

SESSION 3: HOW SHALL I SERVE? Lord, What are You Calling Me to Do?

TO GET THE CONVERSATION STARTED...

Think of a time in your life when you did something out of the ordinary to help someone else. **How did it make you feel to serve someone in need?** *The focus of this opening discussion should center on the positive impact we experience when we serve others.*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) We know we are called to serve, and we are to use the gifts God has given us as we serve others. Because of our different gifts and different circumstances, we all serve in different ways. **How did people serve in these biblical examples?**

Luke 8:1-3 (The women who followed Jesus) *financial support*

Acts 9: 36-43 (The disciple named Tabitha, also called Dorcas)

She made garments for the poor

Acts 9:23-25 (The disciples of Saul, also called Paul)

They helped him escape certain death

Acts 2:44-45 (The early believers) *shared what they had, giving to the poor*

- 2) The specific ways we use our gifts in service to others is a matter of stewardship. A steward is a manager of someone else's property. When we talk about stewardship, we're recognizing that *everything we*

Stew·ard·ship: managing all that which God entrusts to us on His behalf

have ultimately belongs to God! We are the stewards, or managers, of these gifts.

Read the Parable of the Talents¹ in **Matthew 25:14-30**. **What was Jesus teaching in this parable about being stewards of our gifts?**

God expects us to use our gifts, not hide them away, and He will hold us accountable for them!

Is the master in the parable being unfair in how he treats his servants? Why not? What might that mean for us as God's servants, as we steward the gifts He entrusts to us?

The Master (representing God) rightfully owns the gifts he entrusts to his servants, including the return they earn while invested! As stewards, we must remember that all we have belongs to God

- 3) Notice how the contrast in the parable is primarily between the two servants who put their "gifts" to work and the one who did not. The nature and quantity of our gifts are not what set us apart; rather, we are distinguished by our faithfulness in putting our gifts to work!

What are some reasons that you may struggle to put your gifts to work? What lessons do you draw from this parable for the use of your own gifts? *Answers may vary. Encourage honest sharing. Lessons learned could include I need to be less possessive of what I have or less focused on money.*

¹ A "talent" was a monetary unit in Biblical times, equivalent to 20 years wages for a laborer – more than \$500,000 in today's terms!



CONSIDER THIS!

Sometimes we are certain how we are to use our gifts. We know we are to provide for our families and do our work well for our employer. We may already be serving at church or in the community in places that are a good fit for us.

Other times, it's not easy to figure out how to use our gifts. We might be just now realizing that God wants us to put our gifts to work, but we have no idea where to start. We might not know what opportunities are available. We might realize that where we're currently serving is not a good fit or might no longer fit our changing circumstances. Or we might just be ready for a change!

When we are serving, and things are going along well, it still can be a good idea to periodically – maybe once a year – prayerfully review the ways we are serving. An annual review helps us avoid getting in a rut. It might uncover new opportunities, and it opens us up to God's leading. It might lead us to improvements, or might confirm that things should remain as they are now.

4) **Steps to consider when you're asking, "Lord, what do you want me to do with my gifts?"**

- Ask Him directly. Pray about it, not just once or twice, but regularly.
- Strengthen your relationship with Him by faithfulness in weekly worship and in receiving His body and blood in Holy Communion.
- Listen to what He has to say.
 - ❖ In worship, listen to the sermon, but also to the Bible readings and the words of the hymns, songs, etc . Be open to what they might say about the questions you're asking.
 - ❖ Have a daily personal time with the Lord that includes reading the Bible and prayer. Use devotional material, or a Bible reading plan, or revisit scriptures that speak to your questions.
 - ❖ Bring your questions to other Christians you trust, such as your small group (if you aren't part of one now, get connected!) or a Christian friend, someone you respect.
- Use some of the tools available.
 - ❖ **Try the "How Shall I Serve?" worksheet.**
 - ❖ Spiritual gift inventories help people discover how God has gifted them.
 - ❖ Try one of these books: *The Call* by Oz Guinness; *What You Do Best in the Body of Christ* by Bruce Bugbee.
- Perhaps the most helpful step you can take is: **Just Do It!** God teaches us through our experiences. If you start getting bogged down in contemplation, just pick something and give it a try. If it doesn't work, you will have learned something and you can change to something else.

CLOSING IN PRAYER

Ask, "Lord, what do You want me to do with my gifts?"

Continue to serve one another by praying for each other's needs.

