

BIBLICAL UNDERPINNINGS FOR STRENGTHS

Something within our spirit resonates with the discovery of our talents and strengths. It “feels right,” as though from the depths of our being we can finally shout, “This is who I was created to be!” This liberating experience allows us to develop and move toward living out our talents — God-given ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving. It also gives us permission to accept ourselves as God originally created us to be and helps us find our purpose and place in God’s work on earth.

StrengthFinder measures your talents in 34 categories called themes and gives you a report of your Signature Themes — a ranked listing of the five themes that seem to hold your most dominant talents — providing a window into who God created you to be.

Scripture shows us that we are each uniquely created by God with abilities that are to be used for his purposes. These talents are part of our “hardwiring” as human beings and are different from, but work in conjunction with, the spiritual gifts given to Christians as noted in Romans 12.6-8, I Corinthians 12.28-30, and Ephesians 4.11.

YOU WERE CREATED BY GOD

Numerous passages from the Old and New Testaments affirm what we already know in our hearts about God’s grace toward humanity. In the Old Testament book of Genesis, we find that humankind was the crowning achievement of creation:

Genesis 1.26, 27, 31a — *Then God said, “And now we will make human beings; they will be like us and resemble us. They will have power over the fish, the birds, and all animals, domestic and wild, large and small. So God created human beings, making them to be like himself. He created them male and female . . . God looked at everything he had made, and he was very pleased.*

Genesis 2.7 — *Then the Lord God took some soil from the ground and formed a man out of it; he breathed life-giving breath into his nostrils and the man began to live.*

It is this knowledge of God’s intimate involvement in our lives that leads to the deep sense of gratitude expressed in the Old Testament book of Psalms:

Psalms 139.13-16 — *You created every part of me. You put me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because you are to be feared; all you do is strange and wonderful. I know it with all my heart. When my bones were being formed, carefully put together in my mother’s womb, when I was growing there in secret, you knew that I was there — you saw me before I was born. The days allotted to me had all been recorded in your book, before any of them ever began.*

Isaiah also declares that God is our Creator!

Isaiah 45.9-12a — *Does a clay pot dare argue with its maker, a pot that is like all the others? Does the clay ask the potter what he is doing? Does the pot complain that its maker has no skill?*

Do we dare say to our parents, “Why did you make me like this? The LORD, the holy God of Israel, the one who shapes the future, says: “You have no right to question me about my children or to tell me what I ought to do! I am the one who made the earth and created human beings to live there.”

The Gospel according to John proclaims that God is the Creator of all things - and that includes us!!

John 1.1-4 — *In the beginning the Word already existed; the Word was with God, and the Word was God. From the very beginning the Word was with God. Through him God made all things; not one thing in all creation was made without him. The Word was the source of life, and this life brought light to people.*

YOU WERE CREATED BY GOD WITH UNIQUE TALENTS AND ABILITIES

Right from the beginning of Scripture we find that our Creator made us different from the rest of creation. Adam had an ability to think and communicate with God that the rest of creation did not have. Each person since Adam is a unique masterpiece with his or her own thoughts, feelings,

and behaviors that become shaped by unique life experiences. In spite of Eve being taken from Adam's own body, she was different from him - a female who had her own special characteristics physically, emotionally, and cognitively. Eve's differences allowed her to be a companion, helper, and complementary partner for Adam.

Gen. 2.18, 20-23 — *Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to live alone. I will make a suitable companion to help him." ... Then the LORD God made the man fall into a deep sleep, and while he was sleeping, he took out one of the man's ribs and closed up the flesh. He formed a woman out of the rib and brought her to him. Then the man said,*

"At last, here is one of my own kind- bone taken from my bone, and flesh from my flesh. "Woman" is her name because she was taken out of man."

Adam and Eve's sons, Cain and Abel, also had different abilities, interests, and personalities. Genesis 4.2b tells us that Abel was a shepherd and Cain was a farmer. Additionally, special abilities and talents ran in the family lines of Cain's descendents.

Genesis 4.19-22 — *Lamach had two wives, Adah and Zillah. Adah gave birth to Jubal, who was the ancestor of those who raise livestock and live in tents. His brother was Jubal, the ancestor of all musicians who play the harp and the flute. Zillah gave birth to Tubal Cain, who made all kinds of tools out of bronze and iron. The sister of Tubal Cain was Naamah.*

Isaac and Rebecca's twin boys had differing preferences and characteristics in spite of being twins.

Genesis 25.24-27 — *The time came for her to give birth, and she had twin sons. The first one was reddish, and his skin was like a hairy robe, so he was named Esau. The second one was born holding on tightly to the heel of Esau, so he was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when they were born. The boys grew up, and Esau became a skilled hunter, a man who loved the outdoors, but Jacob was a quiet man who stayed at home.*

In the book of Exodus, the Scripture is clear that our talents and abilities are given by God.

Exodus 28.3 — *[The Lord said to Moses] Call all the skilled workers to whom I have given ability, and tell them to make Aaron's clothes, so that he may be dedicated as a priest in my service.*

Exodus 35.30-36.3, 8a — *Moses said to the Israelites, "The Lord has chosen Bezalel, the son of Uri and grandson of Hur, from the tribe of Judah. God has filled him with his power and given him skill, ability, and understanding for every kind of artistic work, for planning skillful designs and working them in gold, silver, and bronze; for cutting jewels to be set; for carving wood; and for every other kind of artistic work. The Lord has given to him and to Oholiab son of Abisamach, from the tribe of Dan the ability to teach their craft to others. He has given them skill in all kinds of work done by engravers, designers, and weaver of fine linen; blue, purple, and red wool; and other cloth. They are able to do all kinds of work and are skillful designers.*

"Bezalel, Oholiab, and all the other workers to whom the LORD has given skill and understanding, who know how to make everything needed to build the sacred Tent, are to make everything just as the LORD has commanded."

Moses called Bezalel, Oholiab, and all the other skilled men to whom the LORD had given ability and who were willing to help, and Moses told them to start working. ... The most skilled men among these doing the work made the Tent of the LORD's presence.

In these passages, we see that Bezalel, Oholiab, and the other workers invested in their God-given abilities by becoming educated and skilled in their trades so that they could do the work God needed to be done on earth. They had taken their innate talents and made them into strengths.

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YOU WERE CREATED BY GOD WITH UNIQUE TALENTS AND ABILITIES TO BE USED FOR HIS PURPOSES

God had purposes and plans for human beings from the beginning of creation. He gave Adam and Eve responsibilities in the following passages:

Genesis 1.28-29 — *[God] blessed them, and said, “Have many children, so that your descendants will live all over the earth and bring it under their control. I am putting you in charge of the fish, the birds, and all the wild animals.”*

Genesis 2.15 — *Then the LORD God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and guard it.*

Throughout Scripture it becomes clear that God uses people to do His work on Earth.

God gives individuals their abilities so that they can accomplish His plans.

Genesis 25.21-27 — *Because Rebecca had no children, Isaac prayed to the LORD for her. The LORD answered her prayer, and Rebecca became pregnant. She was going to have twins, and before they were born, they struggled against each other in her womb. She said, “Why should something like this happen to me?” So she went to ask the LORD for an answer.*

The LORD said to her, “Two nations are within you; You will give birth to two rival peoples. One will be stronger than the other; The older will serve the younger.”

Romans 9.10b-12 — *For Rebecca’s two sons had the same father, our ancestor Isaac. But in order that the choice of one son might be completely the result of God’s own purpose, God said to her, “The older will serve the younger.” He said this before they were born, before they had done anything either good or bad; so God’s choice was based on his call, and not on anything they had done.*

Jeremiah 1.4-5; 29.10-11 — *The LORD said to me, “I chose you before I gave you life, and before you were born I selected you to be a prophet to the nations.”*

The Lord says ... “I alone know the plans I have for you, plans to bring you prosperity and not disaster, plans to bring about the future you hope for.

Luke 1.13-17 — *But the angel said to him, “Don’t be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayer, and your wife’s prayer, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son. You are to name him John. How glad and happy you will be, and how happy many others will be when he is born! John will be great in the Lord’s sight. He must not drink any wine or strong drink. From his very birth he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, and he will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. He will go ahead of the Lord, strong and mighty like the prophet Elijah. He will bring fathers and children together again; he will turn disobedient people back to the way of thinking of the righteous: he will get the Lord’s people ready for him.”*

God even uses the natural abilities and talents of non-believers for His purposes.

Isaiah 45.12b-13 — *By my power I stretched out the heavens; I control the sun, the moon, and the stars. I myself have stirred Cyrus to action to fulfill my purpose and put things right. I will straighten out every road that he travels. He will rebuild my city, Jerusalem, and set my captive people free. No one has hired him or bribed him to do this.” The LORD Almighty has spoken.*

Romans 9.16-17 — *So then, everything depends, not on what we humans want or do, but only on God’s mercy. For the scripture says to the king of Egypt, “I made you king in order to use you to show my power and to spread my fame over the whole world.”*

God has made us all unique parts of the BODY of CHRIST - his plan for the church!!

Romans 12.4-5 — *We have many parts in the one body, and all these parts have different functions. In the same way, though we are many, we are one body in union with Christ, and we are all joined to each other as different parts of one body.*

We are all unique because we each have different, but necessary parts to play in the Body of Christ. In the New Testament book of 1 Corinthians, we discover that God's unique design for us includes using the different parts to help others. Each part is important!!

1 Corinthians 12.12, 14-20, 27 — *Christ is like a single body, which has many parts; it is still one body, even though it is made up of different parts. ... For the body itself is not made up of only one part, but of many parts. If the foot were to say, "Because I am not a hand, I don't belong to the body," that would not keep it from being a part of the body. And if the ear were to say, "Because I am not an eye, I don't belong to the body," that would not keep it from being a part of the body. If the whole body were just an eye, how could it hear? And if it were only an ear, how could it smell? As it is, however, God put every different part in the body just as he wanted it to be. There would not be a body if it were all only one part! As it is, there are many parts but one body. ... All of you are Christ's body, and each one is a part of it.*

Each one of us is necessary for the proper functioning of the Body of Christ.

Ephesians 4.15-16 — *... by speaking the truth in a spirit of love, we must grow up in every way to Christ, who is the head. Under His control all the different parts of the body fit together, and the whole body is held together by every joint with which it is provided. So when each separate part works as it should, the whole body grows and builds itself up through love.*

Expanding on this theme, a number of New Testament books (especially the book of Ephesians) help us understand that a major aspect of ministry is about releasing people's potential — helping them do what God designed them to do best. Our success and impact will result from who we are — not by our trying to be who we are not. We are free to become men and women of excellence as we discover and enhance our strengths by drawing upon our God-given talents through the practice and development of our skills and building our base of knowledge.

From a spiritual viewpoint, when we affirm our strengths and engage with Scripture, we communicate to God our gratefulness for gracing us with our unique mix of talents and gifts, and learn to live the life that God always intended us to live. It also gives us a sense of significance and purpose, and a new set of lenses through which to encounter the life-changing message of the Word of God!

God holds each of us accountable to discover who he made us to be and to live out his unique calling for our lives!!!

Galatians 5.25-26 (The Message) — *Since this is the kind of life we have chosen, the life of the Spirit, let us make sure that we do not just hold it as an idea in our heads or a sentiment in our hearts, but work out its implications in every detail of our lives. That means we will not compare ourselves with each other as if one of us were better and another worse. We have far more interesting things to do with our lives. Each of us is an original.*

Galatians 6.4-5 (The Message) — *Make a careful exploration of who you are and the work you have been given, and then sink yourself into that. Don't be impressed with yourself. Don't compare yourself with others. Each of you must take responsibility for doing the creative best you can with your own life.*

You are at your best when you do what God created you to do best. To accept your natural, God-given talents is to accept yourself the way God created you.