

BIBLICAL STEWARDSHIP

WEEK 2: OUR TALENTS, GIFTS, AND SERVICE TO THE LORD

INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

- The goal of this series is to consider the unique calling of believers to steward their lives for the glory of God and of Christ. For the believer, our whole lives (our skills, bodies, time, money, and so on) ultimately belong to God. Everything we have is on loan to us from our Lord, and we will give an accounting for how we used it. Over the course of these lessons, we hope to bring biblical principles to bear in our everyday lives, so that we might manage what God has entrusted to us in a way that is distinctly Christ-centered. s
- Here is schedule for the upcoming lessons:
 - June 2nd: Overview of stewardship for the believers
 - **June 9th: Our talents, gifts, and service to the Lord**
 - June 16th: Our bodies
 - June 23rd: Our time and relationships
 - June 30th: Our money and other resources Part I
 - July 7th: No Class
 - July 14th: Our money and other resources Part II

INTRODUCTION

- Working from last week's idea of biblical stewardship, we are going to look at a couple ways the Bible desires us to serve or minister as believers.
- The goal is not to become overwhelmed with a "to-do" list, but to make sure that we are using what God has given us...both for His glory and the edification of the church.
- Why is this so important in the life of the church?
- **Ephesians 4:16** "...from whom (Christ) the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love."
- Paul tells the church in Ephesus a couple of things here which is to motivate them to be active members in the church.
 - That every joint supplies something to the greater whole.

- This means that each person, no matter what they do, is part of something that is greater than themselves. Jesus has given each person a place in His body so that they will supply His body with what He desires.
- Each part is to be working properly.
 - When someone does not want to serve in the area they have been gifted in (not for a lack of ability but selfish desire), then the whole body will suffer.
- When we use our individual gifts in the corporate body, there will be growth in love.
 - Healthy things grow and reproduce. When the church is being the church, it is going to be growing. Not just growth in numbers, but the building up of each other in love.
- Church growth is not a program nor is it something that can be planned out. It is something that happens because each person is using their gifts and talents to glorify God and edify (or build up) church members.
- **Colossians 2:19** “...and not holding fast to the head (Jesus), *from whom the entire body*, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God.”
 - As the church holds fast to Christ, He supplies the needed power to both hold together and grow the church as God desires.
 - The growth of the church has everything to do with its members relationship to Christ. This starts with the church leadership, the church’s philosophy of ministry, teaching, etc.
 - But a key component which is often overlooked is the body of the church and their relationship to Christ and to one another.
- As we talk about being good stewards of our gifts and talents, we are ultimately discussing how we are serving Jesus by how we are serving one another...which is His body.

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND NATURAL TALENTS

- While one may develop his talents and later direct his profession or hobby along those lines, spiritual gifts were given by the Holy Spirit for the building up of Christ’s church. In that, all Christians are to play an active part in the furtherance of the gospel of Christ. All are called and equipped to be involved in the “work of the ministry” (Ephesians 4:12). All are gifted so that they can contribute to the cause of Christ out of gratitude for all He has done for them. In doing so, they also find fulfillment in life through their labor for Christ. It is the job of the church leaders to help build up the saints so they can be further equipped for the ministry to which God has called them. The intended result of spiritual gifts is that the church as a whole can grow, being strengthened by the combined supply of each member of Christ’s body.¹

¹ <https://www.gotquestions.org/difference-talent-spiritual-gift.html>

Important Distinctions

- To summarize the differences between spiritual gifts and talents: 1) A talent is the result of genetics and/or training, while a spiritual gift is the result of the power of the Holy Spirit. 2) A talent can be possessed by anyone, Christian or non-Christian, while spiritual gifts are only possessed by Christians. 3) While both talents and spiritual gifts should be used for God's glory and to minister to others, spiritual gifts are focused on these tasks, while talents can be used entirely for non-spiritual purposes.²
 - The following list can be found in its complete form.³
- **1. Every Ability That We Have Is Given by God**
- First, it must be recognized that human talents are something that are ultimately God-given. Both believer and unbeliever possess talents. There is no doubt about this. However we should not confuse these human talents with spiritual gifts. While there is a similarity between them there are also differences.
- **2. A Natural Talent Does Not Automatically Become a Spiritual Gift**
- There is the misconception that a natural talent will become that person's spiritual gift. One may have the natural ability to teach others. However this does not automatically mean that this person will have the gift of teaching God's Word. There is a spiritual dimension that must be involved in the teaching of God's Word. The mere fact that a person can impart information does not mean they have the spiritual gift of teaching. Therefore, we should not assume that one who teaches for a profession should automatically teach in the church. Indeed, to teach the Word of God not only involves the gift of teaching it also involves serious study.
- **3. Sometimes the Spiritual Ability Is Not Evident until after Conversion**
- On the other hand, God may give someone the gift of teaching who had never before displayed such ability. There are many examples of people who became great teachers of God's Word who, before their conversion, had shown no ability or aptitude to teach. It was only after they became a Christian that the ability to powerfully teach became evident in their life. Consequently, there are many cases where God used someone that seemingly had little natural talent.
- **4. There May Be a Relationship between Natural Talents and Spiritual Gifts**
- However, there may be a relationship between natural talents and spiritual gifts. God prepares His people for use in His service. The Apostle Paul testified to the preparation God made in his life.
- **5. There May or May Not Be Overlap between the Natural and the Spiritual**

² <https://www.gotquestions.org/difference-talent-spiritual-gift.html>

³ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/stewart_don/faq/introduction-to-the-gifts-of-the-holy-spirit/05-what-are-the-differences-between-spiritual-gifts-and-human-talents.cfm

- While there is the possibility that natural talents and spiritual gifts may overlap, it is not always the case. We should never assume that a teacher has the spiritual gift of teaching neither should we assume that someone who has never taught before cannot be endowed by God with the gift of teaching.

USING WHAT GOD HAS ENTRUSTED TO US AS STEWARDS

- Since God has given us both spiritual gifts and natural talents, we are to be good and faithful stewards of what has been entrusted to us.
- For the purpose of this class, we are going to discuss what this looks like within the church as we gather together and our daily interactions and also in family life.
- **1 Peter 4:10-11** “As each one has received a [special] gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; *so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ*, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

Within the Church

- **We are going to break down what areas of responsibility men and women have within the church.**
- Often times, we forget that our life is not primarily about us, but about looking out for the needs of others who are around us.
- **Philippians 2:4** “...do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.”
 - This was written to the *church* at Philippi. All the church members were to look out for each other.
- **Galatians 6:10** “So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.”
 - This was written not to *a* church in Galatia, but rather to multiple churches in the Galatian region.
 - They were to look out for opportunities to do good to people, but also have a keen eye to ways they would be able to minister to others in their local church.

For the Women of the Church

- It is unfortunate that women in the church would ever feel they have a lesser or insignificant role.
- It has been said that you can gauge the health of a church by the women serving in the church.
- This is because as men are doing what they are tasked to do, women are freed up to do what they have been gifted to do.

- A woman, when a man is not fulfilling his God-ordained role, will drift into his lane and start to do what he has been called to do.
 - When this happens, a man’s natural reaction is to let her do it and become lazy.
 - This is often times viewed in a positive light, as if the men have *allowed* the women to progress to new heights. In reality, men want to be lazy, and women want to have control over them.
- Writing to the pastor of the church on the island of Crete, Paul says in **Titus 2:3-5** “Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored.”
- For the women of the church, Paul starts by talking about their character:
 - Reverent in behavior: simply put, they are to be known as those who are holy...they care about the things of God and live sensible lives.
 - Not malicious gossips nor drunkards: women who do not put others down nor are known to be around alcohol as part of their normal daily routine.
- **Why is their character important?** Women in the church are not just to be known by their character, but by what they impart to the younger women around them.
 - They are to be teaching what is good...in other words, teaching things to other ladies which please God. I believe this is further explained in **verses 4-5**.
- Look at all the responsibilities that women have in the church. **Verse 4** starts with *so that*, which is our purpose clause.
- When the older women of the church are living godly lives and teaching what is good, there is a purpose for that life. It is *so that* they can...
 - Encourage the young women to:
 - Love their husbands.
 - Love their children.
 - Be sensible (self-controlled, temperate), pure (modest, innocent), kind (good natured, joyful).
 - Workers at home (a steward of the household affairs).
 - Subject to their own husbands.
- **You might be asking...why is this in a class about using talents, gifts, and service to the Lord?**
- In the church, these things are often times overlooked. What is the result when that happens?
- Look at the rest of **verse 5** “...so that the word of God will not be dishonored.”

- When the older women are not discipling and/or encouraging the younger women, there is a real chance that *the word of the God will be dishonored.*
- Women play a key role in the church and should never be overlooked or underemphasized.
- Some of you are great at parenting, some need more help. Some of you are great at organization; others can't find their car keys on a daily basis.
- Some of you have a great schedule, reading your Bible, praying, having fellowship, raising kids, etc. Some of you are just happy that you and your family survived another day.
- The list can go on and on, but the point is, we all have gifts and talents...but are we all using them to the glory of God and for the edification of the church?
 - **1 Corinthians 12:7** “But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”
 - **1 Corinthians 14:12** “So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church.”

For the men of the church.

- Four Reminders⁴
- **1.** God has gifted both men and women to understand and teach His Word, to care for others in God's family, to organize and to lead. The only question Biblically is in what sphere those gifts are to be used. God and His church have great use for the gifts and energy of qualified women, but not in the role or responsibility of teaching or leadership over the congregation in general.
- **2.** Being a man does not qualify anyone for leadership in God's church. Though I believe the Scriptures teach that men are to lead in the church, no one should think that gender alone qualifies a person. The character qualifications of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 mean that many or most men in the church are not yet qualified for leadership.
- **3.** The Bible teaches male leadership only in the home and in the church. The Bible does not command male leadership in politics, business, the academic world, the community, and in other such institutions. God has special purposes for both the family and the church that go beyond pragmatism or efficiency.
- **4.** God's role and responsibility for men in the family and the church are not given because men are more inherently spiritual or gifted. Again, God has special purposes for both the family and the church that go beyond pragmatism or efficiency.
- What does the “normal” Christian man do in the church?

⁴ <https://calvarychapel.com/posts/women-and-men-roles-and-responsibility-in-the-church/>

- Setting aside those who are called to pastoral ministry or shepherds of a church, the men in the church are called to lead their families and serve in the church where they are gifted and have talents.
- Paul does not just address women in his letter to Titus.
- **Titus 2:2, 6-8** “Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance. ... Likewise urge the young men to be sensible; in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, sound in speech, which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us.”
- Whether men or women, there is, in the church, a need for the older to be urging or encouraging the younger men and women.
- We often times think that the peak of men serving in the church is in a pastoral role. That’s not true.
- Men are tasked with discipling and leading the younger generation of men in the church.
- Men, just like women, must have a strong character, but they must also lead their families well.
- This is very important in the life of the church.
- The same question that was asked to the women, *what is this doing in a class about stewardship*, can be asked to the men as well.
- **Are you stewarding the gifts and talents that God’s given you?**
- This does not need to be a big production, nor does there have to be some program...are you firstly setting the example with your life and secondly seeking out men that you can help along the way?

A Word for Both Men and Women

- This goes well beyond what we believe our spiritual gifts to be.
- While we should be using our gifts, we should also use our talents for the benefit of the church body.

SERVICE TO THE LORD

- We will discuss stewardship of our time in a couple of weeks. This section is more about the attitude of our service to the Lord.
- When it comes to serving in the church, there are two gutters that we don’t want to fall into...I do more than most people or I wish I could do more than I do.
- What should our attitude be when we minister in the church to one another?
- Once again, we look at Peter and his familiar verses.
- **1 Peter 4:10-11** “As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God;

whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

- **Two points that Peter makes...**we must be a *good steward* of what we have received from God as we are serving one another. And, secondly, we are to do so in the *strength which God supplies*.
- The word for good is just a generic use of the word. We know the difference between good and bad. What Peter’s saying here is to be a good steward of God’s grace towards you, use your gifts to serve one another.
 - This does not mean that every time there is a need you must do it. Rather, it means that you are aware of what is going on in the body of Christ and when something comes up where you can serve, you find out if you should.
- **How can you deduce if you should be serving someone in any area?**
 - We look to the second part of Peter’s verse...can you do it in the strength which God supplies.
 - I believe this is the most freeing verse in all of the “servanthood” verses in the Bible.
 - There are going to be some of you who run on 8 cylinders and go 100 miles an hour. You will not even break a sweat and are able to do what you do with excellence and for God’s glory.
 - Some of you are able to run on 2 cylinders and hit top speeds of 20 miles per hour and feel like you’re going to fall off the road at times.
 - Both people, if they are serving in the strength which God supplies, being a good steward of God’s grace, will bring glory to God and edification to the church.
- We get in trouble when we start to compare ourselves with others, lose our joy, fix our eyes on someone else’s gifts, and start to serve outside the strength that God has give us.
- In “Church-Talk,” that’s called *servicing in the flesh*. We no longer are operating under the power of God but under our own self-determination and desires. This leads to what is commonly called “burnout” and is not glorifying to God nor is it edifying to the church.