

Just for Thought

A great quote from Rick Warren says, "Biblical Christianity uses everyone's gifts. Every Christian is created for ministry (Eph. 2:10), saved for ministry (2 Tim 1:9), called into ministry (1 Peter 2:9-10), gifted for ministry (1 Peter 4:10), authorized for ministry (Matt. 28:18-20), commanded to minister (Matt. 20:26-28), to be prepared for ministry (Eph. 4:11-12), needed for ministry (1 Cor. 12:27), accountable for ministry, and will be rewarded according to his or her ministry (Col. 3:23-24)." That's pretty much a summary of today's lesson.

The Challenge

1. Prepare for next week – Read Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4. Make a list of gifts you find there.
2. Spiritual Gift Analysis – We'll do a brief spiritual gift analysis in group next week, but if you have time for a more in-depth analysis, click "AssessMe!" under the Serve tab at ewestwood.org, or visit DontBeAnIsland.com.
3. Input from Others – Once you have a list of gifts, ask a spouse, family member, or friend which gifts on the list they think you might possess. Bring this information to group next week.

Answers

Answers - Blanks from "Truths to Remember" on opposite side:

1. believers, 2. one, 3. all, 4. Holy Spirit, 5. Develop, 6. sin, 7. glorifies, grows



"Discover Your Purpose" Series

Design Defines Purpose

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Starting Point

Sometimes we don't find things in life where they are expected. Logically, we would be quite fulfilled in life if everyone else waited on us hand and foot, but in reality, we find the most joy when we focus on meeting the needs of others.

Why do you think this is true?

There seem to be two basic views of our relationship with God. Some see salvation as an ending point, being saved from something. Others see salvation as a beginning point, being saved for something.

Which of these do you think most reflects God's intention for us?

This study begins a two-week series on spiritual gifts and God's design for their use in the body of Christ. This week we'll do an overview, but next week we'll help you discover how God has gifted you to serve His church.

Scripture

1 Peter 4:8-11

Above all, love each other deeply... Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms... with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.

Colossians 3:23-24

²³Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, ²⁴since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

1 Corinthians 12:18

But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as He wanted them to be.

Focus

Just what are spiritual gifts? The term "spiritual gifts" comes from the Greek words *charismata* (gifts) and *pneumatika* (spirits). They are the plural forms of *charisma*, meaning "expression of grace," and *pneumatikon* meaning "expression of Spirit." While there are different kinds of gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4), generally speaking, spiritual gifts are God-given graces (special abilities, offices, or manifestations) meant for works of service, to benefit and build up the body of Christ as a whole. (Mary Fairchild)

When studying spiritual gifts, one thing that believers need to be careful with is our focus. Often the focus becomes the gift and not the goal. To explain that, imagine a doctor who discovers a syringe in his hand, standing above a young child dying of the disease for which the syringe holds the cure. We as Christians can get so focused on the syringe that we forget to give the shot! The gift itself should be secondary to the purpose of the gift. So once you discover your gifts, focus on what God wants to accomplish through them.

It's pretty obvious that many people aren't interested in discovering their spiritual gifts and place of service. In this and other areas, believers are less convicted by sins of omission than we are about sins of commission. In other words, we feel good about ourselves so long as we don't do the bad things, but it's okay not to do good things and fulfill our purpose. But if using our spiritual gifts is God's design, then finding our place of service is an act of obedience and worship. Conversely, refusing to do so is disobedience.

Surely most of us want to experience the full life that Jesus describes in John 10:10 as "abundant". There seems to be no way to arrive there until our minds are conformed to Christ, becoming externally focused just as He was.

Many who are parents remember our kids watching the movie *Cars* countless times. In that movie, the character Mater, a tow truck, is most happy when he is towing and Lightning McQueen, the race car, is most happy racing. Ephesians 2:10 reminds us that "we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works..." When we discover how we are gifted, we will discover the things in life that bring us the most joy. It may be towing or racing or it may be evangelizing or encouraging. But joy will come when we are doing what we were created to do.

Let's also remember that it's all about God, not us. Using our spiritual gifts will sometimes be difficult and demanding. Yet, even in those times, it will also be rewarding. The church will shine brightest when its people discover and use their spiritual gifts to serve one another and ultimately bring glory to God.

Truths About Spiritual Gifts

1. Only _____ receive spiritual gifts. (Romans 12:5-6)
2. Every Christian has at least _____ gift. (1 Cor. 7:7)
3. No one receives _____ the gifts and no single gift is given to everyone. (1 Cor. 12:27)
4. The _____ decides what gifts I get. (1 Cor. 12:11)
5. I am to _____ the gifts God gives me. (1 Tim. 4:14)
6. It's a _____ to waste the gifts God gave me. (1 Cor. 4:1-2)
7. Using my gifts _____ God and _____ me. (John 15:8)

Questions for Discussion

1. Since human beings are weak and fail so often, why do you think God's plan for evangelism or anything else involves us at all?
2. Some people seem to be gifted who are not believers. What is the difference between spiritual gifts and natural abilities?
3. Why do you think many believers have never sought to discover their spiritual gifts?
4. Is it okay if we don't really know what our spiritual gifts are?
5. What spiritual gifts do you believe people in this group have?
6. What is the difference in two people trying to do the same task, where one is spiritually gifted for the task and the other is not?