

Sermon Notes

Practical Lessons for Understanding the Word of God



Step Three—Service

KEY PASSAGE: 1 Peter 4:10-11 | **SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE:** Psalm 92:12-15 | Mark 10:45 | Acts 2:4-8 | Romans 12:4-8
1 Corinthians 12:1-11 | Ephesians 4:11-12 | Colossians 3:22-24

SUMMARY

Life is like a long journey, but we each approach it in different ways.

Some people have a planned destination and consult a map or GPS along the way to make sure they're on track. Others live spontaneously just going wherever the road takes them.

Which one is more characteristic of you? Are you drifting through life, managing from day to day without too much thought for the future, or have you set goals and pursued a course which will help you achieve them? If so, whose plan are you following—yours or God's? The Lord has specific goals for your life and has given you talents, abilities, and spiritual gifts to help you fulfill them.

SERMON POINTS

There is a difference between talents and spiritual gifts.

Talents and skills are natural abilities with which we are born. As we grow, they develop and generally determine our interests and vocations. However, a spiritual gift is a divinely given endowment, which equips us to serve the Lord effectively and successfully. These are chosen for us by God and given at the moment of salvation to enable us to accomplish His plans for our lives.

- **Ministry gifts.** Ephesians 4:11-12 lists spiritual gifts which enable the recipients for the work of service and build up the body of Christ: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers.
- **Personal gifts.** First Corinthians 12:4-11 describes

gifts which are given to individuals for the common good of the church: wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, distinguishing spirits, tongues, and their interpretation.

- **Motivational gifts.** Romans 12:4-8 speaks of spiritual gifts which determine how we express ourselves and serve others: prophecy, service, teaching, exhortation, giving, leadership, and mercy.

Every believer has at least one spiritual gift.

A simple way to discover them is to examine how we respond to situations or needs. For example, those with exhortation like to help and encourage others. Leaders tend to take charge of situations, while people with mercy feel compassion for the hurting. Knowing our spiritual gifts not only aids us in determining how to serve in the church, it can also make our employment more enjoyable and productive when our jobs fit our gifting. Furthermore, understanding the various gifts helps us better understand, accept, and value each other.

Spiritual gifts are given to us for the common good of the church.

They are not for us but for others. God has made us to be a part of the whole body of Christ (Rom. 12:4-5). As we work together according to each one's unique giftedness, the church is benefitted (1 Cor. 12:7). That's why Peter says to employ them in serving one another (1 Pet. 4:10). When we actively use our spiritual gifts to help others, we gain a sense of purpose and satisfaction because we're doing what the Lord created us to do and experiencing success as the Spirit empowers us.

God accomplishes His work on earth through His church as we employ our gifts.

After Jesus ascended to sit at the Father's right hand, He sent the Holy Spirit to accomplish God's work in and through us. He moves in our hearts by revealing needs and empowering each of us to respond according to our own unique spiritual gifting. Together we accomplish His will.

The work is the Lord's, and we are entrusted as stewards of our spiritual gifts.

Being a good steward requires more than sitting in a pew on Sundays. No matter how little we think we have to offer, God wants us to make ourselves available for service. Instead of using our difficult backgrounds, inadequacies, or past failures as excuses, we should do our best and trust the Lord to work through us. No matter what we do or whom we serve, we're working for Jesus, even in the most menial work. (Col. 3:23).

One of the reasons the Lord gives us spiritual gifts is to make us into the people He wants us to be and accomplish what He desires us to do. We won't realize our potential until we put our gifts into action. Therefore, we should never underestimate what God can do in our lives. He can miraculously open doors and provide the resources we need to succeed.

We are to serve one another in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Our spiritual gifts don't originate with us and are not to be used in our own strength or for selfish purposes. If the disciples couldn't fulfill the work Jesus assigned them without the Spirit's empowerment, neither can we. As He guides and equips us, God's work is accomplished for His glory.

Why do believers fail to serve the Lord and thereby weaken the testimony of the church?

- **Ignorance of Scripture.** Some Christians don't use their spiritual gifts because they don't know what God's Word says about them.
- **Inadequacy.** When people focus on their own

weaknesses instead of the Lord's power, they don't feel capable of accomplishing His work.

- **Guilt.** A sense of unworthiness due to past sins may cause believers to mistakenly believe that they have been disqualified from service to the Lord.
- **Fear of failure.** Some Christians let fear keep them from serving instead of seeing failures as opportunities to learn and improve.
- **Laziness.** Those who want to avoid work won't volunteer to help.
- **Unwillingness to commit.** Using spiritual gifts is a responsibility some believers are reluctant to accept.
- **Lack of love for other people.** If people aren't concerned for others, they're unlikely to serve them.
- **Selfishness with time.** Those who want to protect their time for their own interests often say they are too busy to help.
- **Poor time management.** Christians who never schedule time to serve others rarely get around to it.
- **Comparison.** People sometimes turn down a service opportunity because they think someone else could do it better.
- **Sin.** If believers are living in sin, they won't have a big desire to serve the Lord.

RESPONSE

- Have you ever honestly asked the Lord what He wants you to do? How would accomplishing God's work benefit both you and others?
- Do you know how the Lord has gifted you to serve Him? If so, how does your particular gift influence how you respond to situations and people? If you're not sure what your spiritual gift is, do you see a connection between how you typically respond and any of the gifts listed in the Scriptures?
- Is anything keeping you from serving the Lord? What can you do to overcome these obstacles so that you can live in the fullness of God's plan for your life?

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