

Tech Talk

by Randy Salo

Computers exist in various types, each of which is intended for a given purpose. There are desktop machines that provide more power in regard to processor capability, memory, hard drive space and the ability to attach a variety of devices. All of this comes at the sacrifice of portability.

Another type of computer is a laptop. When laptops first entered the market they were slow and lacked significant capability relative to the desktops of the day. In today's market, laptops are often considered desktop replacements. This is due to the decrease in cost and size of components. While the degree of overall processing power is still behind that of desktops, laptops provide a powerful computing platform.

A third category of computer is the server. Just as in other types of computers, servers also have a wide range of features. The set of components included depends on the intended function of the server. Many times we would see many "small" servers that share the load of activities such as responding to web requests. These servers generally would have a single central processing unit (CPU), a moderate amount of random access memory (RAM) and disk space. Often these "small" servers are one rack unit (1.75 inches) high.

On the other hand, servers hosting databases generally have several gigabytes of memory, multiple CPUs, hundreds or thousands of gigabytes of disk space and multiple power supplies. These servers can be four, six or even ten rack units so as to accommodate the necessary components (disk drives, power supplies and fans to keep the heat moving). The disks on these large servers usually are set up in a redundant fashion so if one disk drive fails the overall system or its data is not significantly impacted.

As mentioned earlier, servers vary in physical size as well as applications they perform. One of the more recent "mega server" applications is hosting virtual machines. This means one large physical server hosts several virtual servers where everything appears to the operating system as physical hardware but is really simulated in software. This provides organizations a cost-effective method of running multiple applications on several servers yet has a lower physical server count in their data centers.

The above principles are general characterizations of the types of computers. As mentioned above laptops can be considered desktop replacements. In other words, a given machine may have an original intended purpose but is applied to a different purpose. Sometimes this new purpose is temporary to meet a short term need. Other times it is a long term change of purpose for a device. For instance, if you want to host a web server, any computer will do: a laptop, a desktop or a server. What matters isn't the type of computer but the components and features it provides (processor power, memory, disk space, etc.).

What does this mean for our spiritual life? We all know there are different

"types" of Christians: different stages of maturity, different spiritual gifts, different natural talents, etc. One key passage in understanding this principle is 1 Corinthians 12. Here, the Apostle Paul reminds us that not all of us can be hands or eyes. Each member of our physical body is for a given purpose. Just as each computer has a purpose so does each member of Christ's Church.

We are reminded in 1 Corinthians 12:11 that it is the Spirit who distributes these gifts; "But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills" (NASB). Some may receive multiple gifts; others may receive one or two gifts. Regardless of which gifts you have or how many you have been given, you are still an important member of the body of Christ. We must always recognize that God has given us specific gifts and we are to use them for His glory and honor. Some of us may be more portable (like a laptop) and can go out and work for His kingdom in the form of mission trips, attending or speaking at conferences, etc. Others may have one or two gifts they are really good at and can reliably serve a local church for many years (like a "small" server). Maybe you are one of the "mega servers" that has many gifts and can do many things in your local church. All of these are great and necessary applications.

Verse 11 implies one more thing too. The Spirit distributes the gifts. However it does not specifically mention duration for the gift. He may choose to give a gift to someone on a short-term basis as well. Who receives what and for how long is dependent on the Spirit's will. This means we may have the gift of evangelism for a brief time, possibly to witness to the person we encounter in a store, at the hospital or at work. We may also be called upon to serve our Lord in a distant location temporarily. A desktop computer (or even "mega server") can be disconnected and relocated for a period of time; so we can be called to a short-term missions trip or attend a conference in some other location. This experience could be the catalyst to our serving the Lord in a different (or simply more confident) capacity when we return.

There are many different applications of computers. While each computer may have a predefined profile for use they can also be used for other purposes as well. As members of God's Church we are given a "profile" in the form of spiritual gifts to use. We may receive more gifts on a temporary basis or simply as we mature in our walk with Christ; the decision is left to the Holy Spirit. We must recognize this fact and be open to serve. Are you powered on and waiting to receive the input from the Spirit?