

20 Characteristics of the Server

The second of the seven gifts listed in Romans 12:6-8 is the gift we call server. The server receives joy in helping, assisting, carrying out instructions and being of use in a wide variety of ways.

An Exception to the Rule

This is a good place to point out an important exception to the rule that people will function best in the motivational gift(s) that God has given them. Here it is: When God calls you to do a job outside the sphere of your motivational gift, He will also give you an anointing that will enable you to do the job. The anointing supersedes the giftedness. We continue to emphasize that this teaching on motivational gifts is not designed to put you in a box labeled “*All I Can Do.*” Be led by the Holy Spirit in everything. Be open to a special call from God and the subsequent provision at any time in your life.

1. Easily recognizes practical needs and is quick to meet them.

A server can spot a need a mile away. It's as though he or she has built in radar geared to others' necessities, and high motivation to do something about those needs.

You can spot these servers easily at a church potluck dinner. Check who is regularly out in the kitchen making the preparations or setting up tables and chairs or doing the cleanup afterward.

During youth meetings, study groups, potlucks, etc. We used to wonder why some of the people quickly migrated to the kitchen to help while others stayed in the living room to chat. It's the natural inclination of servers to help in that way. The important thing is that servers enjoy doing it.

2. Especially enjoys manual projects, jobs and functions.

Of all the motivational gifts, it is the servers who have the greatest dexterity, the ability to work well with their hands. That's why we call them the hands of the Body. They can do just about anything that involves manual skill: artistic endeavors, repairs, carpentry, plumbing, electrical work, sewing, cooking or gardening.

3. Keeps everything in meticulous order.

Servers cannot stand clutter, dirt or disorganization. Some people with this gift often dust every day. There are no dirty dishes left in their sinks, their laundry is folded and put away the day it is washed and the beds are made before nine A.M. You can drop in on them at any time of the day and the house will be ready for company. They also keep their closets in order, their socks never get thrown in the shirt drawer, you can always see the top of their desk and every tool is hanging on the right hook on the pegboard.

What's more, the lawn is mowed on schedule and weeds don't have a chance to grow in the flowerbeds.

4. Is a detail person with a good memory.

Servers have a computer-type memory for details. They can remember where they filed away an article, they clipped out of the newspaper three years ago. They remember that you like cream in your coffee, but not sugar. They remember all the birthdays on both sides of the family (and remember to send cards) and they can relate an episode from the thirteenth chapter of the book they read last week with amazing accuracy.

5. Enjoys showing hospitality.

When the pastor announces that a place is needed for the visiting missionary, it will likely be the servers who offer their homes first. They love to entertain people. They look for opportunities to invite others over for dinner or dessert, and they do a terrific job of making their guests feel welcome.

6. Will stay with something until it is complete.

Servers finish what they start. They have wonderful stick-to-it-iveness. When they say they will do something they will do it. The only thing that produces frustration is when you give them something to do in too short a time. You see, they not only want to finish a task, but they also want to do it well.

7. Has a hard time saying no to requests for help.

Because servers are naturally geared to be helpful, and because they know that they are good at it, it is difficult for them to turn down a request for help. As a result, they tend to get overinvolved. Even a simple question like, "Do you know what to use for a clogged drain?" will elicit a response like, "Let me come over and look at it!" Before he or she has time to think, the server is under the person's sink with wrench in hand and the drain apart.

8. Is more interested in meeting the needs of others than his or her own needs.

Servers are such caring people. When we were in New Zealand we stayed for a week with a lovely Christian family. Two of the Eynons' four girls were still at home: Greta, eighteen, and Aly, sixteen.

We were struck by how much Greta seemed to enjoy preparing meals.

"Mum", she'd say, "let me fix the dinner. You spend time with the Fortunes." She'd put on a beautiful meal and when her mother would get up to clear the table Greta would say to her, "No, you stay there and talk, I'll take care of the dishes."

Aly would take a few dishes to the kitchen, then say, "Please excuse me but I've got to run. I'm setting up the school's talent show and we've got a meeting tonight."

A similar scene would take place each evening with Greta serving dinner and doing the dishes and Aly running off to organize something else. Their parents worried about the situation. They felt that Aly was running out on domestic responsibilities while Greta was overly conscientious around the house. They wished Greta would have more outside interests.

We were able to help them to see that Greta was a server and Aly an administrator. It was predictable that Aly's interests would lean toward group involvement while Greta's giftedness would cause her to focus on meeting other people's needs even to the neglect of her own. We encouraged the parents to let Greta concentrate on the domestic needs of the family for the time being, for that was bringing her joy.

9. Enjoys working on short-term goals rather than long-range goals.

Servers prefer short-term projects. They like something that takes two hours better than something that takes two weeks and prefer a two-week or two-month project to a two-year project. They enjoy something they can get their teeth into and finish in a foreseeable amount of time. They leave long-range goals to the administrators.

A server would enjoy providing food for the family of a woman who is temporarily in the hospital but would not necessarily want to take on that kind of service on an ongoing basis. He or she would be glad to work one day a week at the food bank but would not want to manage the project.

10. Shows love for others in deeds and actions more than words.

Servers believe actions speak louder than words. They express their love by what they do.

One server said to us, "It's easy to say, "I love you, but the other person may never really know if you mean it. I believe that when I do something for someone, he knows how I feel".

11. Needs to feel appreciated.

It's not that servers serve in order to be praised, but appreciation assures them that they've done well. It builds up a positive self-image. It is the culmination of their joy in serving.

In the early days of Aglow magazine, we were entirely a volunteer staff.

12. Tends to do more than asked to do.

Servers so enjoy the doing that they often don't want to stop.

When Berta gave birth to twins, the family had five children under the age of six. Her server mother-in-law told her she would be glad to keep all five of their baby books up to date. Berta was delighted because she'd only had time to throw items into a box.

13. Feels greatest joy in doing something that is helpful.

Don's mother was a classic server. Every time she came to our home for dinner, the first thing she would ask as she came in the kitchen door was, "What can I do to help you?" Now I do just fine in the kitchen if people leave me alone to concentrate. So, my usual answer to her was, "Nothing, thanks, I've got everything under control."

One Thanksgiving she arrived a whole hour early. I had been working on the dinner since eight that morning and had timed everything to finish just on schedule. "I came early to see if I could help you;" she offered.

"Thanks anyway;" I responded. "Everything's under way;"

I could tell she was disappointed as she sat down at the kitchen table to watch me work. She began to talk, and the distraction was more than I could handle. "Why don't you go and chat with Don awhile?" I suggested.

She found Don deeply engrossed in the Thanksgiving Day football game on TV. The boys were also watching the game. Meanwhile in the kitchen the Lord spoke to me:

"Katie, you are being selfish."

"How?" I asked with astonishment.

"You're so busy functioning in your gift that you are not making room for your mother-in-law's gift."

The words cut deeply into my heart. I was being selfish. She wanted to help and I wouldn't let her. That was downright unkind of me. I realized I needed to do something about it. I called into the rec room. "Mother, I could use your help now!"

She was there in a flash, her face bright. "Could you make the tossed salad?" I asked. "I'd love to".

14. Does not want to lead others or projects.

Servers are not leaders; they are followers. God made them that way. If a leadership position is forced on them they are frustrated.

It is tempting to turn leadership over to servers. Because they do such a good job at whatever they do, it may seem that they are the natural ones to take charge. But when this happens, they lose their joy. They've been placed in a situation for which they are not equipped. The result is frustration for them, and probably (eventually) frustration for those they try to lead.

15. Has a high energy level.

Servers have one speed: fast forward.

They seem to have boundless energy. First Peter 4:11 urges them to serve "with the strength which God furnishes abundantly." And indeed servers seem to have unusual endurance and often get by with less sleep than the average person.

We can only surmise that God has endowed servers with all this energy because they are the doers and there's so much that needs to be done.

16. Cannot stand to be around clutter.

We've heard servers say things like, "I can't leave the office until my desk is clear", or "It's only after I have the house picked up that I can sit down and watch television", or "I can't stand to go over to my neighbor's house. I feel like I want to dig in and put things away, but I don't think she'd appreciate it".

Servers are the ones who straighten crooked picture frames on your walls.

17. Tends to be a perfectionist.

Whatever servers do they want to do well. They want things to be just right and are willing to work toward that end. For other gifts perfectionism could be a sign of abnormal behavior. But the server has been created a perfectionist for God's purposes. Someone in the Body of Christ needs to exhibit this trait in a positive and balanced way.

18. Views serving to be the top priority in life.

One server said to us, as he was stacking up the chairs after a meeting at church, "I just can't understand why the other men don't chip in and help."

Serving seems to the server to be the essence of Christianity. To him or her, the rest is mere words. Certainly, Jesus' example and teaching on the importance of having a servant's heart reinforces his or her conviction that serving is the greatest activity of all.

But servers need to be careful not to insist that others feel the same way. Each gift thinks its type of functioning is the most important of all.

19. Prefers doing a job to delegating it.

Not only do servers prefer to do the job themselves, but they also have a sense of guilt when they don't. One man said, "I find it very hard to delegate messy or menial types of work to my kids. I generally end up doing those jobs myself."

20. Supports others who are in leadership.

Servers make wonderful secretaries, vice presidents or committee members. They have incredible loyalty to those they serve under. It is not unusual for a server to burn the midnight oil to bring a project to culmination. Servers want to see those they support succeed.

Problems of the Server

The server, like each recipient of motivational gifts, has his or her own typical problem areas.

1. Is critical of others who do not help out with obvious practical needs.

The classic example is Martha, the sister of Mary and Lazarus. In Luke 10:38-42 we see Mary sitting at Jesus' feet, listening to His teaching. Meanwhile, back in the kitchen, Martha is preparing food to serve their hungry guests. To her, Mary's obliviousness to a practical need is incomprehensible.

But Martha (overly occupied and too busy) was distracted with much serving; and she came up to Him and said, Lord, is it nothing to You that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me to lend a hand and do her part along with me. Luke 10:40

To Martha, getting that meal ready is the most important thing in the world. Jesus loves the server gift in her, of course, but also identifies the servers' problem and speaks kindly correction. It is always a temptation for servers to feel put upon by those who ignore "obvious" practical needs.

2. May neglect own family's needs by being too busy helping others.

The typical example is that of a server who so enjoys helping out the neighbors that he never has time to fix things around his own house. Then there's the example of a server who does so much volunteer work that soon the laundry is stacking up and dinners are getting later.

It is helpful for servers to be reminded of healthy priorities.

3. May become pushy or interfering in eagerness to help.

Servers can sometimes "help" where help is not wanted.

One time we had a server who wanted to be helpful all the time stay at our home for two weeks. She would become restless if her hands were not busy, so she'd do things without asking.

Sometimes it was helpful, other times it created more work.

4. Finds it hard to accept being served by others.

Because servers so love to do the serving, they can feel awkward when someone else serves them. But the fact is they need to learn to receive as well as give. Otherwise, they rob others of the joy of serving.

5. Is easily hurt when unappreciated.

The need for appreciation is so deeply built into the server that some hurt is almost inevitable.

We find it's important to look to the Lord for appreciation . He always gives it even when others don't. Let His love and appreciation be enough for you, and then if a person thanks you, too, that's the frosting on the cake! Keep on serving!

If you know any servers, appreciate them. They'll love you for it.