

## Natural Abilities: 8 Categories

God designed everyone on earth with a set of abilities as part of their unique design. He gave natural gifts to Christians and non-Christians alike. These abilities are what you are inherently good at without any additional training or experience. They have nothing to do with your background, education, intelligence, interests or personality. They are the innate strengths that God hard-wired into your system as part of His purpose for your life. You are good at your abilities without trying. They will not markedly improve through practice, and they will not noticeably deteriorate through lack of use.

Your abilities are firmly established by high school, and they don't change during your lifetime. Throughout your life you will acquire *learned skills* through education and experience. But your abilities are innate, consistent, and unalterable.

Too many people go through life without ever discovering and utilizing their greatest strengths. In *Now, Discover Your Strengths*<sup>1</sup> the Gallup organization surveyed 1.7 million people in 101 companies from 63 companies. Only 20 percent of those surveyed felt that their strengths are used each day. Eighty percent of the global workforce goes to work every day and doesn't use their greatest strengths. It's no wonder that so many people are dissatisfied with their careers!

In order to experience personal and professional satisfaction, it's critical for you to identify and focus on your abilities. Imagine working in a job that is fun and fulfilling. Your stress level will decrease and your enjoyment level will increase. Over a lifetime your potential for making a difference in this world would increase exponentially.

So why do so few people focus on their abilities? It's very simple. They don't spend time or effort in reflecting on what they excel at and enjoy doing. Schedules are busy. Reflection is hard work. It's far easier to drift along from one experience to the next without evaluating what it is that we are good at and wish we could spend more time doing.

This booklet examines eight categories of abilities one at a time. The goal is for you to identify at least your top abilities, and perhaps your next one as well. Knowing your abilities applies to your career, personal relationships, church involvement, and community activities. The chart below lists the eight categories and provides a one-word summary of your primary strength. Can you identify your top category now? You may be surprised as each one of the eight categories is unpacked.

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<sup>1</sup> Buckingham, Marcus and Donald O. Clifton. *Now, Discover Your Strengths*. NY: The Free Press, 2001, p. 6.

## Natural Abilities: 8 Categories

### CATEGORIES OF ABILITIES

<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>YOUR STRENGTH</b>
Analytical	Thinking
Communication	Words
Creative	Imagination
Entrepreneurial	Initiative
Interpersonal	People-skills
Leadership	Charisma
Organizational	Precision
Practical	Know-how

## Natural Abilities: Analytical

### Definition

- To separate something whole into its various parts for individual study
- To study the interrelationships among various parts in making up a whole

### Core Strength

You are a good thinker

### Indicators

*You find it easy and enjoyable to ...*

- \_\_\_ Assess
- \_\_\_ Diagnose
- \_\_\_ Discover
- \_\_\_ Investigate
- \_\_\_ Solve

*You personally are ...*

- \_\_\_ Inquiring
- \_\_\_ Logical
- \_\_\_ Methodical
- \_\_\_ Sequential
- \_\_\_ Systematic

### Biblical Example: Luke the Physician

“Many have tried to report on the things that happened among us. They have written the same things that we learned from others—the people who saw those things from the beginning and served God by telling people his message. Since I myself have studied everything carefully from the beginning, most excellent Theophilus, it seemed good for me to write it out for you. I arranged it in order, to help you know that what you have been taught is true.” ~ Luke 1:1-4

### Personal Example

The Pastor asked Jeff, a successful businessman, to join a church committee responsible for an upcoming capital campaign. The church needed to raise a huge sum of money to build a new auditorium and expand church programming. Jeff developed the step-by-step process the committee used to approach its task. When the pledges came in, the church raise 25% more than its target amount.

## Natural Abilities: Analytical

### Application

Are you an analytical person? Is the profile above describing you? If so, God has given you a wonderful natural ability that is needed in the Church. You may wish to explore the following volunteer opportunities:

- Investigate: Check with other churches to discover their approaches to church programs
- Planning: Help develop step-by-step plans for church events or projects.
- Problems: Help identify solutions to problems and select the best alternative.
- Reports: Write summary reports on any issue under consideration.
- Research: Conduct research on any topic under consideration.

If this is one of your strengths, God intentionally gave it to you to serve others. Find a role in your church that will allow you to use this natural ability to meet needs, bless others, and bring you great personal fulfillment. Most importantly, using this natural ability will bring glory to God by allowing others to see Him in you.

## Natural Abilities: Communication

### Definition

\* The exchange of thoughts, messages, or information, as by speech, signals, writing, or behavior.

\* The art and technique of using words effectively to impart information or ideas.

### Core Strength

You are good with words.

### Indicators

You find it easy and enjoyable to ...

\_\_\_ Explain

\_\_\_ Listen

\_\_\_ Respond

\_\_\_ Speak

\_\_\_ Write

You personally are ...

\_\_\_ Articulate

\_\_\_ Clear

\_\_\_ Concise

\_\_\_ Compelling

\_\_\_ Expressive

### Biblical Example: Apollos

"[Apollos] had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately." ~ Acts 18:25-26

### Personal Example

Sibyl, co-director of a Christian retreat center, is a gifted communicator. She speaks with passion and eloquence, especially about the topics that most interest her. When Sibyl speaks, people listen. They are drawn into the word pictures she paints in their minds that helps them understand her message. As a reflective listener, she pays close attention to what others say before she herself responds. Sibyl is also the author of a book that helps people understand how God has used their life story to make them who they are.

## Natural Abilities: Communication

### Application

Are you strong in your communication abilities? Is the profile above describing you? If so, God has given you a wonderful natural ability that is needed in the Church. You may wish to explore the following volunteer opportunities:

- **Speak:** Give a talk before different sized-groups about a topic important to you.
- **Listen:** Practice active listening skills with people at church, especially newcomers.
- **Write:** Send letters of encouragement to your pastor, missionaries, or people at church.
- **Teach:** Be an instructor in Sunday school a teacher for a Bible study group.
- **Explain:** Provide information to people who come to the information or welcome center.

If this is one of your strengths, God intentionally gave it to you to serve others. Find a role in your church that will allow you to use this natural ability to meet needs, bless others, and bring you great personal fulfillment. Most importantly, using this natural ability will bring glory to God by allowing others to see Him in you.

## Natural Abilities: Creativity

### Definition

- The ability to transcend traditional ideas, rules, patterns, relationships, or the like, and to create meaningful new ideas, forms, methods, interpretations, etc.
- The quality of originality of thought, as well as expressing the thought imaginatively.

### Core Strength

You have imaginative and/or artistic ideas.

### Indicators

*You find it easy and enjoyable to ...*

- \_\_\_ Act (as on stage)
- \_\_\_ Brainstorm
- \_\_\_ Design
- \_\_\_ Draw
- \_\_\_ Sing, play an instrument, or dance

*You personally are ...*

- \_\_\_ Artistic
- \_\_\_ Expressive
- \_\_\_ Imaginative
- \_\_\_ Innovative
- \_\_\_ Inventive

### Biblical Example: David

“As the ark of the Lord was entering the City of David, Michal daughter of Saul watched from a window. And when she saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord ... [~ 2 Samuel 6:16]

### Personal Example

Don is an exceptional graphic designer. He transforms abstract ideas into concrete, understandable pictures, symbols, and diagrams. His church relies on Don to design posters, programs, and booklets that capture people’s attention and desire to become involved. In fact, Don created the logo for Designed to Serve.

### Application

Do you have skills involving creativity? Is the profile above describing you? If so, God has given you a wonderful natural ability that is needed in the Church. You may wish to explore the following volunteer opportunities:

## Natural Abilities: Creativity

- Sing a solo
- Lead singing worship songs
- Play an instrument
- Perform in dramas
- Write scripts for the dramas
- Take part in dance interpretations
- Prepare video clips to aid worship
- Use your graphic arts abilities to promote events
- Participate in stage design
- Decorate the church for various events
- And many other possibilities

If this is one of your strengths, God intentionally gave it to you to serve others. Find a role in your church that will allow you to use this natural ability to meet needs, bless others, and bring you great personal fulfillment. Most importantly, using this natural ability will bring glory to God by allowing others to see Him in you.



## Natural Abilities: Entrepreneurial

### Definition

- A person who organizes and manages any enterprise, especially a business, usually with considerable initiative and risk.
- A person marked by imagination, initiative, and readiness to undertake new projects.

### Core Strength

You take the initiative to start new things.

### Indicators

*You find it easy and enjoyable to ...*

- \_\_\_ Compete
- \_\_\_ Negotiate
- \_\_\_ Risk
- \_\_\_ Sell
- \_\_\_ Start

*You personally are ...*

- \_\_\_ Adventurous
- \_\_\_ Risk-taker
- \_\_\_ Persuasive
- \_\_\_ Self-starter
- \_\_\_ Negotiator

### Biblical Example: Paul and Barnabas

“While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’” [~ Acts 13:2]

“Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch ... Paul and Barnabas appointed elders<sup>[a]</sup> for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.” [~ Acts 14:21B,23]

### Personal Example

Tony is an entrepreneur who is always on the lookout for the next new thing to start. When his children were born Tony knew he wanted to be the best Dad possible and searched the internet for relevant resources. He soon found that there were very few sites that provided information on being a good dad. So he started his own site called SavvyDaddy [<http://savvydaddy.com>]. As soon as the website was running successfully, Tony used his knowledge of website development to start another business called Launch Your Movement. Once it was successful he developed an interest in providing

## Natural Abilities: Entrepreneurial

micro-loans to entrepreneurs in emerging countries. Later this month he is flying to India with several colleagues to begin this new venture.

### Application

Do you have entrepreneurial skills? Is the profile above describing you? If so, God has given you a wonderful natural ability that is needed in the Church. You may wish to explore the following volunteer opportunities:

- Look at the existing programs at your church and ask, “Do people have a need in their lives that our church isn’t addressing?” Talk to your Pastor about launching a new ministry that will meet this unmet need.
- As you examine the existing programs at your church, ask yourself, “Is there a program that needs to be revitalized?” Step up to the plate to turn things around.
- Look at the needs that exist in your hometown and ask, “Is there a need that isn’t being met?” Talk to village officials about starting a new program to meet this need.
- Look at the larger world and ask, “What need exists that I have a passion to help address?” Then launch out in faith to start something new.

If this is one of your strengths, God intentionally gave it to you to serve others. Find a role in your church that will allow you to use this natural ability to meet needs, bless others, and bring you great personal fulfillment. Most importantly, using this natural ability will bring glory to God by allowing others to see Him in you.

## Natural Abilities: Interpersonal

### Definition

- To be skillful in social communication and interaction to reach certain effects or results.
- Being in, relating to, or involving relations with people.

### Core Strength

You are good with people.

### Indicators

*You find it easy and enjoyable to ...*

- \_\_\_\_\_ Cooperate
- \_\_\_\_\_ Empathize
- \_\_\_\_\_ Encourage
- \_\_\_\_\_ Facilitate
- \_\_\_\_\_ Support

*You personally are ...*

- \_\_\_\_\_ Friendly
- \_\_\_\_\_ Hospitable
- \_\_\_\_\_ Warmhearted
- \_\_\_\_\_ Likeable
- \_\_\_\_\_ Engaging

### Biblical Example: Barnabas 9:27

“But Barnabas took [Saul/Paul] and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus.” ~ Acts 9:27

“Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.” ~Acts 11:25-26

### Personal Example

Scott wants men to build deeper relationships with other men. Scott is convinced that guys have a hundred relationships that go about an inch deep. They don't know what to talk about after they've covered sports, business, and cars. Scott intentionally invites me to have coffee to get to know one another. Then he invites the man to come to an event or a men's small group. Scott really cares about other people and has a way of winning them over easily with a friendly smile and an infectious laugh. He may talk the talk, but he also walks the walk.

## Natural Abilities: Interpersonal

### Application

Do you have interpersonal skills? Is the profile above describing you? If so, God has given you a wonderful natural ability that is needed in the Church. You may wish to explore the following volunteer opportunities:

- Volunteer to be a greeter at one of the Sunday services at your church.
- Serve at the Welcome Center (or whatever your church calls it).
- Invite people to go with you to special events – both in and out of church.
- Say “hi” to people visiting the church for the first time; get to know them personally.
- Take advantage of the moment when you’re supposed to “turn and greet others” at church.

If this is one of your strengths, God intentionally gave it to you to serve others. Find a role in your church that will allow you to use this natural ability to meet needs, bless others, and bring you great personal fulfillment. Most importantly, using this natural ability will bring glory to God by allowing others to see Him in you.

## Natural Abilities: Organizational

### Definition

- “Leadership is organizing, inspiring, and driving a group to achieve results beyond their expectations.” ~Michael Dell
- “Leadership is turning vision into reality.” ~LeaderTreks

### Core Strength

You are good at achieving shared goals.

### Indicators

*You find it easy and enjoyable to ...*

- \_\_\_ Achieve
- \_\_\_ Envision
- \_\_\_ Guide
- \_\_\_ Influence
- \_\_\_ Inspire

You personally are ...

- \_\_\_ Visionary
- \_\_\_ Idea person
- \_\_\_ Motivational
- \_\_\_ Persistent
- \_\_\_ Direct

### Biblical Example: Nehemiah

“Then I said to them, ‘You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace.’ I also told them about the gracious hand of my God upon me and what the king had said to me. They replied, ‘Let us start rebuilding.’ So they began this good work.” ~Nehemiah 2:17-18

### Personal Example

Debbie is a remarkable leader who is able to cast a compelling vision that attracts people like a magnet. She was responsible for writing and implementing a brand new curriculum for her church’s volunteer connection program. Her vision was developing a curriculum that was biblically-based, practical, and transformational. She began recruiting people to be part of a team organized on the basis on individual’s abilities and interests. Twenty people joined the team and were assigned to various roles, including Bible researchers, curriculum writers, teachers, discussion facilitators, setup and tear-down, and hospitality. The team developed a high degree of confidence, respect, and trust in Debbie’s ability to guide and direct their work. The team fulfilled the vision and the program has impacted many people in the church.

## Natural Abilities: Organizational

### Application

Do you have leadership skills? Is the profile above describing you? If so, God has given you a wonderful natural ability that is needed in the Church. You may wish to explore the following volunteer opportunities:

- Be part of a team dedicated to improving existing programs
- Look for opportunities to lead church teams in developing new programs or events.
- Serve on advisory groups to provide input to church staff responsible for various ministries.
- Provide your input, feedback, and ideas whenever the opportunity presents itself.

If this is one of your strengths, God intentionally gave it to you to serve others. Find a role in your church that will allow you to use this natural ability to meet needs, bless others, and bring you great personal fulfillment. Most importantly, using this natural ability will bring glory to God by allowing others to see Him in you.

## Natural Abilities: Practical

### Definition

- Concerned with and actively engaged in the production or operation of something useful
- Concerned with the application of knowledge to useful ends, rather than with theory

### Core Strength

You are skilled in working with tools.

### Indicators

*You find it easy and enjoyable to ...*

- \_\_\_ Handy
- \_\_\_ Know-how
- \_\_\_ Mechanical
- \_\_\_ Project-minded
- \_\_\_ Technological

You personally are ...

- \_\_\_ Assemble
- \_\_\_ Build
- \_\_\_ Install
- \_\_\_ Operate
- \_\_\_ Repair

### Biblical Example: Bezalel

“Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘See, I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts - to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of craftsmanship.’” ~Moses 31:1-4

### Personal Example

My late father, Howard Lake, was a tool-and-die maker with a strong set of practical skills. He shaped steel into molds that punched out pieces used to manufacture products. In the era before computers, Dad knew how to cut metal precisely, sometimes to within 100ths of an inch. One wrong move meant that the entire piece of metal was useless. When Dad was at home I remember him constantly working to maintain or repair the house or car. He changed the oil, tuned up the spark plugs, bled the brakes, replaced alternators, and countless other tasks. On occasion I'd go with him to the junk yard looking for a vehicle that matched our car's make, model, and year. Then we'd remove the part we needed, went home, and Dad would

## Natural Abilities: Practical

replace the broken part on our car with the one from the junk yard. People with the practical abilities know how to use tools to work on mechanical and technological projects. This knowledge includes the building trades, automobile industry, and technology of all kinds.

### Application

Do you have practical skills? Is the profile above describing you? If so, God has given you a wonderful natural ability that is needed in the Church. You may wish to explore the following volunteer opportunities:

- Look for opportunities to maintain or repair the church building – painting, carpet replacement, HVAC, electrical, plumbing, technology, or whatever your specialty might be.
- Use your practical abilities as a way to serve others – believers and unbelievers alike.
- Take part in a Habitat for Humanity project in your area.
- Go on a short term mission trip that plans to build or repair something needed elsewhere.

If this is one of your strengths, God intentionally gave it to you to serve others. Find a role in your church that will allow you to use this natural ability to meet needs, bless others, and bring you great personal fulfillment. Most importantly, using this natural ability will bring glory to God by allowing others to see Him in you.



## Natural Abilities: Organizational

Quick! What's the difference between caffeinated and decaffeinated coffee? Hmm ... Is that a trick question? Obviously, the difference is the presence or absence of caffeine. Both come from the coffee bean; both impact the body. But the impact of caffeine is far more powerful.

The analogy applies to spiritual gifts. The difference between gifts and abilities is the presence or absence of the Holy Spirit. Both come from God; both impact the Body. But spiritual gifts have a FAR more powerful impact.

Both gifts and abilities come from God. Gifts are imparted at the moment of spiritual birth. The Spirit comes to live within you, and provides power to live the Christian life. God chooses the spiritual gift(s) you have; they're part of your divine design. He manifests Himself through you to spiritually impact others.

In contrast, abilities are given at the moment of physical birth. Your abilities are unique to you; they are part of your divine design. Like gifts, your abilities impact others. The difference is that spiritual gifts bring SPIRITUAL impact, abilities don't. Abilities also have impact. But their impact is physical, emotional, mental, and relational. God uses both your gifts and abilities to serve others. With gifts, the Spirit works through you to impact others; with abilities, you impact others with the abilities God gave you.

The diagram below depicts the similarities and differences between natural abilities and spiritual gifts:



What next steps should you take in using your natural abilities? First, identify your strongest natural ability. Make this determination by asking yourself these three questions: Which one tends to be used

## **Natural Abilities: Organizational**

most often? Which one energizes you the most? Which one seems to have the greatest positive impact on others?

Second, consider your current occupation. Do you use your top natural ability everyday in your job? Is your top natural ability the most important skill needed to be successful in your job? If so, how can you maximize this natural ability to succeed in your job? If not, is it possible for you to revise your job description to capitalize on this natural ability? You may need to consider changing careers if your top natural ability isn't a key aspect of your current position.

Finally, does your current ministry position make use of your natural ability? If so, use it to make the greatest possible impact on those you serve. If not, change ministries.

Your natural abilities are an important part of the way God uniquely designed you to impact others. Thank God for the ones He's given you, and use them faithfully to bring Him glory.