

Skills

Live Like a Christian

Each person trained by a country's educational system gains knowledge of that country's history and current laws. Then, to earn a living and supply the family's needs, each learns skills needed in the community for the benefit of all. Some develop the skills of physical labor while others learn academic skills to use in office work. Some devote themselves to medicine and the care of others, while still others turn to learning and teaching children the skills needed to become adults. The process is a continuing cycle, changing only by increased understanding of God's creation and advancements in technology. On a more critical level, the Gospel of our Lord and Christ is used to learn and teach the skills necessary to become and live like a Christian.

Paul writes the basic principles of living like Christ. ***"Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body ... present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, ... For sin shall not have dominion over you ..."*** (Romans 6:12-14). This language is used in the Law for offering a sacrifice acceptable to God by obeying His commands. But this sacrifice is not an animal, but the individual, ***"present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service"*** (Romans 12:1).

Both Peter and Paul write of the need to use (offer) the "gifts" given to each of us. As they wrote to include us, the gifts the apostles refer to are the abilities and skills all people possess to a greater or lesser degree. They are the same abilities we use to live among others in harmony and contribute to society. As we move into other countries and cultures, we sometimes need to modify our behavior to the customs of that society. When viewed against all the traditions and courtesies of the world's nations, the only standard of acceptable behaviors is the one contained in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Peter admonishes disciples of Christ, scattered over the face of the Earth, to live like Christ. The Holy Spirit delivered some of the things He mentioned to the original audience. But since the gospel has been fully delivered, and is written for our learning, we use our natural abilities to read, learn, and perform these tasks. Peter says, ***"As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace"*** (1 Peter 4:10 ESV). Each person must determine what skill they are blessed with, find it, cultivate it, and use it.

Peter continues in verse 10, ***"If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God."*** Those oracles are contained in the Bible. ***"If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies,"*** do not go beyond or short of the Word in the Bible. ***"That in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever."*** Jesus came to bring the Word of God and teach us how to handle it. By speaking His words to others and showing them how He lived, we are putting Him forward. He is the source and the end of God's plan of salvation, and we do everything ***"looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God"*** (Hebrews 12:2).

Paul used similar language to encourage Christians to develop the potential in their talents and skills, and again, refers to them as gifts. ***"Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality;***

he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness" (Romans 12:6-8). We no longer have the Holy Spirit's gift to prophesy, but we do have the ability to read scripture to others. We can develop our skills to select verses that will teach, encourage, comfort, or admonish ourselves and others. Not everyone can preach the Word, but we can assist and support the arms of those that do. Not all can give aid and care for the sick and injured, but we can help as needed. Not all can teach, but we can help the teachers by listening and supporting the things they explain. We can encourage the encouragers and use our wealth and possessions to help others and spread the gospel. Some people are natural leaders whom others follow eagerly; ensure the example they follow is Christlike. As we work for the Lord using our gifts, we can put on a cheerful face because we are children of God and brethren to the King.

At the end of each day, can we honestly say, "I have used my talents for God?" We can ask, "Did I reflect God and Christ in my actions so that the world sees them and not me?" And then the big question that we do not like to ask. "What can I do to be a better Christian in service to my King?"