

EXECUTIVE CORPS®

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MOTIVATIONAL DRIVERS

The Theological and Empirical Case for the Universal Relevance of the Romans 12
Motivational Gifts

For leaders who want the evidence

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Executive Summary

Every person carries a set of motivational gifts. Paul named seven of them in Romans 12. We call them Motivational Drivers.

Our position is simple. God the Father gives these gifts to every person at creation. Salvation doesn't create them. It amplifies them and points them toward God's purposes. Christ then gives equipping roles to His church (Ephesians 4), and the Spirit manifests gifts as He wills (1 Corinthians 12). Three persons of the Godhead. Three categories of gifts. One design.

Scripture supports this directly. Paul uses the same word for gifts, *charismata*, for what God gave people who were, at that moment, enemies of the gospel, and he says those gifts are irrevocable (Romans 11:28–29). He traces his own calling back to his mother's womb (Galatians 1:15). James names the Father as the source of every good gift (James 1:17). And 1 Corinthians 12:4–6 ties gifts, services, and workings to the Spirit, the Lord, and God.

The research points the same way. DellaVecchio and Winston (2015) built a seven-scale instrument in plain, nonreligious language and tested it on 4,177 people. Seven factors emerged, one for each gift. Non-Christians show the same seven gifts as Christians. The difference is expression, not possession. In police officers, nurses, and Air Force personnel, gift profiles tracked with job satisfaction and person-job fit. Among 417 adults, gift scores sorted entrepreneurs from non-entrepreneurs with 72% accuracy.

That pattern matters for business. The largest meta-analysis on job fit shows that fit is tied to satisfaction, commitment, and intent to stay far more than to performance (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Performance depends mostly on ability. Staying depends on fit. Motivational Drivers is a fit tool, and fit is where turnover, disengagement, and lost margin begin.

1. The Claim

Romans 12:3–8 names seven kinds of contribution: prophecy, service, teaching, exhortation, giving, leading, and mercy. Most churches teach them as spiritual gifts. Most gift inventories are written for church members.

We make a bigger claim. These seven describe how God wired people. All people.

The claim has four parts.

One. The Father gives the Romans 12 drivers at creation. Every person has a profile across all seven.

Two. Salvation amplifies the drivers and redirects them toward God's purposes.

Three. Christ gives the Ephesians 4 roles as a structure for equipping the church.

Four. The Spirit manifests the 1 Corinthians 12 gifts as He wills.

The first part is what makes Motivational Drivers useful in any organization, whether or not the people in it follow Christ. The rest explains what those same drivers become when a person does.

2. The Scriptural Case

Paul uses the gift word for people outside the faith

Romans 11 is about Israel. Paul says that, regarding the gospel, they are enemies. In the next breath he writes: “For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable” (Romans 11:29). The word here is *charismata*; the same word he uses one chapter later for the seven gifts (Romans 12:6). In Paul’s own letter, *charismata* remain with people who are outside saving faith.

So the fact that Paul wrote Romans 12 to believers doesn’t limit the gifts to believers. It tells believers how to use what God already gave them before conversion.

Created capacity works in every person

Paul makes the same point about conscience. Gentiles who never had the law still do by nature what the law requires, because its work is written on their hearts (Romans 2:14–15). Every person bears God’s image (Genesis 1:27). Regent University scholars build on this point: because all people are made in God’s image, people without the Holy Spirit can still display elements of God’s character (Bocarnea et al., 2018). God sends rain on the just and the unjust (Matthew 5:45). His goodness doesn’t wait for conversion.

The Father is the source

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights” (James 1:17). Paul told the Athenians that God gives everyone life and breath and everything and sets the times and places of their lives (Acts 17:25–26). The giver is named. The recipients are everyone.

The calling starts in the womb

Paul describes his own calling this way: God set him apart from his mother’s womb and called him by His grace (Galatians 1:15). In the Greek, womb (*koilia*), grace (*charis*), and calling sit in one sentence, and all of it comes before the Damascus road encounter with the Lord. David says God formed him and wrote his days before one of them came to be (Psalm 139:13–16). God tells Jeremiah He knew him and set him apart before he was born (Jeremiah 1:5).

Paul was a gifted, driven man before he met Christ. He studied, argued, organized, and pursued what he believed with everything he had (Galatians 1:14; Philippians 3:4–6). In fact, to his own admission, his zeal was unmatched. Salvation didn’t give him a new engine. It gave the engine a new direction.

God gives ability for ordinary work

God filled Bezalel with skill for craftsmanship, and He gave ability to every skilled worker who built the tabernacle (Exodus 31:1–6). Scripture treats work ability as God’s gift long before the church exists.

Three persons, three categories

Paul lays out the structure himself:

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.” (1 Corinthians 12:4–6)

Three categories. Three persons. Gifts (*charismata*) and the Spirit. Services (*diakonai*) and the Lord. Workings (*energemata*) and God, who works all things in all.

The other passages fall into place. In Ephesians 4, Christ gives apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers “to equip the saints for the work of ministry” (Ephesians 4:11–12). The word for ministry is *diakonia*, the category 1 Corinthians 12:5 ties to the Lord. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul calls the Spirit’s gifts a “manifestation” (*phanerosis*), distributed “as he wills” (1 Corinthians 12:7, 11).

That leaves the third category, the workings of God. That is where we place Romans 12: the drivers the Father builds into each person.

We are not the first to see three categories. Fortune and Fortune (1987) organize the gifts the same way: motivational gifts (Romans 12), ministry gifts (Ephesians 4), and manifestation gifts (1 Corinthians 12).

Salvation amplifies

Romans 12 opens with transformation: be transformed by the renewing of your mind (Romans 12:2). Only then does Paul turn to the gifts, and he ties their use to faith. Each person has a measure of faith (12:3), and prophecy operates in proportion to faith (12:6). Faith doesn’t install the driver. It governs how far and how well it’s used.

The research found exactly this. Christians and non-Christians both show the seven drivers. The difference between them is expression, not possession (Parolini & Winston, 2006, as cited in Earnhardt, 2014).

3. The Empirical Case

An instrument built to standard

DellaVecchio and Winston built the Romans 12 instrument following Spector’s (1992) scale development steps (Winston, 2023). A panel of experts reviewed the items. Eight separate studies refined them, including interviews with high scorers to make sure each item measured one gift and not a blend. The items ask how often a person does something, not whether they believe they have a gift, and they use no religious language. That makes the instrument usable in any workplace.

The final study collected 4,177 responses. The data were well suited to factor analysis (KMO = .91), and seven factors emerged, one for each gift in Romans 12 (DellaVecchio & Winston, 2015; Winston, 2023).

Scale	Driver	Cronbach's α
Perceiving	Watchman	.798
Serving	Builder	.684
Teaching	Instructor	.697
Encouraging	Energizer	.817
Giving	Investor	.674
Ruling	Operator	.816
Mercy	Advocate	.888

Every person scored on all seven scales. The instrument produces a profile, not a single label. That's how Paul describes the body: many members, each with a different function (Romans 12:4–5).

The drivers show up outside the church

Parolini and Winston studied 319 non-Christians and found the Romans 12 drivers in Christians and non-Christians alike. The difference was expression, not possession (Parolini & Winston, 2006, as cited in Earnhardt, 2014). DellaVecchio and Winston also compared results across religious groups when they developed the instrument (Winston, 2023).

Profiles track with satisfaction and fit

Researchers have now tested driver profiles in five working populations.

Police officers. Officers with long tenure and high job satisfaction had a driver profile significantly different from the general population. Three distinct profiles emerged among them (McPherson, 2008, as cited in Winston, 2023).

Nurses. Two profiles emerged, and they differed significantly in job satisfaction (Tomlinson, 2012, as cited in Winston, 2023).

U.S. Air Force. Among 72 enlisted personnel, two profiles emerged. One reported significantly higher person-job fit (66.8% vs. 54.7%) and general job satisfaction (81.3% vs. 72.6%; Earnhardt, 2014).

College professors. Two profiles emerged. Satisfaction and fit were similar across both (Tomlinson & Winston, 2011).

Entrepreneurs. Among 417 adults, driver scores correctly sorted entrepreneurs from non-entrepreneurs 72% of the time. The drivers also correlated significantly with innovativeness, risk-taking, and proactiveness (Knopf, 2016, as cited in Winston, 2023).

In three of the four studies that measured satisfaction, driver profile made a difference. A framework drawn from Romans 12 is predicting work outcomes in secular settings.

4. Fit Predicts Satisfaction. Ability Predicts Performance.

The Air Force study found no performance difference between profiles. That is what the science predicts.

Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, and Johnson (2005) analyzed 172 studies of person-environment fit. Person-job fit correlated .56 with job satisfaction, .47 with organizational commitment, and $-.46$ with intent to quit. Its correlation with overall performance was .20, the least consistent relationship across settings. Fit that meets what a person needs and wants had the strongest tie to satisfaction, at .61.

That is the kind of fit the drivers measure. Winston (2023) places Romans 12 on the needs side of person-job fit: the driver profile describes what a person wants from their work. A needs-based fit measure should predict satisfaction, commitment, and intent to stay. It should predict performance only weakly, because performance depends mostly on ability. The Romans 12 research shows exactly that pattern.

There's a second reason the Air Force performance result was flat. The ratings couldn't tell airmen apart. In 2014 the Air Force Chief of Staff said the enlisted evaluation system had become so inflated that most airmen received a "firewall five," which made it very hard to identify the best performers. The Air Force overhauled the system and added forced distribution in 2015. In Earnhardt's data, both profiles averaged about 79% on performance. When the ruler can't separate people, no predictor can.

For a business owner, the takeaway is direct. Fit is tied to whether people are satisfied, committed, and planning to stay. That's where turnover starts. That's where margin leaks.

5. The Seven Drivers

Romans 12	Driver	Domain	What the research measures
Perceiving	Watchman	Alignment	Sees and states what is true. Willing to confront or correct.
Serving	Builder	Execution	Spots practical needs and acts on them. Frees others to work.
Teaching	Instructor	Clarity	Analyzes, studies, and explains so others learn.
Encouraging	Energizer	Momentum	Calls out the best in others through encouragement and motivation.
Giving	Investor	Resources	Stewards and releases money, time, energy, and skills generously.
Ruling	Operator	Direction	Creates order, sets goals, coordinates people and resources.
Mercy	Advocate	Restoration	Feels and acts on empathy for people in pain.

The Driver and domain names are Executive Corps® working names. The Greek rationale for each is in our companion paper, *From Gift Labels to Motivational Drivers*.

6. Using Motivational Drivers

We use Motivational Drivers for discovery and development. Nobody hears “this test says what you are.” The seven drivers give people language for patterns they already live: what they notice first, what work feels meaningful, what frustrates them when it’s missing, and what they keep contributing no matter where they sit.

We lead with the workshop. The research treats every person as a profile across all seven, so discovery through examples, reflection, observation, and conversation fits better than a single label. The assessment is one data point. It doesn’t get the final word on who someone is.

The evidence points to where the drivers do the most good: self-awareness, team fit, delegation, role design, reading conflict, and keeping good people. In hiring, the drivers inform the fit conversation. Ability gets assessed on its own.

7. Conclusion

Scripture says the Father gives good gifts to every person, calls people from the womb, and leaves His gifts in place even among those who reject Him. Paul lays out three categories of gifts under three persons of the Godhead. Romans 12 names the seven drivers the Father builds into each of us.

Research says the same seven drivers can be measured in plain language. They show up in Christians and non-Christians alike. They track with satisfaction and fit in police officers, nurses, and airmen, and they sort entrepreneurs from everyone else, exactly the way job-fit science says a motivation measure should.

Two lines of evidence. One conclusion. Romans 12 describes how God designed people. All people.

Working thesis. Motivational Drivers are the seven drivers God the Father gives every person at creation, named in Romans 12 and measurable in any workplace. Salvation amplifies them because of pursuit towards the glory of God. Job-fit with them tracks with satisfaction, commitment, and the decision to stay.

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