

What Do You Do with Your Gifts?

by Susan Forde

Subject: Gifts

Theme: What people do with their gifts

Proposition: Everyone receives gifts from God to minister to Him and others, but the question is not what my gifts are, but what do I do with them?

Transitional Sentence: Because of a dramatic presentation illustrating four ways that people respond to God in the reception and distribution of their gifts, people will see different choices and see that in responding to their own gifts from God, the choice is theirs.

Introduction

It has been a privilege to have been able to come here to CCF and minister to you, Thank you for allowing me to come and speak a word to you, ... A word, I hope, that blessed you, encouraged you, motivated you, inspired you and caused growth, resulted in you drawing closer to God. It certainly has been a blessing for me.

The messages these past weeks have been to help you grow in understanding of the importance of an ever deepening relationship with God. He has been and is still calling CCF to a closer relationship with Him.

In these past weeks, we talked about moving past good intentions to reality, placing guard rails, practicing God's best for our lives, and proving our faith by action.

We talked about my life changing experience, my personal testimony, and how God can use anyone with a willing heart to serve as we draw closer to Him and make the most of every opportunity.

We talked about the result of change in our lives from the power of God's transforming Word, in that we find our hunger and thirst for a deeper relationship with God and with one another increasing.

God's best for our lives **is** a deeper relationship with Him. We develop a closeness to God as we choose to make Him our #1, as we recognize and acknowledge His blessings in our lives even in the midst of the trials and suffering, and as we realize God's faithfulness which establishes such trust that we will know beyond a doubt that God has made our lives secure.

The response to the call for a deeper relationship with God includes spending time, holy luxury, with God, being motivated by love for God, not obligation. As we spend this time with God, we know God better, become more like Him, we grow in His love and knowledge. Spending time with God changes us and this change results in an ever deepening relationship with Him and being filled with His unlimited provisions, abundance and blessings, not for our own indulgence, but for His glory and purpose.

The response to the call for a deeper relationship with God

- Results in being better equipped to minister to God through worship, to minister to our brothers and sisters within the body by love and nurture and to minister to the world through evangelism, continuing Jesus work of love and compassion.
- It results in not operating in our own strength, but we are being enabled by the power of the Holy Spirit, the gift sent to ensure our success.
- It results in being able to truly walk as Jesus did, to have the same attitude as that of Jesus, to reflect Jesus, to be like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose, offering selfless love even to our enemies, emptying ourselves.

Through the ever deepening relationship with God, we can find all we need to love, forgive and serve supernaturally for God is faithful to provide all that we need to be all He wants us to be, to love Him with our entire being and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

So that was a recap of the past weeks. And it leads us to the questions like, how can I serve? What have I got to give? What are my gifts? This is entirely between you and God. 1 Cor 7:7 says God gives us all gifts.

We the Body Have Gifts

We are all a part of the body that Jesus wants to continue His work of love and compassion through. The Bible talks about the church being like a body. Not one part of the body is more important than another. Not one job is more important than another (1 Cor 12:1, 4-6, 12-27, Rom 12:6).

Ask God and He will tell you (1 Cor 1:7, James 4:2-3). If you want to do something in particular, ask God. If you want a certain gift or ministry, ask God. He may start you out with small, menial tasks to see if you are faithful servant with what He gives you before giving you something more. Remember the parable that Jesus told about the servants with their talents? It is in Mt 25:14-18.

The servants received talents to keep until the master returned from a lengthy trip. One was given five, another two and other one, according to his ability (25:15). In other words, they started out with a small amount so that they could grow before they got more. The servants with five and two put theirs to work and gained double. But the servant with one didn't gain anything extra. When the master returned he commended the servants who had used his talents wisely and he rewarded them by giving them more. Verse 21 says, "*Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!*" (25:21). In Luke 19 the story is told from another perspective and the result is the master saying, in verse 17 "*Well done, my good servant!*" his master replied. *'Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.'*" The master **rewarded the servants according to what they did with what they had been given.**

God also may start us out with little and reward us based upon what we do with the gifts He gives us. He may give us more rewarding tasks as we grow and prove our faithfulness in the small things.

God may also point you in a direction in which you think you are weakest to see if you'll obey, trust in His provisions to accomplish the task or if you will try it on your own, some may have heard it called stepping out of your comfort zone. Noah comes to mind, think of the ridicule he faced and the pressure to not obey. If the people's hearts were not so hard, God may have delivered more than Noah and his family. Moses also comes to mind, he didn't think he was qualified, but God told him, "I'll be with you." (Ex 3:12) Through Moses, God delivered the nation of Israel from Egyptian bondage. God also said "I'll be with you" to Joshua, Jacob, Isaac, and Gideon. God may direct you to a task that you absolutely cannot do without Him, so that you can grow in dependence upon Him. He will be with you also. The gift of the Holy Spirit will empower you.

All of these past weeks called for some kind of action on our part, a call to respond somehow. You'll have to figure out what your gifting is from God and then you will have to decide **what do you do with your gifts?** That is the real question that we have to answer based upon the past weeks. What do you do with your gifts? And what you do with your gifts is up to you.

Dramatic presentation begins: What Do You Do with Your Gifts?

First Act

The Giver(G) offers a beautifully wrapped gift and Recipient(R) will not accept it insisting that he/she is not worthy. The G continues to insist that she wants the recipient to accept it, that though he/she is not worthy, it is a gift that the G wants the R to have. The end result is that the R refuses the gift and no one in the body benefits from a gift not accepted.

Second Act

The G offers a beautifully wrapped gift to another R and that person gladly receives it, admires it, is generally grateful, but does not open it but rather sets it on a shelf, unopened so that he/she could admire the beauty of the gift never knowing what the true gift is. The end result is that the gift is received but never realized in its full potential and no one in the body benefits from the gift that is left unopened and unused.

Third Act

The G offers a beautifully wrapped gift to another R that not only receives it but commences to open it and as he/she looks in and realizes the potential of the gift, he/she hoards it, hiding it from the brothers/sisters of the congregation, selfishly keeping the gift all to him/herself, for his own indulgence not for God's glory or purpose. The end result is that no one in the body benefits from the gift not used or shared.

Fourth Act

The G offers a beautifully wrapped gift to another R that receives it, opens it, sees its potential and in all his/her joy cannot help but share it with his/her church family. The R begins

immediately pouring out of the abundance of the gift on the congregation. The end result is that the body benefits from the gift used and shared.

We too all have been offered or given gifts and we have to decide what to do with them. Do we???? Or as we are filled up with God's abundance and gifts, as a result of an ever deepening relationship with God, do we then pour out of His abundance upon our brothers and sisters, sharing our gifts with them and reach out to a lost and dying world, to share love and meet needs? What choice will we make regarding the gifts God is giving us? It is a choice that each and every one of us has to make.

What do you do with your gifts? Do you make a difference?

Making a Difference

Our scripture this morning is 1 Pet 4:10 *"Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms"*

How do we make a difference? How do we serve others by using our gifts?

1. **Be the real you.** If you have a deep relationship with God, you know Him better and know His will, are sensitive to the leading of His Spirit and to His voice, and obey what He tells you, allowing Him to work through you, you will make the difference that you were born to make. It will be so natural. You discover your gifts and find innovative ways to use those gifts to serve others, for God's purpose, God's glory. Just be you – the authentic you that God created.
2. When Jesus was praying for His disciples, He said that they were in the world, but not of the world. (Jn 17:16-17, 20) This is true of all His disciples including us, now. He prayed that we are one in Christ so that the world would believe. **Don't think that just b/c you may not be powerful or wealthy or famous, that you won't make a difference.**

That reminds me of a story of a man who made a difference.

The Starfish Story

adapted from The Star Thrower
by Loren Eiseley
1907 - 1977

Once upon a time, there was a wise man who used to go to the ocean to do his writing. He had a habit of walking on the beach before he began his work.

One day, as he was walking along the shore, he looked down the beach and saw a human figure moving like a dancer. He smiled to himself at the thought of someone who would dance to the day, and so, he walked faster to catch up.

As he got closer, he noticed that the figure was that of a young man, and that what he was doing was not dancing at all. The young man was reaching down to the shore, picking up small objects, and throwing them into the ocean.

He came closer still and called out "Good morning! May I ask what it is that you are doing?"

The young man paused, looked up, and replied "Throwing starfish into the ocean."

"I must ask, then, why are you throwing starfish into the ocean?" asked the somewhat startled wise man.

To this, the young man replied, "The sun is up and the tide is going out. If I don't throw them in, they'll die."

Upon hearing this, the wise man commented, "But, young man, do you not realize that there are miles and miles of beach and there are starfish all along every mile? You can't possibly make a difference!"

At this, the young man bent down, picked up yet another starfish, and threw it into the ocean. As it met the water, he said, "I made a difference to that one!"

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Just do what you can, what is possible for you and God will do what is impossible. You just use the simple tools of loving and helping others and in the end, you will make the difference that you were born to make as you live out your faith in authentic action in the world and not of the world.

3. **The difference you make may be the opportunity right in front of you.** Think of the story of the good Samaritan. The Samaritan took direct and immediate action. He didn't analyze the problem or wonder if this would be a worthwhile ministry in the future. He didn't say "this is not what I specialize in" or "it's not my job" or "responsibility." He didn't interview the man to see if he was worthy to help or to figure how much help the man was likely to need or have him fill out forms in triplicate. He just did what he could. You also can make a difference by taking action and making the most of every opportunity that presents itself right in front of you.
4. **You may make a difference that you did not plan to make.** God may take you by surprise. I remember being kind of down b/c I was not seeing the fruit of my labor. I came to the conclusion that I was bearing no fruit. When I prayed about it, God spoke on my heart that the tree doesn't see the fruit that it bears. No, it just grows under the hand of the caretaker within its seasons and it is not the business of the tree to know how much fruit it bears. (The story of the missionary that made the difference...)
5. As you set out to make a difference, remember that **little things make a difference.** Example: Marylou's Garden project and the giving of excess plants to people. It became a ministry. One woman and her husband especially changed and brought closer together. And within our church, our community grew closer as we all compared nurturing our

tomato plants and discussing it with one another. We too can make a difference in small acts of loving and serving one another with the gifts that God gives us.

We may not see or understand the difference we make or the impact we had on the lives of those around us until we are called home and God says to you “good and faithful servant” like the master said to the servants who multiplied the talents from Mt 25. Another example comes from Mt 25. It is the story about the people who were feeding and clothing, and simply considering and treating others better than themselves, putting others’ needs before theirs. Not only looking to their own interests but also the interest of others. This is what the King of that parable said,

“ ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶ I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me. ’” Mt 25:34-36

The people in their surprise said, “When did we do all this?” And he answered ‘*I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.*’ Mt 25:40

Conclusion

So just know that one day when you are in heaven, you will receive the Servant’s Reward. There is not much in the way of payment for a job well done or a reward here on earth. But there is a time of reward coming at the fullness of God’s abundance.

The Servant’s Reward by Roy Lessin

“One day, when you are in heaven, someone will come up to you and thank you for the way you touched his/her life with hope and encouragement. The person’s words will take you by surprise. Soon another person will seek you out, and then another, and another.

As you listen to each one’s story, you will begin to discover all the ways that God used your life when you were completely unaware of it. You will find that it was not only through the big things you did, but also through the small things – through a spoken word that was not planned, a spontaneous act of kindness, a loving attitude, or a simple prayer of concern.

To your joy, you will discover that in all these ways and more, God used you to deposit an eternal measure of His love into many needy hearts.”

There will be so much joy as you realize how many lives you have touched, how much fruit you really did bear and as you receive your servant’s reward. Through the close relationship with God, our lives naturally touch the lives of others as we share and pour out of the abundance that God gives us and fills us up with. Through the close relationship with God, we receive all we need from God to accomplish His will. We have access to His abundant provision, His unlimited resources. His gifts poured out on us so that we can be ministers, ministering to God first

through worship, to each other by loving and nurturing one another and to the lost and hopeless in the world through evangelism. It's up to us to take/receive His gifts and to live out our faith in the action of continuing Jesus' work of love and compassion.