

Some pondering has lead me to conclude that the existing title is best, except for the fact that the words “Gifts and Growth” do not convey as immediately as a book seller would like the rather exciting ideas between the covers. You have to read the subtitle to understand what the book is about. To fix that, I tried adding the words “The link between”, and found the meaning clearer, but the title too long ...

The link between  
**GIFTS**  
and **Growth**

How Discovering People’s Gifts  
Nurtures Evangelism

THE WYCLIFFE BOOKLETS  
ON EVANGELISM #3

Gifts and  
Growth



How Discovering  
People’s Gifts  
Nurtures Evangelism

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#### THE WYCLIFFE BOOKLETS ON EVANGELISM

- #1 PREACHING THE CHURCH'S MISSION *Sermons Towards Self-Understanding*
- #2 JUST THE BASICS *Teaching Christian Faith to Beginners*
- #3 GIFTS AND GROWTH *How Discovering People's Gifts Nurtures Evangelism*

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BILLY GRAHAM'S MINISTRY has spanned well over fifty years and he is now without doubt the world's best-known evangelist. Having preached to millions worldwide, he has seen people from every corner of the earth come to faith. His passionate gifts as a communicator of the Gospel message have been used by God to lead many thousands to commit their lives to following Jesus. Considering this man's incredible gifts as an evangelist, my question is this: in a perfect world, would all Christians be just like Billy Graham?

The question sounds silly, doesn't it? We know that God's purpose is to shape us, not into the image of Billy Graham, or St. Paul, or Mother Theresa, or any other Christian, however wonderful, but into the image of Jesus. Yet, when many Christians hear the word "evangelism" they often feel guilty, because they mistakenly think that in order to be a "good Christian" they really should be a gifted evangelist.

While there is scant scriptural support for the idea that God has shaped everyone be an evangelist, there is plenty for the idea that God has shaped the Church to be a dynamic evangelizing community, and considers this one of its central purposes, as well as an important indicator of its health. God wants churches to be *compelling* communities of faith. One way we can become such communities is by helping all members discern and use their particular God-given gifts. All of these gifts (including those of the evangelists among us) are important in

*In a perfect world would all Christians be just like Billy Graham?*

*All the gifts of God are important in engaging seekers.*

engaging seekers, sharing the gospel message with them, helping establish them in the Christian faith, and equipping them to serve God by using their own particular gifts.

## How Does Scripture Describe a Healthy Community of Faith?

### SUPERNATURALLY COMPELLING

The Book of Acts tells us much about what the first Christian communities were like, revealing their struggles as well as their strengths. In Acts 2:42-47 we read about a community in

which people met regularly together and cared deeply for each other, meeting not only each other's spiritual needs, but intellectual, emotional and physical needs as well. The result was a truly compelling community of faith which experienced rapid growth.

This passage also reveals a key principle related to evangelism: when the Church is responsive to God's call to be faithful, God himself brings growth. At the heart of such faithfulness is a belief in the apostles' teachings about the risen Lord Jesus Christ, a vibrant shared life of worship, and discernment and use of what each person has to offer.

*Day by day, the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.*

### AMAZINGLY GIFTED

There are three key passages in the New Testament that describe the remarkable variety of gifts God gives to the community of faith.

In 1 Corinthians 12:7-10 we read of many different manifestations of the Spirit, all of them given "for the common good." Whether the gift is wisdom, a message of knowledge, faith, healing, special powers, prophecy, discernment, or new languages and their interpretation, Paul reminds us that

there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are varieties of service, but the same Lord. There are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone.

God himself is the source of this amazing variety of gifts available to the Church. To neglect them is to miss out on powerful evidence of God's Spirit at work: something of great encouragement to believers, and great interest to seekers.

Ephesians 4:11-13 contains another list of gifts demonstrated in the faith community. These relate to a variety of leadership roles, including prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. These are given to the Church

*It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers ...*

to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the

faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.

Clearly, if the community of faith is to reach maturity, its members need to discern and implement all of these gifts. And they *need* to reach such maturity if they want to engage, evangelize and establish in the faith those who are seeking.

Finally, Romans 12:6-8 contains another list of gifts through which God wants to strengthen the Church. Whether

*Serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.*

prophecy, service, teaching, encouraging, leadership, showing mercy, or contributing to the needs of others, Paul reminds the community that “we have gifts that differ according to the grace given us” and that each person should be using whatever gifts they have been given so that the entire community of faith can be strengthened. Paul, a passionate evangelist, recognized the amazing giftedness of the Church and the

link between the full use of those gifts and the effective spreading of the Gospel message.

#### INVOLVING EVERYBODY

It is important to note that none of these passages suggests that only the primary leader, or a select few people in the community of faith, are given gifts that equip them for service. Rather, the clear expectation is that *everyone* is given gifts. Everyone’s gifts are important in revealing God’s Spirit at work, in the

spiritual maturing of the community, and in engaging and establishing seekers in the faith.

One of the clearest statements of this expectation is found in 1 Peter 4:10, which says, “Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.” Peter, like Paul, understood that, in order to serve God faithfully, all believers needed to discover and use their gifts. When that happens, the body of Christ most fully reflects the complex and varied image of our infinitely gifted God. And that is the most compelling message of all to seekers.

## The Role of Different Gifts in Building an Evangelizing Community

Any discussion of gifts within the Church needs to recognize that we are talking about people. In one way, it is people, in all their diversity, who are themselves the gifts to the believing community, bringing with them various talents, interests, life experiences, personalities and spiritual strengths. For this reason our exploration of the role of gifts in building a healthy evangelizing community will examine three areas of gifting: (a) Spiritual Gifts, (b) Life Gifts and (c) Personality Gifts. These three areas often demonstrate considerable overlap. For example, someone whose personality favours a systematic approach to sharing new information with others, and who has developed the valuable life gift of public speaking, may also exhibit the spiritual gift of teaching or evangelism.

Of course, all of these areas of gifting have their source in God as our maker, so in one sense to label some gifts as “spiritual” gifts is misleading. However, we will still use this descriptor to refer to those gifts of the Holy Spirit listed in scripture that are given to build up the Church. We will then take a look at how a wide variety of life gifts and the gift of different personalities can be used to build an evangelizing community.

Our framework for discussing gifts is based on a gift discovery program called *LifeKeys*<sup>1</sup>, one of several published programs available to help churches discern and grow into their full

ministry potential. First, we will look at the role of specific gifts in building an evangelizing community:

### A. Spiritual Gifts

Spiritual Gifts are particular gifts of empowerment given by the Holy Spirit to build up the Church. We will look specifically at nineteen of these gifts mentioned in the New Testament, by dividing them into four broad categories. We will then examine how each of these four categories of gift can be useful in developing an evangelizing community.

#### 1. GIFTS OF THE HEART

These gifts include *hospitality, mercy, helps, faith* and *giving*. Grounded in an assurance of God’s sovereignty, and a recognition of what he wants accomplished in a specific situation, people with these gifts offer practical acts of love. Whether this means inviting newcomers over for a barbecue, helping an elderly neighbour with their snow shoveling, praying for someone who is sick, or donating time at a local shelter, these gifts are “front line gifts” that demonstrate the love of God to people in tangible ways.

In one congregation, I know a particular woman who intentionally watches for newcomers as they enter the church and then invites them to sit with her. This small act of welcome was

especially important to a woman who was new to the area and had come alone. This single gesture of kindness, linked to the gift of *hospitality*, was enough to make her want to come back.

Another couple from the same church took some baked goods over to a neighbour whose wife had just died of cancer. When they realized that he had no family nearby, they helped him to make some of the funeral arrangements, and gave him information about a grief support group. As a result of their gifts of *mercy* and *helps*, the love of Christ was demonstrated to him at a time when he needed it most. In addition, their friendship with him was strengthened to the point that they also felt comfortable inviting him to come to church with them a few Sundays later.

In both cases, meaningful connections were made with people who might otherwise have gone unnoticed. Such gifts are also evident in those who love to prepare the food for an Alpha supper, serve at Sunday's Coffee Hour, donate blankets to a Ukrainian orphanage, or change the oil in a single parent's car. Gifts of the heart demonstrate that God does indeed work through the hands and feet of everyday believers. And, in a society in which people are increasingly alone and disconnected, such practical acts of love can strongly stimulate seekers to want to find out more about the faith that lies behind such kindness.

## 2. GIFTS OF DIRECTION

Gifts of direction include *leadership*, *administration*, *shepherding*, and *encouraging*, and are the “behind-the-scene strategy gifts” of an evangelizing community. These gifts involve the big-picture ability to discern God's direction and motivate people to get involved in God's work, as well as the small-picture ability to understand the details involved in accomplishing that work. People with such gifts may focus on the life of a parish (for example, helping to develop a new mission statement), or they may focus on the life of individuals (for example, helping them discern God's leading in their business life).

These gifts are critical in maintaining a healthy direction in the Church, reminding the community of faith, corporately and individually, that as Christians we do not live for ourselves, but live to know and serve God, and to share the message of his love with those who do not yet know him. Gifts of direction also translate this broader vision for the body of Christ into a plan for concrete action.

In terms of building an evangelizing community, such gifts are evident in those who enjoy planning social events that engage seekers on a fun level, or educational programs that address the types of spiritual questions seekers are asking. These gifts may result in organizing an outreach to immigrant families, or preparing a divorce care program, depending on the needs of the surrounding community. Gifts of direction are crucial for the church to discern how best to engage seekers and then nurture them in the faith.

### 3. GIFTS OF PROCLAMATION

These gifts include *apostleship*, *evangelism*, *teaching*, *discernment*, *knowledge*, *prophecy* and *wisdom*. They are the gifts people most strongly identify with the Church's commission to spread the good news of Jesus Christ because they tend to be the "in-the-spotlight gifts." People with these gifts are crucial in an evangelizing community because they can offer a clear articulation of the Gospel and of how that message applies to people's lives today.

Someone with a gift of *apostleship* is often drawn to engaging seekers in a cross-cultural or pluralistic setting. Such a person might offer to be a guest speaker in a High School World Religions course. Someone with the gift of *evangelism* has the ability to share the Gospel message in a clear and compelling manner. This may mean sharing with a neighbour why they belong to a church, or it could mean speaking at a youth retreat about why they believe in God.

Someone gifted in *teaching* understands how to communicate effectively truths about the faith and how they are applied in people's lives. Such a person may be just the person to lead a Seekers and Skeptics Course or teach a baptism preparation program. A gift of *knowledge* enables people to understand, organize and effectively use information for Gospel purposes. This person may be great at researching parenting issues in our culture, and then convening a special forum on parenting to which the broader community could be invited.

Someone with a gift of *prophecy* is able to clearly articulate

not only the current state of affairs related to God's truths, but also sees clearly how God is calling for change. Such a person may challenge the church community to become more active in meaningful ministries that connect with the poor and marginalized. People gifted with *wisdom* understand and proclaim the ways in which biblical truths and theological concepts apply to complex or paradoxical problems and situations. A person with this gift may, for instance, help a parish handle the tensions that can arise in an evangelizing community between "old-timers" and "newcomers."

### 4. GIFTS OF INSPIRATION

These gifts include *healing*, *miracles*, *tongues* and *interpretation of tongues*, sometimes viewed as "the signs and wonders gifts" because of their especially evident supernatural nature. Along with the rapid rise and spread of Pentecostalism throughout the 20th century came renewed interest and activity across a wide variety of Christian denominations in these biblical and apostolic practices of the Christian faith. Although the Church in the west has been heavily focused on the rational explanation and appropriation of Christianity, in many parts of the world Church growth and evangelism are directly linked to signs and wonders that resonate perfectly with the amazing stories of such occurrences found in the New Testament.

The Church has given renewed recognition of, and teaching about, these gifts through groups such as the Anglican



Renewal Movement, through such programs as Alpha, and through such practices as training lay people in the ministry of prayer and anointing with oil for healing. While sometimes prone to abuse or misuse due to their extraordinary nature, these gifts can also be particularly dynamic in attracting seekers to the faith because they point so clearly to God's presence and work. Maybe particularly in our postmodern context, in which seekers are often openly seeking an experience of God, these gifts of inspiration play an important role in shaping compelling communities of faith.

## B. Life Gifts

While Spiritual Gifts are given by the Holy Spirit specifically to Christians to empower the Church, Life Gifts are talents and inclinations that are given by God to each and every human being. Life Gifts are the things a person really enjoys doing simply by virtue of who God has made them to be. While they will not necessarily include all the things we have become skilled or competent in through practice, they are the things we truly like to do because they are matched to our temperament and interests.

The *Amplified Version* of Proverbs 22:6 says, "Train up a child in the way he should go [and in keeping with his individual gift or bent], and when he is old he will not depart from it." While this verse is often assumed to emphasize training a

child to adhere to prescribed rules and principles, the *Amplified Version* cited here emphasizes training a child to develop according to their God-given gifts. This meaning, which points to our amazing diversity and giftedness as God's children, has often been overlooked.

If only we could all discover and do those things we were best designed to do, life would be much more fulfilling. And what about the community of faith? Wouldn't it be great if people were helped to identify their natural Life Gifts and use these in the work of God's kingdom?

*LifeKeys* base their framework for exploring Life Gifts on the work of John Holland, who conducted research into career choices.<sup>2</sup> Holland suggested that there were six areas of preference related to work and work environments based on people's interests. He labeled these: *Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional*, and found that although people may have at least some interest in each of these areas, their interests usually cluster around two or three of the six. For the purposes of our discussion, we will briefly describe the gifts associated with each of these types, and relate how a community of faith can be enriched and empowered to reach out with the Gospel by helping people discover and use their Life Gifts.

### 1. REALISTIC LIFE GIFTS

People with realistic Life Gifts may be described as "hands-on," "mechanically inclined," "outdoorsy," and "athletic." They

generally enjoy building and fixing things, and prefer discussing realistic applications as opposed to abstract concepts. Such people frequently underestimate the value of their gifts because they wrongly assume that everyone can do the things they do. (These are the sort of people who will exclaim, “Why would anyone *hire* someone to wire the basement for them?”) The Life Gifts of this group include mechanical aptitude, manual dexterity, physical co-ordination, organization of necessary supplies, emotional stability, and skills in equipment operation.

The Church needs people with these Life Gifts because they are the ones who make sure the necessary physical environment and equipment is operating the way it should. You can plan the best Seekers and Skeptics Course in the world, but if the building has no heat, the lights don’t work, the data projector has a burned-out bulb, and the photocopier has ruined the handouts, the course is not going to amount to much. A church can be full of friendly people but if the lawn is full of weeds, the church sign hasn’t been painted in fifteen years, and the nursery has a broken doorframe, newcomers are likely to be turned off, even if they can’t pinpoint what they found unwelcoming about the place. And on a personal level, an offer to help fix a neighbour’s broken lawn mower may be just the way to develop the trust that can lead to exploration of questions of faith.

Most of the time the realistic Life Gifts help to prepare and tend the soil in which the seeds of the gospel can then be planted. Whether being used to maintain the church buildings and

equipment, or in acts of kindness to the less mechanically gifted, these Life Gifts are an important part of an evangelizing community.

## 2. INVESTIGATIVE LIFE GIFTS

These Life Gifts include inventing, researching, conceptualizing, problem solving, theorizing and synthesizing information. People with these gifts often enjoy working on their own to solve puzzles and analyze things. They may be described by others as “intellectual,” “naturally curious,” “rational,” and “introspective.” Such people enjoy the world of information, ideas, theories and concepts. They relish finding connections and analyzing systems.

In order to become a compelling community of faith, people with investigative Life Gifts need to be free to use their gifts to do such things as: research trends in the surrounding community, strategize about what questions seekers may be asking, dream about how new technologies can be used in ministry, spearhead long-range outreach planning efforts, or articulate explanations to various apologetic problems.

Full use of their gifts will keep the programs of a parish fresh and responsive to the changing social and technological environment. Without them parishes can get locked into programs and systems that once worked well, but have grown overworked and tired. Since they excel at research, analysis and problem-solving, such people are key to a healthy parish’s self-evaluation and visioning.

### 3. ARTISTIC LIFE GIFTS

People with these gifts are often described as creative, artsy, and imaginative free spirits. Their Life Gifts include strengths in the performing and visual arts such as acting, writing, painting, sculpting, photography, and craftwork. Such people often also display a proficiency in language skills, and can have a keen sense of spatial concepts. Being highly creative in their use of sight, sound and touch to convey meaning, they are often quite adept at interpersonal dynamics.

Every compelling community of faith needs people with artistic Life Gifts because they enrich us with drama, music, and artwork. They often envision artistic ways to convey ideas and feelings, enhancing worship as well as bringing beauty to otherwise stark church buildings. In short, their gifts can be used by God to attract and engage seekers by stimulating their senses.

It may surprise you to know just how often people hear God's call through a challenging song, a beautiful tapestry, a simple drama, or even a stained-glass window. In our present postmodern, post-literate culture there is evidence that people are becoming more attuned to the arts as a primary means of learning about and experiencing new things—including God. This means that the ministry of leading an excellent drama team, or performing a beautiful liturgical dance, will be just as important in term of engaging seekers as teaching a Newcomers' Class.

### 4. SOCIAL LIFE GIFTS

People gifted in this area are often described as being especially helpful, gregarious, understanding, and co-operative. They have strong people-skills, freely offering others a listening ear and assistance, and frequently choosing team work over situations in which they would work alone. Their Life Gifts include: teaching, facilitating, counseling, informing, being empathetic, and having keen discernment of motives and values. These are the true team builders and team players in the faith community.

Such people are crucial to the health of an evangelizing community because they genuinely enjoy other people and so are great at building a sense of community. Often such people have effective ministries as lay pastoral visitors, small group leaders, or are the organizers behind social gatherings in a parish. When their gifts are used with the particular goal of connecting with seekers, they may plan social events especially suitable for parishioners to invite friends and neighbours to. On a more individual basis, they may serve well as parish sponsors for new couples requesting baptism for their child, or marriage mentors for couples planning a wedding.

Today, many of us live in urban centres in which we are surrounded by people but have little sense of community. Many are starving for a sense of belonging. For this reason those in the Christian community who are blessed with social Life Gifts have an important role to play in building authentic

community in a parish, and in helping extend that sense of belonging and shared identity to those still on the outside.

## 5. ENTERPRISING LIFE GIFTS

These gifts include public speaking, selling, persuading, managing, negotiating and leading. People with these Life Gifts are often described as self-confident, persuasive, outgoing risk-takers. They enjoy promoting new ideas, often in a challenging and competitive context. They are comfortable in an “up front” role that involves high visibility and they frequently have a fast-paced approach to life. Such people set ambitious goals and are skilled at persuading others to join them in their mission.

Enterprising Life Gifts are crucial to an evangelizing community because they are especially suited for rallying a faith community for new growth. Whether this means a building program to allow more seating, a church plant in a new subdivision, or an outreach program that will connect with seekers, people with these gifts are happiest when they are involved in leading in an ambitious challenge of some sort. We need them to keep the rest of us from getting too comfortable and complacent!

It has been clearly demonstrated that every organization has a natural life span that includes birth, growth, plateau, decline and death. In order to alter this natural process, faith communities need to embrace new opportunities for growth and change, preferably taking on new challenges when they are still in the growth or plateau stage. Once serious decline has set

into a faith community, it may not have the critical mass of people and energy necessary for such a new challenge. When we help people with enterprising Life Gifts identify those gifts and then use them in the Church, we kick-start a natural process of new birth and growth.

## 6. CONVENTIONAL LIFE GIFTS<sup>3</sup>

These gifts include organizing, systematizing, evaluating, goal and priority setting, and attending to details. People with these gifts may be thought of as practical, methodical, efficient and orderly. They often have a strong sense of good stewardship and are persistent and reliable. In many ways they are the strong backbone of an organization. They have a clear idea of the goals and of the detail work that is required to meet the goals. And, even better, they like being involved in that detail work.

People with these administrative Life Gifts play an important role in an evangelizing community because they are detail people who make sure good records are kept, measurable goals are recorded, schedules coordinated, and deadlines met. Their skills can be crucial in setting up the practical systems that keep track of newcomers and make sure they are integrated into the community of faith. People with these gifts may be the best ones to evaluate the systems in place in a parish to connect with and nurture seekers. Good management and administration are highly valued by people who are considering giving their financial support to a church. People with Conventional Life Gifts make sure that resources, whether people or

finances, are handled well, and by doing so they contribute to building a healthy faith community.

## C. Gifts of Personality, Passion and Values

Besides Spiritual Gifts and Life Gifts, people also bring their particular personalities, passions and values into a community of faith. All of these are gifts that can enable a church to be more effective in evangelism. When people better understand their own personality, passions and values, they know themselves more deeply and so recognize how they can be used in the work of God's kingdom. A richly varied community of faith is best able to connect with seekers, who are also richly varied in personality, passions and values.

Personality is that package of preferences and tendencies that shapes our behaviour and affects how we approach life. Personality types are often differentiated by examining such factors as: what situations energize a person? what is their preferred way of taking in information? how do they make decisions? and how do they make sense of the world around them? Are we energized by a dinner party, or by having some down time with a good book? Do we like to plan out our day in detail, or go with the flow? When it comes to learning and problem solving strategies, are we detail people or big-picture types?

No matter what type of personality you are, there are people outside the church who share your type, and that means you have a built-in connection. A church full of extraverts is not going to have much appeal to a highly introverted newcomer. A seeker who is highly analytical and logical may feel out of place in a community comprised of people who are drawn to the subjective and the emotional. We need a balance of personality types to allow seekers a measure of comfort as they explore the faith.

Similarly, our passions (that is, those issues, activities or purposes that bring us joy) can be connecting points with people outside the community of faith. For instance, people both inside and outside of the faith community can have a passion for gardening, woodwork, crafts, scrap-booking, photography, golf or jazz. One church I know recently put together a jazz trio of people in their church with that passion. Once a month they play at a local coffee shop, at which they make connections with fellow jazz lovers in the broader community. In another parish, a group of new moms hosted a scrap-booking event at the church, to which members could invite friends or neighbours. These sorts of events are often the starting point for new relationships that eventually blossom into friendships. Such friendships are often the fertile ground in which people feel safe enough to explore the deep questions of life, including questions about faith.

Apart from hobbies and sports, people in our parishes may have passions around key social issues such as caring for the environment or building housing for the poor. When

Christians live out these passions by getting involved in groups like Habitat for Humanity, Amnesty International or the World Wildlife Federation, they not only form relationships with others sharing these passions, but they also demonstrate the important link between faith and works. This link in itself can be a compelling connecting point for some seekers.

Finally, along with personality traits and passions, the values that people in our churches hold are also possible connecting points with people outside the church. For example, the importance of having time together as a family is often a value shared by people both inside and outside the faith community. This may mean that a day-long workshop or seminar on street-proofing our kids, talking with teens about drugs, or building family memories, can be an “easy access” event that help seekers first explore the community of faith.

Today, many secular people are interested in how faith applies to everyday life. They are willing to consider different avenues of spirituality, especially if they find one that speaks to them where they are at. If we can impart to them how widely-held values such as authenticity, integrity, and peace relate to a life of Christian faith, we may be able to make connections that were previously absent.

## How to Help People Discern Their Gifts

The first step toward helping people discern and use their gifts to build an evangelizing community is for the leaders to examine honestly their commitment to developing people, as opposed to simply caring for people. Our churches need to be asking hard questions like:

- ♦ Do we honestly believe that God has placed within our community many different gifts that he wants discovered, developed and used?
- ♦ Are those currently in leadership willing to share the responsibility of ministry with a broad range of people in the church?
- ♦ Are the members of our community of faith aware of and excited by God’s call to offer their gifts in the work of his Kingdom?

The second step in helping people discover and use their many gifts is for the leaders to make a conscious decision to use the necessary time, effort and money to do this. There are several tools available to help people become more aware of the gifts God has given them. *LifeKeys* is one of the most comprehensive programs available because it explores Life Gifts, spiritual gifts, personality types, values and passions. Comprised of

individual participant workbooks, leader guides, and prepared visual aids, it can be offered in eight weekly evening sessions or as a full two-day seminar.

Periodically there are training seminars offered in Minneapolis, Minnesota, to equip leaders to present the *LifeKeys* program.<sup>4</sup> While this leadership training is highly recommended for starting the program in a parish, if a parish does not have the resources to send someone for such a seminar, they should still be able to run the program if they read carefully through all the materials, including the accompanying textbook. A special section for leaders in this text outlines the necessary components of a leadership team, the various steps involved in offering *LifeKeys* in a parish, as well as detailed suggestions about the content and running of each part of the course.

Of course there are also other published inventories of spiritual gifts which may be useful to parishes. Many of these can either be explored on the world-wide web or through Christian book distributors. If the program you choose does not include a component that examines personality type, I would also suggest that you arrange for the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) to be administered in your parish.<sup>5</sup>

## What to Expect When People are Empowered Using Their Gifts

Both benefits and challenges arise from helping people discern and use their various gifts. The most obvious benefit is that more people are mobilized to be active in ministries to which they are suited, and this in turn will result in more effective sharing of the good news of Jesus Christ. As we have already explored, everyone's gifts are important in shaping a church into a compelling community of faith, one that is active in engaging seekers, sharing the Gospel with them, establishing them in the faith, and equipping them to use their own gifts in ministry.

A second benefit is that, as more people use their gifts in ministry, those in current leadership roles are more free to focus on those areas that they too are most gifted in. Although developing people is just as time-consuming as caring for people, the end result is a healthier community in which the task of caring is shared by many. When everyone in the community is using their gifts, clergy and other leaders feel more supported and are less pressured to be "all things to all people."

One challenge associated with helping people discern and use their gifts is that often this reflects a change in direction, and change always brings an element of discomfort. Particularly in parishes that have been operating out of a model in which their clergy are there to take care of them, this

new direction can seem quite threatening to members. For this reason, it is best for those in leadership to lay solid groundwork to prepare for such a change. This will involve first teaching key leaders in the parish about God's call to the Church to reach out with the Gospel message and the importance of lay ministry. It will likely also mean leading the parish through a process of evaluation and visioning. And it should entail teaching about both the discomforts and new possibilities associated with change.

A second challenge that arises from people discovering and using their gifts is that it will inevitably introduce more chaos into the life of a parish. This is largely due to the "bottom up" model associated with lots of people discovering and exercising their gifts in new ministries, developing new ideas and wanting to try new approaches. This challenge is most effectively met by having clear policies and procedures around the development of new ministries, which should involve discernment and confirmation by the leadership of the church. Due to the inherent brokenness of all of us, this discernment and confirmation is crucial, in order to guard against misuse of the gifts people have, or imbalanced use of gifts in the church.

## Conclusion

Do we all need to be like Billy Graham for effective evangelism to occur today? No, but all of us do need to discover, develop and use the gifts God has given us, with the goal of together

building an effective evangelizing community. All our gifts play an important role in sharing the good news of what God has done, and is doing, in Jesus Christ. Romans 12:1 challenges us to "present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." May we be faithful in offering all our gifts to God, for his praise and glory.



## Notes

1. J. Kise, D. Stark, & S. Krebs Hirsh, *LifeKeys* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1996). Principles from this work are gratefully used with the permission of Bethany House. For more information see [www.bethanyhouse.com](http://www.bethanyhouse.com) and [www.lifekeys.com](http://www.lifekeys.com).
2. *LifeKeys*, 29-59.
3. The term “conventional” is sometimes used in a derogatory way: that is not the intention in the *LifeKeys* system.
4. Check for a list of these on the *LifeKeys* website: [www.lifekeys.com](http://www.lifekeys.com).
5. People qualified to administer MBTI can be referred to by most community educational programs or by contacting the publisher of the MBTI, Consulting Psychologists Press, at 800-624-1765.