

Stewardship: A Way of Life

The Stewardship of Talents & Gifts

Sermon preached by Chris Lofquist

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Introduction

As a parent, I find myself taking on multiple roles in my children's lives. Sometimes I am a disciplinarian, other times I am a teacher. But in light of the beginning of another football season I find myself taking on the roles of **coach and cheerleader**. I am striving to coach them how to be men of God, and as a cheerleader I am taking every moment imaginable encouraging them to be good and do what's right in God's eyes. There is nothing I love more than coaching them in the way of the Lord and then giving them a big hug when they make the choice to honor God with their actions, words, or behavior. This is a similar role that I have as your Pastor here at New Hope Bible Church. It is my desire as your shepherd to coach and cheer you on through careful teaching of the Word of God to walk as God would desire you to walk. But there is a difference from being a parent to being a Pastor. As a parent I (we) have been given the responsibility to care for, provide for, and raise my children the way God desires. As a Pastor the responsibility of the ministry does not lie solely upon my shoulders. God has given each of us certain abilities, gifts and talents in order to minister to each other and to share the Gospel with the world around us. My role on that team is to equip you to do the work of the ministry, while I serve alongside of you. We are the Church, and it is through the Church that the message of hope is given to a world in need of a Savior. If this was a responsibility only given to Pastors, it would be like a football game where only the Coaches played. Imagine the spectacle that would be! The task would be too great a burden, and little would be accomplished. But that isn't God's plan to have only the Pastors do the work of the ministry – His plan is that the Church, using their God given gifts and talents, would impact this world to the glory of God and the salvation of mankind. This morning when we look again to the concept of Stewardship (caring for another's possession), in the area of talents and gifts, we will see that God's plan is to gift you each with talents and abilities, and spiritual gifts, that He intends you to use for His purpose within the Church, as you reach in, and as a testimony of God's love for this world, as you reach out. God has a great plan and you are very much a part of it. *Let us pray.*

Open your Bibles to **Ephesians 4:4-16** (read).

Like last week, I want to frame our message by using two questions. The first being...

1. **What is the Stewardship of Talents and Gifts?**

"And He gave some as apostles, and as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ... But speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into him who is the head, even Christ, from whom 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." (vv. 11-12, 15-16). In this passage we read that God has given each individual a part, a responsibility in the ministry of the Church in order to grow and serve together toward

Christ who is the Head of the Body. What an interesting illustration. The Church is like a Body. In fact, the Church has been called the Body of Christ multiple times in Scripture. *“So we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another...”* **Romans 12:5**; *“For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ...For the body is not one member, but many.”* **1 Cor. 12:12, 14.** *“..Christ is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body.”* **Eph. 5:23b.** *“He (Jesus) is also head of the body, the Church...Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the Church...”* **Col. 1:18a, 24a.**

It would seem that according to multiple passages in Scripture you and I, as believers in Jesus Christ, are a part of the body of Christ – which is the Church. This **illustration** works in so many ways. Let’s think about your **body** a little more for a second. Our body is filled with 11 major organ systems, like the digestive system, and the circulatory system, and the nervous system – each one impacts the other. It has 78 organs – each one, little and big impact each other. You are born with 270 bones, but as your body changes from child to adult this number decreases to around 206 bones – each one impacting the total functionality of the body. There are 5 types of blood vessels in your body, making up the highway system of your body – which impacts greatly the health of your major organs. There is purpose for mucus, goosebumps, fingernails, eyelashes, and even that hanging ball thing in the back of your throat (the uvula). And to this day, after thousands of years of studying the human body, they are still finding new parts and pieces. It astounds me to think about the intricacies of the human body; and the more we study it, the more we realize that every part has its unique function greatly impacting the health of the entire body. Each nerve, each muscle, each bone, each vessel, each cell, each organ impacts your overall health. Therefore, when one part of the body stops functioning or breaks, your entire body (from head to toe) is impacted one way or the other. **Each part has a very important function, role, and responsibility** – this is true of the Church as well. When Jesus ascended to Heaven, He did not abandon those who would believe in Him. He did not desert or forsake the Church. He equipped the Church with you – a man, woman, teenager, or child – uniquely gifted to function in this Body toward the purposes of God to the glory of God. Let me say that again – at the moment of birth God has given you abilities, talents, a personality and experiences that make you uniquely you. And like that, at the moment of salvation, you become a part of the Body of Christ (the Church), in which the Holy Spirit graciously equips you with a Spiritual Gift to be used toward the vitality and life of the Church. **1 Peter 4:10** *“As each one has received a gracious gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”* This is what God has entrusted you with. *“Each of you have received a gift...”* God wants us to know that our gifts are not an accident, but that He has intentionally given you the gift you have in the measure you have it, to use for His Glory.

So what are these grace gifts? What are these Spiritual Gifts? I do not intend to spend a lot of time classifying each gift and clarifying whether they are still in use today, or had a more specific purpose in the early stages of the Church. What I do want to do is simply focus in on one passage of Scripture dealing with these Gifts and read from **Romans**

12:3-8 and highlight some of the areas of service and ministry that we have been uniquely gifted to function within the Church. *“For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly; if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.”* God gives each individual a gracious gift - whether it is the gift of prophesying, or service, or teaching, or exhorting, or giving, or leading, or showing mercy – It is God who has entrusted us with these gifts, in order to minister to each other, for the building up of the Church, who will seek to faithfully make disciples of the nations. This is God’s mode or method in which He intended to lead the Church. And when I speak of being a Steward of Talent, this is what I mean – these gifts and abilities that God has given to each of you in order to accomplish the ministry of the Church. *So that is the “what” of our study...Let’s move to the next question...*

2. How am I to Use my Gifts and Talents?

What are some principles or guidelines from Scripture that will help us answer this question? **Guideline #1: Use your Gifts and Talents.** Use them! We just read **Romans 12:3-8**, one of the great applications to this passage is that God has given you gifts and talents to actively use. *Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly.* Use your gifts! If your gift is *Prophecy* (which is a word that means to ‘speak forth’ and has to do with speaking the truths and wisdom of God’s Word to others) *than preach it!* If your gift is *service* (which is the word where we get Deacon and literally means to serve), than seek for opportunities to serve others. If *teaching*, (which is the ability to interpret and clarify the Scriptures) than volunteer to teach. If your gift is *exhortation* (which deals with calling other believers to faithfulness) than seek opportunities to exhort others to faithful living! If your gift is *generosity*, than look to minister in that area. If your gift is *leading* (which has to do with administration) than lead. If your gift is *showing mercy*, than seek out those in the Church who need encouraging and walk with them through their affliction. God has given you a ministry gift, use it!

Guideline #2: Be Content Serving the Way God has Gifted you.

1 Corinthians 12:14-18. *“But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired.”* **Illustration:** Tell a story about how kids are always jealous of their siblings toys.

Do not allow jealousy to rob you of serving the way God has gifted you to serve. Each one of you is a significant part of the Body of Christ – if you understand that truth, you will not be jealous or envious of the gift your brother or sister has.

Guideline #3: Do not Allow Pride to Poison the Church.

Romans 12:3 – *“For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound*

judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.” Understand that it is God who has gifted you with this particular gift to function within the Church. He does not make mistakes, you are made specifically for this ministry. And if your ministry is more up front, do not think that you are more important than those whose giftedness requires a more ‘behind the scenes’ ministry. Each measure of gift has been given perfectly by God to assist the Church in ministry.

Guideline #4: Use your Gifts and Talents to Serve One Another.

1 Peter 4:10 – *“As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”* Use your special gift to serve one another within the Church, and in return the grace of God (that leads to salvation) will be evident to all who observe. Your relationship with one another, as you minister to each other by being good stewards of your gifts, will point them others to Christ and help one another grow in their faith.

Ephesians 4:14-16 – *“As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom 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.”* The result of each member of the Body of Christ using their giftedness is maturity and growth in Christ. This is God’s plan to grow the Church spiritually into mature believers.

Now, you may say, *‘how can I use my gifts, if I don’t even know what they are?’* That’s a great question. And my answer may surprise you. In a day and age where surveys and questionnaires are written to help you find your Spiritual Gift, I simply say to you, who may not know what your giftedness is, find a need, jump in and serve. If you are unaware of your spiritual gift, then serve, and you will find what brings joy and passion to your heart. You will find that which you are good at and when you do, then you have found your gift and talent. You will never learn how God gifted you to serve, unless you start serving.

Conclusion

God has graciously given the Church everything it needs to grow in faith (reaching up), to make disciples (reaching in), and to evangelize the lost (reaching out) – and He has done this by gifting you with the talents and gifts you already have. So the questions I leave you with are these: 1. Do you know your giftedness? 2. Are you ministering in the areas which God has gifted you to serve. May we be Good Stewards, so that when the Master has returned He will say, ‘well done good and faithful servant.’

Let’s pray.