



Links Players

Why Links? - Called and Gifted

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 4:10-11, ESV)

One ongoing debate regarding professional golfers is this: Are elite golfers born with the gift to play, or do they become extraordinary through hard work? As expected, we could ask this same question regarding virtually every other vocational and athletic endeavor.

The question(s) surrounding natural talent (giftedness) versus hard work (sustained effort) is usually categorized as the “nature versus nurture” debate. Are we born with innate skills and thus destined to become what we become, or are we a blank slate and become what we endeavor to achieve?

Most resolve the apparent conflict by suggesting that men and women achieve greatness by recognizing their natural gifts and applying themselves to reach extraordinary heights through study and hard work.

To make this more concrete, we might ask the following question: Could Fred Couples, Davis Love, Justin Thomas, or Collin Morikawa have achieved what they achieved by having one without the other—nature (giftedness) over nurture (development)? Most people would say no.

This discussion is similar when it circles back to the people of God and their various callings and gifts inside and outside the institutional church.

A significant amount of joy awaits those who will exert the effort to embrace the adventure of discovering Christ's callings and giftings in co-laboring with Jesus to expand his kingdom.

Scripture teaches us that the risen Christ has given “gifts to men.” When Christ ascended to the right hand of God the Father, he “gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds, and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry...” (Ephesians 4:11-12).

Notice that these special offices are given to train others for the “work of ministry.” One fascinating observation made by more than a few astute observers is that the church in the West has inverted the idea of what it means to “be a minister.”

The tendency is to outsource the ministry to the clergy (i.e., paid staff). When in Scripture, the fundamental task of the clergy is to equip followers of Christ for the “work of ministry.”

This is yet another aspect of the crucially important topic of gifts. The ascended Christ gives gifts to all his followers (see Romans 12; 1 Cor. 12; et al.). Discovering one's gift and then giving oneself to development in that gift (successes and failures) is one of the genuine joys of following Jesus.

Links Fellowships are established and grown when men and women seek the Lord to know their role in his ever-expanding kingdom by faithfully stewarding their gifts to serve their Redeemer, King, and Friend—Jesus the Christ!

Prayer: Lord Jesus, help me to know my place in your purposes!

READING - 1 Peter 4: 8-11; 1 Corinthians 12: 4-11; Romans 12: 3-8

OPENING QUESTIONS: Discuss among yourselves what you consider your gift to be.

1. 1 Peter 4: 8-11 addresses the reasons, motives, and objectives for which Christ Jesus gave us gifts. Discuss what they are and why these are so important.

2. In 1 Corinthians 12: 4-11, Paul has a significant amount to teach us about gifts: Why are they given? Who is the source/power? Who decides what gift each member receives?

3. What warning regarding our gifts is announced in Romans 12: 3-8? Why do you suppose he is concerned to warn us? Discuss.
