

**SECULAR WORK – AND SPIRITUAL GIFTS****Robert J. Tamasy**

What are your greatest strengths in the workplace? In other words, how would you describe the unique mix of talents, abilities and experience you have to offer to your company or organization?

Sometimes we refer to these as “gifts,” and might comment that someone is particularly “gifted” in certain areas, such as leadership, administration, marketing, handling finances, investing, team building, communicating, and many other functions necessary for success in the marketplace.

In considering our own traits, we often view them in terms of our own success – being able to earn a desired pay raise, meriting a promotion, receiving professional recognition, or achieving many other personal goals. But how often have you thought that perhaps your unique gifts are not primarily for your benefit, but for others?

A friend pointed this out during a recent conversation. Being a writer and editor, I enjoy my craft – working with words to communicate ideas, concepts and principles I have found to be important and meaningful. I receive a measure of pleasure and satisfaction from the work I do. But ultimately, if what I have to convey through the written word is not shared with others, or found by them to be of value, in reality I am wasting my time.

Years ago I heard a man recite a brief poem that made a lot of sense: *“A bell is not a bell until it is rung; a song is not a song until it is sung; now love was not given in your heart to stay – for love is not love until you give it away.”*

In a similar manner, we might say a personal gift we possess is not truly a “gift” until we give it away for the benefit of others. We might derive some results from the use of our gifts, but ultimately we have them to serve our companies, our clients and customers, shareholders and others.

In the Bible we find a discussion of “spiritual gifts,” traits such as evangelism, faith, wisdom, healing, teaching and others. Each is given *“for the common good”* (1 Corinthians 12:7). The passage then proceeds to compare these separate gifts with the individual parts of the human body, noting they are not intended to function independently but rather in concert with other organs.

*“If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts of the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.... As it is, there are many parts, but one body”* (1 Corinthians 12:17-19).

We are sometimes tempted to take special pride in our distinctive talents and abilities. We must never forget, however, our success depends on the support of others with different capabilities. And we are urged to appreciate the contributions of others, just as we would hope they recognize our own. *“But God has combined the members of the body...so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other”* (1 Corinthians 12:24-25).

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### **Reflection/Discussion Questions**

1. Answer the questions that are asked at the opening of this "Monday Manna": What are your greatest strengths in the workplace? How would you describe the unique mix of talents, abilities and experience you have to offer to your company or organization??
2. Have you tended to regard these abilities and traits as being primarily for your benefit, for your own personal use and advancement in your career? Explain your answer.
3. What difference does it make – or should it make – when you consider that the "gifts" you utilize and demonstrate on the job are intended first and foremost to benefit others rather than for you to achieve your own objectives?
4. The Bible states our respective talents, abilities and gifts – professionally as well as spiritually – come from God. What does that mean to you?

If you would like to look at or discuss other portions of the Bible that relate to this topic, consider the following brief sampling of passages:

Proverbs 19:20; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; 1 Corinthians 12:1-31; Philippians 2:1-4