

Each one of us is unique, and has received from God a unique set of gifts, one of which sets the tone for the others. As suggested by the enneagram teaching, there are nine gifts we are to use in our journey here on earth, to help us contribute to the communities we belong to and find our way back to God. Each gift reflects a facet of God's splendour. As they combine in each one of us, we reflect a facet of God which is unique. God gives us these gifts in different measures, and we grow in them differently according to the unique set of challenges to which we respond during our lives. One of them is primary. Though each one of us remains unique, we can be identified as belonging to the family of those who share the same primary gift.

The danger is that we often tend to over-depend on our primary gift, which leads us to under-utilize our other gifts. We do this because we are vulnerable, especially in our early years, and we count on that gift to protect us and help us achieve our own goals. If we hang on to it too tightly it becomes a fixation to which we are prone and a hindrance to others. Our contribution to the lives of those around us is diminished and our journey to God put in jeopardy.

Jesus is the model of how we are to live out our particular constellation of gifts. We will offer remarks based on each of the nine families.

As a perfect human being and the perfect image of God Jesus belonged to all these families, thus in his gifts fully reflecting the various facets of the divine splendour. He grew in grace, maturity, and wisdom, and at every stage of his life he was without sin and endowed with the integration that goes with that stage of his life. He made use of each one of them in a balanced way, avoiding the fixations and the disorders to which we are prone.

Jesus helps us to unshackle the original giftedness intended by God for us when we came into the world. We become less of a hindrance, a dead weight to the human community, and more a vehicle of grace, bringing our characteristic strength to the community in a balanced and effective way, but also developing and using other strengths as needed in our human journey.

There are two aspects to our presentation of these nine facets: each primary gift is described, and a brief description of a secondary gift which helps us make use of that gift in a balanced way, without fixation or compulsion. Then we will consider various aspects of Jesus' life and ministry which exemplify both the gifts and the wisdom with which he used them.

<i>The Primary Gift and the Secondary Gift which assists it</i>	<i>Examples of how the behaviour of Christ shows these gifts in action in a loving and transformative way..</i>
1 ZEAL: A deep sense, tolerant and compassionate, of what is right, equitable, and perfect. <i>Together with this gift ACCEPTANCE of others in their messiness</i>	Jesus was the last of the prophets. He was consumed by the Word he had to communicate. With zeal he preached, taught, enlightened, reproved, encouraged, finding all sorts of ways to share the message. He was a reformer, going to the heart of what was intended by the Old Law and stressing that, abrogating many forms of outward behaviour he saw as peripheral. This meant continuing conflict with religious authorities. Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect would his universal call. At the same time Jesus understood the situation of the people he was teaching, and in addition to afflicting the comfortable he also comforted the afflicted. The yoke he was imposing was simple and demanding, in comparison to the detailed prescriptions of the mosaic law. He did not try to overwhelm others into adherence but respected their dignity and their freedom. A good example is his encounter with the Samaritan woman.
2 COMPASSION: Helpfulness and self-sacrifice, authentic because they do not claim a response. <i>Together with HUMILITY: I avoid fostering the sense that I am important in the lives of others because of what I do.</i>	Jesus was compassionate towards all those he met. He wanted to bring healing to others, not only physical miracles, but also healings that would bring psychic and spiritual peace. He forgave sins, relieved them of unnecessary burdens, enabled them to stand up straight and lead their lives. At the same time his compassion was totally other-centred. He did not use it as a means to cultivate followers that would depend on him and adulate him. How often he would send people away after having cured them to lead their own lives, telling them that their own faith had cured them. He was far from identifying himself as a wonder-worker. He sought solid results that would last. He was far from seeking publicity. Cf. the second of the three temptations in Matthew, and not allowing Mary Magdalen to cling to him but sending her away on a mission.

3 EFFECTIVENESS: Success and efficiency in achieving whatever goals I have. <i>Together with VERACITY: I have a genuine sense of self, with no need for promoting myself and achieving splashy successes based on an image I have constructed.</i>	Jesus had a goal which was to preach the word of God, and in the course of his ministry he gained many followers. He was well organized. He picked a group of persons who would be his close associates, and worked hard to train them. But they picked up on the popular expectations of what the Messiah was supposed to accomplish – overcoming the political and economic oppressors of Israel – and desperately wanted him to bring this about. Indeed the success of his mission was in doing his Father's will. He would be successful precisely in foregoing the trappings of political power and in the eyes of the majority being a failure, an impostor. But accepting this path was at the heart of his effectiveness as saviour. He was successful, but set aside the signs that would lead him to be recognized and adulated as successful by the many. He was true to himself. The triumph of his entry into Jerusalem ultimately counted for nothing. What counted was the seeming failure of the cross.
4 AUTHENTICITY: Bringing out and treasuring my own deep uniqueness and originality of each human self. <i>Together with EQUANIMITY: accepting without comparisons the equal uniqueness of others. I am myself without envy of others.</i>	Jesus was who he was, simply, without putting on airs. He let his authenticity speak to others rather than draw attention to it. He could have put on religious airs, wrapped himself in the cloak of pharisaic superiority, but his preaching and activity was very close to the people and their concerns. He was aware of his origins with the Father and spent much time cultivating that relationship in prayer. He made his origins with the Father known and the Father treasured. Because he was at home with his own uniqueness, he was able to help others discover and treasure their own uniqueness in spite of their flaws and weaknesses. Samaritan woman, adulterous woman in Jn 8.
5 WISDOM: Deep wisdom and wide learning made available to others in large measure. <i>Together with GENEROSITY: letting go and trusting in the abundance within myself and within reality as a whole.</i>	Jesus drew not only on the prophetic literature of the Old Testament, acting very much like a prophet announcing the coming of the Lord's Day. He also drew on the wisdom literature, and he was seen as a purveyor of wisdom. His parables present profound teachings in simple terms. They can be understood differently by people at different levels in their spiritual evolution. His conversations were clear and to the point. But he did not do this as some kind of austere and distant wisdom figure that kept apart on a pedestal. He spent many years generously living the life of ordinary people and it is out of his abundance that he drew images, examples, stories which they could relate to. A wisdom that was engaged with life and spoke to ordinary people.

6	LOYALTY: Care in discovering and implementing the will of God and others in authority. <i>Together with COURAGE: readiness to take risks, trusting in one's God-given gifts.</i>	One of the hallmarks of Jesus' life was his absolute closeness and obedience to his Father. He did not deviate from His Father's will even though his human feelings recoiled from what he was asked to do (agony in the garden). This was not a fearful and anxious submission but that of a person endowed with courage and strength, trusting in the ultimate outcome. In teaching obedience to others he encouraged them to act the same way, to fully be themselves. The young man who fulfilled the law had a measure of loyalty to God's law, but he was asked for an act of courage which would lead him to a deeper loyalty.
7	JOYFULNESS: Enthusiasm, optimism, positive energy towards achieving worthwhile goals. <i>Together with SOBRIETY: being in the present moment, be it painful or pleasurable.</i>	Ultimately Jesus saw reality in an optimistic vein. His predictions ended up with the resurrection and the coming of the day of the Lord. All would work out in the end according to the Father's will. He was able to participate in events where all enjoyed each other's company and the good things of the earth. A striking example was the wedding feast at Cana, where he was instrumental in prolonging the joy of the occasion. He was also known as a guest at the table of people upon whom the establishment of the day frowned. At the same time he did not shirk from experiencing the pain of the people he met, and took upon himself the sins of the world. He predicted his resurrection, yet was very clear in also predicting what came before: his passion and his horrific death.
8	POWER: Assertiveness and leadership which because respectful of others build up the community. <i>Together with VULNERABILITY: readiness to trust, to be powerless in the eyes of the world.</i>	Power was something which exuded from Jesus' personality. He did not repress his feelings of indignation and anger, but expressed them forcefully and clearly. He chased the moneychangers out of the temple, and berated the pharisees and scribes for their hypocrisy. But he never used power to demean those who were weak and oppressed. He would approach them gently, healed them, and sent them away not with a threat of retribution but with an encouragement, reminding them of the faith and confidence which was theirs. He eschewed the trappings of power. He led because he was authentic, loving, vulnerable.

- 9 PEACEFULNESS:
Bringing calm and
peace to conflicted
situations, being an
agent of
reconciliation.
- Together with
ALERTNESS: being
fully awake to the
world and ready to
face its conflicts head
on.*

Jesus came to bring peace and reconciliation to the world. "My peace I give to you." He preaches reconciliation rather than conflict. He shunned violence, as when he reproved those who would try to counter the band come to arrest him in the garden. His kingdom was not one of armed conflict and victory. At the same time he knew what was going on in his world in need of redemption, and declared it in his preaching. He was quite able to bring a sword and not peace, inviting his followers to take strong and divisive stands. Reconciliation, but not reconciliation at any price.