

People of **Destiny**

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DISCOVER

Your Gifts and Calling

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How to Make Your
Gifts Work For You

Eager Desire:
A Key to Usefulness

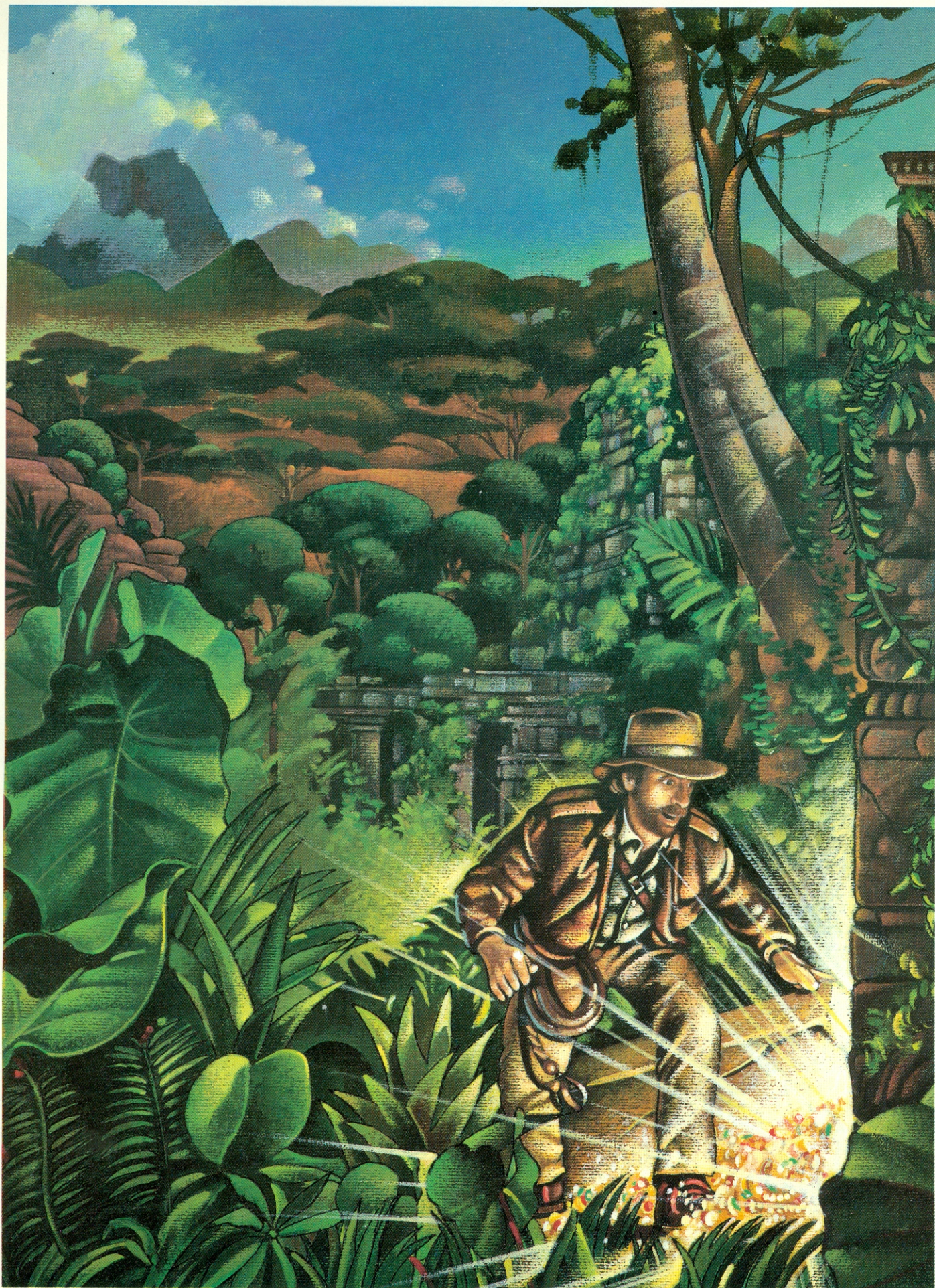
Your Spiritual Calling
is an Everyday Event

Could I be Called
to This Job?

Also: Reaching the World
at Colleetown, U.S.A.

Max Headroom:
Why Should We Care?





LARRY TOMCZAK

Discovering, Developing and Deploying Your Spiritual Gifts

Everybody, please rise to your feet!"

Chuckles mix with sounds of feet shuffling, chair backs thumping, and Bibles and notebooks slapping the floor. I have a reputation for beginning my messages in rather unorthodox ways. (I ask drowsy audiences to stand and jog in place.)

"It's my privilege today," I begin, "to ordain you all into the ministry."

Scattered chuckles cross the room again.

"Many of us were raised to believe that in the church there are two groups of people — the ministers and the pew-warming, preacher-graders. That was never God's intention. He's shattering this passive spectator mentality and challenging us to recapture a biblical understanding of 'every member involvement.' As 'ministers of a new covenant' you have been given 'the ministry of reconciliation.' I hereby ordain each of you to the ministry! You may be seated."

Over the years I have repeated this scene countless times. Though smiles and laughter usually follow this impromptu "ceremony," most Christians know God never intended them to merely warm the bench. I'm not suggesting that every





person is called to function full time in one of the Ephesians 4:11 ministries (apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher). But the Bible is clear in its expectation that every Christian fulfill a ministry in the church through employing the gifts given to each of us by the Holy Spirit. The mission of those called to the often "full time" ministries listed in Ephesians 4 is to enable all of us to find and employ our gifts.

Even as Moses declared to Pharaoh, "Let my people go!", so I believe the Lord similarly addresses any traditions that hinder his people. He desires us to be liberated to serve him fully by discovering, developing and deploying our gifts to the glory of God.

PARTICIPATORS NOT SPECTATORS

The situation in the Church today can be compared to a modern day football game. On the field are twenty-two players in dire need of rest. In the stands are twenty-two thousand people in dire need of exercise. With good reason it's been said: "Christianity is the greatest indoor spectator sport."

No other section of Scripture conveys the idea of our responsibility to be participators, not spectators, as vividly as 1 Corinthians 12. Here Paul compares the Church to a human body in which each part is absolutely essential. He reminds the factious Corinthians that they need each other, implying that without each fulfilling his essential function the body begins to break down. The apostle chides the less-prominent members for their low self-esteem. "If the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body,' it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body."

Then he employs the same humor that's made Gary Larson's "The Far Side" cartoons famous: "If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?"

A hand is much more prominent than a foot. Songs are written about hands and their tender touches; television commercials focus in on smooth hands and beautiful nails; sculpture is done of hands, such as the classic "praying hands." Oh, to be a hand! After all, who ever sings about a foot or places a sculptured foot on their mantle?

Likewise, what about the ear? It can't compete with the eye. Eyes are highlighted in magazines and form the subject of songs and poems. Who ever wrote a song about someone's ears?

Again, who ever celebrates the nose? More often than not it's the object of

derision: "Look at the size of that beak."

Yet, God warns us not to indulge in depreciating any gift, whether it's ours or not.

Why?

Such downgrading causes us to withdraw, rendering us useless and thereby depriving the body of an essential supply.

Even though some members of the body have a more prominent place, we must never allow ourselves to downgrade others or our calling and minimize our "one talent".

Three tiny bones in our ear may seem insignificant, yet without the malleus, stapes and incus we couldn't hear.

Nostril hairs may seem insignificant, yet without this essential filtering plant our breathing would be impaired, and our lungs filled with dangerous impurities.

Few of us give much thought to spittle, yet without it we'd choke on our food.

When temptation comes to belittle an apparently minor gift, remember Dorcas the seamstress in Acts 9. Her gift of "helps" blessed so many that when she died her friends cried so intensely Peter had to resurrect her to end their grief!

The redemptive work that needs to be done in the earth today is not going to be accomplished by individual heroes and charismatic superstars. It is going to be done through a majestically integrated, finely tuned body. The need in this hour is not for one or two flaming prophets or evangelists, but for a living church where every member is a participator — not simply a spectator.

DISCOVERING OUR GIFTS

There are no shortcuts to discovering our unique callings and giftings. Maximum blessing does not follow minimum dedication. God tells us to "eagerly desire spiritual gifts" (1 Cor. 14:1). In other words, discovering and functioning in our giftings is for the passionate — those who are actively seeking, not passively "open."

A.W. Tozer, giant of the faith from the previous generation, put it this way: "The Bible was written in tears, and in tears it yields its richest treasures. God gives nothing to the frivolous man."

We need to "dig in" to the Scripture and other resource materials that can help us understand the different kinds of gifts, their definitions, functions and how to identify the ones operative in our life.

Often we discover our gifts by understanding those functions that we naturally perform. For example, the gift of "teaching"

refers to the unique, God-given ability to instruct others effectively in the knowledge and ways of God. A person graced with this gift manifests certain characteristics: he enjoys study and researching (consulting commentaries and dictionaries); presents his messages in a clear, well-ordered and thorough manner; and usually likes to illustrate points with biblical incidents.

Or a person with the gift of "mercy" — the special ability to feel genuine empathy and compassion for others and translate it into cheerfully-done deeds to encourage and alleviate suffering. Those endowed with this gift usually exhibit great patience and

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perform.**

sensitivity in dealing with others. They demonstrate an ability to comfort those in distress and offer genuine understanding and forgiveness to those who've stumbled and need help getting back up.

Christians intent on fulfilling their destiny are wise to pursue serious study of all the gifts of the Spirit. (We've listed brief descriptions of most of the gifts mentioned in the Bible in boxes throughout this section of the magazine.) Remember: the value of our life as a Christian will be determined by the degree to which we discover and use that which God has given us.

DEVELOPING AND DEPLOYING OUR GIFTS

Spiritual gifts are not optional toys but essential tools for building the Church and reaching the lost. If we're not using our gifts, we are actually living below the revealed will of God for our life!

So where do we begin?

1. *Cultivate a strong personal relationship with the Lord.*

There is no substitute for a life of close,

intimate communion with God. It is out of this abiding relationship that we come to know him and his ways. Isn't it interesting that the Book of Acts begins "O Theophilus" (lover of God) and not "O Theologian" (student of God)? This is not to discredit or downplay doctrinal study, which is absolutely essential, but to emphasize that our greatest need is to know and love God intimately and enjoy an ever-increasing revelation of him.

2. *Find your place in a church that seeks to appropriate the power, purity and pattern of living demonstrated in the New Testament — a place where spiritual gifts are respected and expected — from everyone.*

Many people are realizing today that in order to function in their place in Christ's body, they need to be involved in a local

church where provision is made for each member to serve in ministry and the expression of his or her individual gifts. If all one does is sit in a building once or twice a week, "fellowshipping with the back of some guy's neck," some adjustments are in order.

3. *Decide to forfeit your "right" to passive non-involvement.*

A genuine convert not only gives up his wrongs but also his rights. That means an end to life on our own terms. Therefore, as one terminates his life as a "cruisamatic" to take his place in a local church, the next step is a mental resolution to resist tendencies toward passivity and so to begin serving. This is why the list of gifts of the Spirit in Romans 12 is preceded by a directive to "offer our bodies as living sacrifices" (v.1).

As we survey our opportunities to give of

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ourselves faithfully in practical service, we'll learn a principle that permeates all of Scripture: Faithfulness leads to fruitfulness.

What are some areas of ministry to consider in a local church?

- ▶ counseling
- ▶ intercessory prayer
- ▶ evangelism
- ▶ administration
- ▶ music and worship leading
- ▶ teaching
- ▶ training children
- ▶ hospitality
- ▶ practical helps
- ▶ ministry to the elderly, sick or imprisoned
- ▶ secretarial helps
- ▶ audio-visual
- ▶ ushering and greeting
- ▶ drama
- ▶ graphics and art work
- ▶ photography
- ▶ writing
- ▶ bookkeeping
- ▶ ministry to the oppressed and downtrodden

When people ask me how I got started in ministry, I tell them that I did not begin preaching to masses, planting churches or

editing a national magazine. I started by developing a servant's heart through areas of service God brought my way. Proving myself faithful in the three areas Jesus outlined in Luke 16:10-12 — the "little things," finances and serving others — eventually led to promotion. I took down chairs after our meetings for almost a year (while my tummy cried out for a 'Big Mac' and fellowship with the brethren who had long since departed!). I shared my faith with unbelievers whenever natural opportunities arose and prepared short "talks" to give to elementary and junior high students on relevant subjects that got them thinking about where they were headed in life.

The greatest preacher of this century, Billy Graham, didn't start out a polished orator. He practiced his messages by preaching to alligators to develop his confidence and communication skills!

4. Determine to pay the price

When Paul told Timothy to train himself to fulfill his calling in God, he used the word from which we get "gymnastics." He was literally saying "Gymnaze yourself" to develop character and giftings in God. "Train yourself to be godly" (1 Tim. 4:7), Paul exhorted the young man. "Do not

neglect your gift . . . Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them . . . Persevere in them . . . (1 Tim. 4:14-16).

5. Be willing to step out and fail

Proverbs 24:16 reveals, "The righteous man falls seven times yet rises again."

There come times in God where we have to draw on his grace, run headlong into our fears, and step out even if we botch it. God is far more pleased with those who step out and fail than with those who stay back and do nothing for fear of failure. God can vindicate our mistakes! This is not to commend recklessness, but to see the necessity of bold risk taking if we're to grow in our calling.

Thomas Edison had over ten-thousand failures before he finally invented the electric light. His response to an assistant who bemoaned another failure? "My good man, that's not a mistake, that's an education!"

When Billy Graham was having his first Madison Square Garden Crusade, he told Richard Halverson, now chaplain of the U.S. Senate, he was fearful of addressing a small luncheon of thirty-five businessmen. Visibly nervous, he told Dick, "I'm scared to death to talk to those guys. I can stand in front of the [Madison Square] Garden, but I don't know what to do in front of thirty-five men."

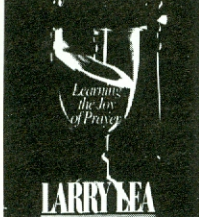
Instead of retreating, Billy drew upon the grace of God, stepped out in faith and eventually became the master of this challenge as well.

Truly, there has never been a day like this day in the history of the Church. After centuries of ignorance and paralysis in the body of Christ, the Holy Spirit is working at an accelerated pace to prepare the Bride for the return of her Bridegroom. God's original intention of a people who move in the gifts as participators and not mere spectators is becoming more of a reality with each passing day. As we respond to what the Spirit is saying, we'll see before our very eyes the restoration of the sleeping giant known as the Church. Then when we read in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 that Jesus "descends from heaven with a shout," we'll know what it is that he sees upon his return that causes such excitement to explode from his heart! □



Larry Tomczak leads the People of Destiny International team in establishing and overseeing churches throughout the United States. The PDI team also seeks to help bring Christians to fulfill their calling in God through *People of Destiny Magazine*, which Larry edits, as well as through conferences, tapes and books. Larry's most recent book is *Divine Appointments: Making Every Day A Masterpiece for God*. Larry, his wife Doris and their four children make their home in Gaithersburg, Maryland, a suburb of Washington, D.C.

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