpersonal talent. From the time he could sit up, he would offer you a piece of whatever food was in front of him—he just didn't want you to be left out of a good thing. What amazes me is how obvious their abilities were from the time they were very young.

Acquired abilities are those things you have learned along the way that enhance your natural abilities. We can see in Scripture that God used the acquired abilities of many people. Moses, Hebrew by birth, grew up in the Pharaoh's household, understanding the ways of the Egyptians. We can see the hand of God early in Moses' life, preparing him for what

would be his task later in life. The combination of his birth, his education and his wilderness training (herding sheep) gave him a unique package of acquired abilities for use by the Master.

Some areas of acquired abilities would include the following:

- **Mental:** critical thinking, analytical skills, decision-making processes, strategic thinking, etc.
- **Physical:** athletic training, specific sports, teamwork, building or making things with your hands, using a mitre box or power saw
- **Social skills:** meeting new people easily, leading small groups, listening, empathy, building rapport
- **Organization:** administrative skills, technology, setting up a good buffet line, project management
- **Verbal-linguistic:** debate, argumentation, persuasive skills, writing, editing
- **Musical:** playing an instrument, being part of a band or orchestra, following a conductor

Spiritual gifts, as you know, are our God-given capacity for releasing a Holy Spirit empowered ministry for others. Scripture gives us different lists of the ways the Holy Spirit gives us gifts in 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4 and Romans 12.

Robert Clinton, in his book *Spiritual Gifts*, gives suggestions for people to develop their spiritual gifts. People with a word-oriented gift need to be in the Scripture and growing in their handling of the Word. Those with an exhortation gift should become familiar with the short Epistles which often address specific problems that people face. For those with a teaching gift, study systematically; learn to organize what you're learning. For those with "love" gifts—those gifts that support others—develop your relational skills or learn practical skills for helping.

Three areas comprise your giftedness. The first area is in ministry. Giftedness is discovered and developed over time in the active process of ministry. An early indicator of giftedness may be found in your list of most admired leaders—who is it that you would like to be like? Often there is a correlation of "like attracts like." You are attracted to leaders who have similar gifting to yours.

A second area of giftedness is in what type of assignments you gravitate toward. People tend to volunteer for work that fits prior experience, perception of natural ability or intuition, or spiritual giftings.

A third area is when you are put in a role where a gift, previously unknown, becomes apparent.

Over time, as giftedness emerges, there is a ripening of the gift mix—primary spiritual gifts may be supported by well-developed natural and acquired abilities to form a mix that is unique to you.

Our giftedness is part of our stewardship. My gift mix supports God's call on my life, but in and of itself, it is not a stand-alone qualifier for a ministry role. And my gift mix is not an excuse from serving in non-gifted areas. We all have responsibilities that are required of us that are outside our gift mix. Those are often the training path for faithfulness.

Our character and obedience bear an important relationship to giftedness. The qualification that you most often see in Scripture for leaders is obedience—the desire and commitment to do things God's way. Qualities of humility, love, forgiveness and self-control supercede giftedness in qualification. In other words, I would always choose the leader with solid character and fewer gifts over the leader with giftedness but poorer character. Leadership is too critical to be entrusted to someone without sufficient depth of character. ***A leader's heart must be trustworthy with God's agenda.***

God takes us down a path to develop our heart and character through unlikely ways—hardship, weakness, limitations, loss, failure, intense pressure, conflict, even feedback. His processes test our willingness to believe Him despite circumstances. The mixture of gifts is only the servant to a heart that is truly the Lord's.

This is Moses' story—we watch him grow from a reluctant leader to a humble and powerful leader, as he took God at His word and obeyed Him. *His gifts were simply tools in God's hands.* May this be our story as well!

The mixture of gifts is only the servant to a heart that is truly the Lord's.



Andrea Buczynski is international vice president of leadership development for Campus Crusade for Christ.

Have You Opened Your Gifts?

Karen Purpero | Holzen, Germany



This is the time of year we all think about gifts. But as you think about the gifts you will give to your loved ones, have you thought about the gifts you possess?

Contentment comes from being satisfied with what we have. Are you satisfied with the gifts God has given you? Or do you compare yourself to others and feel as if your gifts are too obscure or insignificant to ever make a difference in anyone's life? Do you believe you belong on the "Island of Misfit Toys"?

I felt like I was a misfit all my life. I was skinny and awkward as a child. My glasses were so thick that the temples did not close. I was unathletic, unpopular and unconfident. These feelings ran deep and continued in a much more sophisticated and covert sense as I grew up. My husband, Vince, and I joined Student Venture staff in 1986. Although I have a passionate heart for teenagers, anyone who has worked with me knows I don't have the "youth worker" gifts. I am a classical pianist, so let's just say I never was asked to play at a Student Venture meeting. I am reserved rather than extroverted, a listener rather than a talker, and frankly, rather intense. Yet, despite operating out of weakness for a good 10 years, I know that God used me in the lives of young girls. Sometimes we have to operate outside of our gifts.

However, after extended times of neglecting our gifts, we pay the price. Depression crept up on me, and I was sick all the time with ailments like pleurisy, proctitis and shingles. That's when I started to consistently pray about my life's calling.

I learned that instead of asking God, "Why did you make me this way?" I should be asking Him, "What do you want me to do with the gifts you've given me?"

God did not deprive me when He chose to make me this way. He did it on purpose. How about you? Have you considered that the way you have been knit together is a gift? "For you created my inmost being; You knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:1-6).

If you have not embraced the unique gifts God knit into

you, then you aren't believing that you are fearfully and wonderfully made. Just as you shop with care for the perfect gift for loved ones, God gifted you out of His passionate love for you, with a purpose and plan to use that gift in His own way, in His own time.

I continued to practice piano that entire 10 years without performing a single time. When I started praying for opportunities to use my gifts, the door started to open. The "desert" I had been in turned out to be a time of preparing me for the service God had in store.

In 1997, at a seminar during the U.S. Staff Conference, I heard about a ministry in Florence, Italy, that focused on artistic and creative people. I asked the leader if he thought they would be interested in me. He said, "Why not?"

Those words literally set my life in a new direction. I went from playing nowhere for no one, to playing in a vineyard at sunset in a Tuscany villa. I began to regain my confidence as a musician and speaker, and since then, I have given evangelistic, classical piano concerts in the U.S. in Fort Worth, New York City and Orlando, as well as in Europe in Florence, Paris, Berlin and four cities in Switzerland. As I play classical piano music, I weave in my testimony and the gospel.

I am astounded at the way God is blessing me and using me, but I shouldn't be. Why would He have knit in me the gift of playing classical piano if He didn't have a plan to use it?

God knit us together with great care. The things you love and are good at are no mistake. Be content with them. You have a unique contribution to offer! Be brave and take the initiative to share these gifts with others. This is the most beautiful way to express your thankfulness to the Giver.



Disguised Gifts



Janet Richards | Orlando, Florida, United States

The news that came out of the doctor's mouth was an arrow shooting through our hearts: "I'm sorry but your daughter will be severely handicapped and will never walk or talk. She will have multiple surgeries and likely won't live to hit puberty."

Overcome with a myriad of emotions, my husband and I cried together as we struggled to understand how God could have let this happen. We had been missionaries overseas, following God to the ends of the earth! Is this how He rewards us for our sacrifice? If children were a gift from the Lord, how was I supposed to thank God for this gift?

The day Emily came home from the hospital, four months after her birth, her siblings were anxiously awaiting her arrival, and we celebrated with balloons and a pizza party. On the outside, things looked happy.

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On the inside, however, it was quite a different story. I was supposed to thank God for her. I was supposed to love her. How could I love Cerebral Palsy? How could God ask me to love the very thing that I felt was wrecking my life?

A few weeks later, our pastor spoke about agape love. Again I asked God, "How am I supposed to love Cerebral Palsy?" This time I got an answer. I didn't have to love CP! I wasn't called to love *her disability*, I was called to love *Emily*. Yes, she came with an oversized crate of problems, but her problems did not define her. She was made by God, and we were called to love her. We dealt with her disabilities, but we were called to love her.

The freedom of that moment was life changing for me. In the remaining six years of her life, I spent absolutely countless hours serving Emily. There were nights I was up feeding her, wiping her brow after another seizure or trying to get her nebulizer treatment done so she could breathe more easily. But I learned how to serve her out of a more pure love than I'd ever experienced before.

Profoundly mentally and physically handicapped, she had nothing to give back to me. Yet God seemed to give me everything through her. I learned to walk in the power of the Holy Spirit on a level that I'd never been able to grasp before. I learned more of what it was to love unconditionally.

Way back when Emily was born, I wouldn't have believed I would say this, but we were truly privileged to have her as our daughter. Some of God's greatest gifts come in disguise, and she was one of them.

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Evelyn Lechliter
Managing Editor

Jennifer Lechliter
Assistant Editor

Mary Beauvais
Linda Paasonen
Anne Marie Winz
Writers/Editors

Terri Oesterreich
Designer

Tony Metcalf/Salt 1 to 1
Printing

Produced by
Women's Resources Team
Judy Douglass, *Director*
100 Lake Hart Drive #4400
Orlando, FL 32832

407.826.2080
staffwomen@ccci.org