**Did you ever notice how some people are constantly striving to be the best at something.**

**No matter what it is, they have to be the best?**

What does it take to be the best, the greatest, or the World Champion?

What characteristics can you think of that make someone great?

Some characteristics I thought of are:

**Ability, training, studying, practice and application.**

**ABILITY**

Have you ever heard someone say "*he has great ability*", "*she has potential*", or "*They are so gifted*"? Having a natural ability is a gift. Each person is blessed with different gifts.

God, through the Spirit, is the grantor of these abilities.

*There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of work, but the same God works all of them in all men. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines. The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ.*

 1 Corinthians 12:4-12.

God knows our abilities. He wants us to be faithful, available, and obedient, then he will use us to reach others who are lost to sin and bring them into His kingdom.

*But to each of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.*

 Ephesians 4:7

**TRAINING**

Even though a person has been given Spiritual Gift, Talent, or Potential, it takes training to develop and discipline that ability. Solomon tells us what happens to a man who turns away from training and discipline.

*How I hated discipline! How my heart spurned correction!*

*I would not obey my teachers or listen to my instructors.*

*I have come to the brink of utter ruin in the midst of the whole assembly.* Proverbs 5:12-14

**STUDYING**

Knowledge is a powerful weapon, but you must be careful not to be deceived by those who seem to have knowledge. It is possible to know about something but not know how to do something. A cookbook contains recipes that describe what ingredients need to be mixed in what order, yet not everyone can cook. You can study every chess book and all the rules but that doesn't make you a great chess player. Can you play chess and not know all the rules? Sure you can; you won't be the best, but you will be doing the best you can with what you know. Can you know all the rules and not be a good chess player? It takes more than knowing the rules in your head to play chess. Knowing the rules helps, but it does not guarantee the outcome. Apollos had a great gift to teach and what he said was not incorrect but there was more he needed to learn.

*He 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)

**PRACTICE**

Just knowing the rules does not do you much good.

You need to practice what you have been told, have read, and have learned.

*This has been my practice: I obey your precepts. You are my portion, O LORD; I have promised to obey your words.*

*I have sought your face with all my heart; be gracious to me according to your promise.* Psalms 119:56-58

*Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.*

 Matthew 7:24

*I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete.*

 Luke 6:47-49

*Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me-- put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you*.

 Philippians 4:9

**APPLICATION**

The ultimate test comes when we try out our skills and put them to the test. What good are we to God if we have all the ability, knowledge, and training and fail to apply it? In chess, the application comes when we sit down and play another person.

*Do not neglect your abilities.*

I Timothy 4:14

*We have examined this, and it is true. So hear it and apply it to yourself.* Job 5:27

*Pay attention and listen to the sayings of the wise; apply your heart to what I teach, for it is pleasing when you keep them in your heart and have all of them ready on your lips. So that your trust may be in the LORD, I teach you today, even you.*

 Proverbs 22:17-19

*Apply your heart to instruction and your ears to words of knowledge.* Proverbs 23:12

**Where are you in your walk and your search for God?**

* + I have it, but don't know it.
	+ I have it, I know it, but I don't use it.
	+ I have it, I know it, and I do it.

An Example:

In our society today the Olympics is recognized as the ultimate sports competition in the world. The athletes who compete are *the best* in the world. These individuals have gifts in certain sports. The swimmer is not a runner and a runner is not a pole-vaulter. Even runners are not the same, a sprinter is different from the marathon runner. Each athlete has a special talent. Many of these athletes have trained for years to improve their abilities and improve their performance. They practice for hours and sacrifice other things to improve the one thing they do. The final proof of their efforts comes in the reward at the end of the competition. The Gold, Silver and Bronze medals go to the top three competitors who have finished ahead of the others. Often, the margin between victory and defeat is very small. Sometimes, things happen, and in an instant, victory is snatched away - a slip, a blink, the glare of the sun - something outside of their control affects the outcome. There is so much we can control but there is also so much we cannot control and can never understand.

 What a comfort to know God gives us special gifts to be used to bring honor and glory to His Kingdom. He gives us the tools but He demands we train, study, practice, and apply our gifts. God doesn't ask us fight the battles on our own. Many of the battles we fight, large or small, do not appear to be won on *this* side of eternity because we are unable to clearly see the bigger picture.

He loves us, cares for us and He only asks that we be faithful and obedient to Him.

God knows your ability, but what he wants is your availability!

**Pray God will reveal His gift to you**

**and you may have the strength and wisdom**

**to apply it.**