

The Amazing Work of Spokes

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Romans 12:4-8 NIVO

⁴ Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. ⁷ If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; ⁸ if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

1. Spokes keep us rolling.

Spokes were invented to enable wheels to be lighter and faster. Solid wheels were very heavy. They required greater effort to move. They made transportation better, but they were still very cumbersome.

Spokes were invented it is believed about 2,500 BC.

The chariot was the fastest cart made. It was designed in the Caucasus regions (Black Sea). They were first introduced to Greece and then made their way down into Egypt and other countries. We know that the Egyptians had chariots in 1450 when they were lost in the sea crossing during the Exodus.

The [chariot](#) was a light vehicle, usually on two wheels, drawn by one or more horses, often carrying two standing persons, a driver and a fighter using bow-and-arrow or javelins. The chariot was the supreme military weapon in Eurasia roughly from 1700 BCE to 500 BCE but was also used for hunting purposes and in sporting contests such as the [Olympic Games](#) and in the [Roman Circus Maximus](#). (Ancient History Encyclopedia)

Egyptian spokes were made by bending pieces of wood in an angle and then binding those pieces with other pieces. Each piece made up part of two spokes. Typical chariot wheels were made of 6 spoke wheels for war chariots, carrying two riders. Personal chariots for the king or priests were made of 4 spokes.

Paul teaches that a church is like a wheel. The wagon is God's kingdom work. The wheel is a local church. It must keep moving forward with its message.

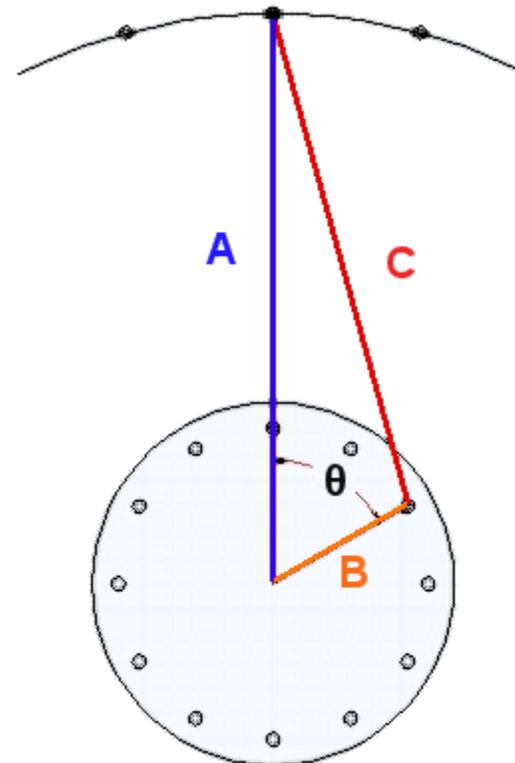
Just as there are many spokes for a wheel there are many members for the body, and there are many kinds of spiritual gifts that are necessary to serve the needs of the church. Paul loves to use the example of the human body when it comes to people serving in their gifts. He often emphasizes that these gifts are different in nature. A hand is not a foot. Both belong to the body. You appreciate each of them. When it comes to riding a bicycle, you need both. Feet to pedal the wheels, hands to steer the bike. Both are necessary. It is very difficult to ride a bike when you lack one or the other.

So, Paul mentions here several gifts. He mentions prophesying, serving, teaching, encouraging, giving, leading, showing mercy. In

each of these, he admonishes that the gift is to be used in excellence of character.

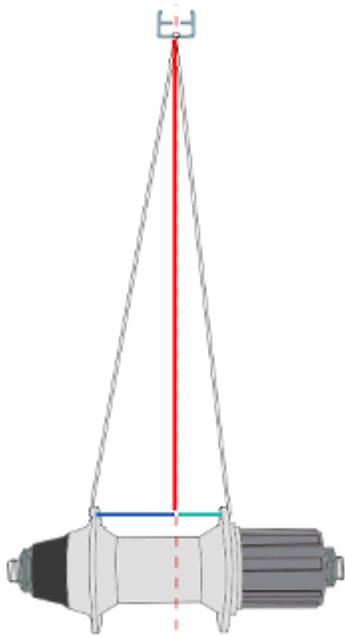
- Prophesying by degree of faith
- Serving (“deaconing” wait on tables) by serving
- Teaching by practice of teaching
- Encouraging (or exhorting) by giving encouragement
- Giving by liberality (simplicity)
- Leading by diligence
- Showing mercy by joyfulness in mercy

These are not all of the gifts Paul mentions (see 1 Cor. 12). His point is not in elaborating on the gifts, but rather on exhorting people to use the gifts they have. The church needs your service.



2. Spokes share the load.

On a wheel, a spoke takes on the load when it is in the down position. In the down position, the spoke is compressed as the load puts pressure on it. This is the only real pressure on wooden wheels. On wire spokes, all of the spokes are compressed to a degree to form tension and strength to the wheel. Yet, still the same principle applies. The spokes on the bottom of the wheel take more of the pressure than those on the top. But in the case of a wire spoke bicycle, there are many spokes to help with the load.



$$C = \sqrt{A^2 + B^2 - 2AB \cos \theta}$$

$$L = \sqrt{C^2 + w^2} - d/2$$

Just in case you want to know how to determine the length of a wire spoke.

It's complicated. So also is God's gifting of saints to do ministry in the church. God has chosen to use imperfect people to do kingdom work. People have differences in personalities, capabilities, emotional constraints, and differences in gifts. All of this makes the use of gifts in church ministry complicated. Only God knows the formula.

All of the gifts Paul mentions -- prophesying, serving, teaching, encouraging, giving, leading, showing mercy -- help share the load of ministry in the church. The idea is for everyone to help in ministry. We are not all called to be ministers in a formal capacity. However, we are all given the Holy Spirit. We are all carriers of the presence of God by faith. So, the work should not merely fall on a few. It has never been God's design for a few ministers and leaders to do the work of the service of the church. God has designed everyone to be a spoke to help carry the load.

Are you helping to carry the load? Or, are you one who seeks to avoid the load? God has given assignments to the church for the load of ministry it is to accomplish for the Kingdom. We are but one wheel in the great scheme of God's work. In that wheel are many spokes. You are one of those spokes. Help us to carry the load.

3. A spokes' value is found in the Wheel.

A spoke by itself has no value. It is just a piece of wood, or a piece of wire. It finds its value in helping to form a wheel. It is the wheel that is valued. The wheel gets the cart, or car down the road. Every spoke is valuable as long as it works properly to support the wheel.

I have noticed two trends: 1. Modern Christianity wants to focus on the spoke. They want to identify their gift. They ask, "How can I discover my spiritual gift." 2. Paul never focuses on identifying gifts. Paul focuses on the unity and work of the body, not its members.

Paul does not tell us to search for our unique spiritual gifts. Paul tells us to **use** the gifts God has given us. We make gifts a mystery to

be unveiled. In reality, gifts are God-given abilities which we need to use for God's purposes so the body of Christ can be doing the work God has called us to do.

The Holy Spirit gives gifts. God may give many gifts. He may choose to give a gift for a short time or for a lifetime. The real issue for most people is not serving in the gifts they have.

What good is a spoke if it is not on the wheel? What help is it if it refuses to bear the load when it is its turn to do so?

Paul tells us to use our gifts, and get on with it! Excel in your service as you are gifted!

If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. ⁷ If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; ⁸ if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

The point of having gifts is not shining a light on our gifts. It is putting the gift into service to help the work of the church. Churches have gifted people who are unwilling to work. As a result, 20% carry the load for 80% of the work.

Why is it that we have so many who love babies, but we struggle to get help in the nursery? You may say, "Well, I helped in my time. Others can help now." Are you dead? Are you dead in the body or just dead in the heart?

So many love to use cell phones and all of the latest technology, yet we struggle to get people to help with tech crews. Why? We are not

putting on a show here. It is ministry. People receive ministry when the projectors work right. They are encouraged in worship when the words come on the screen at the proper time and when the mics are working at the right time.

Do you love to cook? I am certain that Margaret could use more help in the kitchen.

We need many services. We need spokes to engage the wheel. We need more teachers, more deacons, more assistant to teachers, more van drivers... We need spokes.

Today, I want to be a spoke's person. **I'm calling on spokes to get into the wheel and service.**