

The Gift of Service (17)

A gifted story: Scott knows how to plug in where needed. He just has an affinity for that-- if there is a need, he's more than happy to help fill it. And happy is the word for it, because he always has a happy look on his face as he does this or that. Roof leaking? "Hey, I'll go up there." Grass need mowing? "How about next weekend?" Chairs in the wrong place? "Let me take care of that." Kids need a chaperone? "I've got a car." It's always a quick response to a need, and that's because Scott sees service as his ministry. He is a believer that he can support the efforts of others and help pull things off. Some people start things or talk about things-- he finishes things. It's the gift of service.

Biblical references:

Gal. 6:2— *Help carry one another's burdens, and in this way you will obey the law of Christ.*

Romans 12:7— *...if it (our gift) is to serve, we should serve, if it is to teach, we should teach...*

1 Cor. 12:28—*In the church God has put all in place: in the first place apostles, in the second place prophets, and in the third place teachers; then those who perform miracles, followed by those who are given the power to heal **or to help others** or to direct them or to speak in strange tongues.*

Definition and comment:

The gift of Service: the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to identify the unmet needs involved in a task related to God's work, and to make use of available resources to meet those needs and help accomplish the desired goals. With this gift the Spirit brings empowerment to willingly bear the burdens of other Christians so that they can do their tasks more effectively. The person who has this gift is able to work gladly behind the scenes in order that God's work is fulfilled. There is a desire to help others in their ministries by aiding them in practical ways.

The gift of service is also described as the gift of helps in different scriptural passages. Both service and helps are being combined for the purposes of this study. The Greek word "Diakonia" refers to "serving" and "Antilempsis" is translated as "helping." The verb form of the word means "to take a burden upon oneself." The gift manifests itself in persons who place themselves at the disposal of others in order to give assistance in a Christian undertaking. There are always many things that need tending to in the church, and many of these things require no particular ability other than a willingness to see and do the task at hand. People with the gift of service or helps are ones who "get things done" and "see the job through."

It is important to recognize the great value of this gift. Because it is largely employed "behind the scenes," it may seem less prestigious. However, in Christianity humility outranks prestige, and people with the gift of service are blessed with that attribute and are exceedingly valuable to the church as a result.

Affirm that you have this gift; questions to ask yourself:

Do you enjoy doing tasks that help others minister effectively?
Do you sense when others need a helping hand and are ready to give it?
Are you content to take orders rather than to give them?
Would you prefer to let someone else have the “limelight” while offering a supportive role?
Do you find it satisfying to find practical ways to help others do their work?
Have others mentioned that you seem to enjoy doing routine tasks and that you do them well?

Areas for study and personal growth:

Study the lessons in scripture that pertain to this gift, especially as it is demonstrated in the lives of several New Testament accounts: Acts 6:1-7; 9:36-39; 20:34-35; Romans 16:1-2; 1 Cor. 16:15; 2 Timothy 1:16; Philemon 8-13.

Because you have the gift of service, you have the power to relieve a great deal of stress in the lives of others. However, you will have to become skilled at “plugging in.” Learn where assistance from you can relieve burdens and make an offer to help out. As a helper, you must be somewhat expert at working well with a variety of personalities—practice the art of understanding before seeking to be understood, and use that as your guide when giving assistance.

Look for literature on giving support to others, and build a personal library of resources that will assist you in this ministry (such as: *How to be a People Helper*, by Gary Collins). Consider attending a workshop on building positive relationships or on caring ministries. Insight into where and how you might volunteer to assist can be gained through prayer. Place your gift in God’s hands and ask for his guidance as to where to exercise your serving gift to help a fellow Christian, to build up the church, or to glorify God. Seek to be the hands of Christ in all you do.

General ways to use the gift of service:

Personally: be a good Samaritan; help a busy single parent children or widow with home maintenance tasks

Within the church: attend the nursery; help with furniture re-arrangement or in keeping up the grounds; help with meal setup or cleanup (see more specific church service opportunities in the Booklet *Channels for Using the Gifts*).

Within the wider community: help with Operation Bootstrap or the church food pantry; assist with a Bible ministry.

For reflection:

There is probably no person better equipped to exemplify humbleness than one who possesses the spiritual gift of service or helps. All Christians are called to serve and not to be served, to help the weak, and to support one another, but the person with the gift of serving is able to do these things at a supernatural level with great gladness of heart. This is especially marked by the joyful attitude, which is displayed when the service is rendered no matter how lowly the task. It is an example of the rewards of humility—joy!

When Jesus washed the feet of the disciples, it was an action that was hard for them to understand. Peter at first wasn’t going to let Jesus do it. But Jesus had found a way to show

the disciples the kind of servanthood he expected of them—they were to help one another with humility and love. Even today, many of us have a hard time grasping this important lesson. Being a “humble servant” seems to go against the American grain, yet when we see someone perform a humble act of assistance, we instinctively know how truly wonderful it is and desire to share in it. Your acts of humble assistance to others will serve as a reminder to all the rest of us that this is really the Christian way. It is an important witness indeed.

In all that you do using your gift, remember that your service to others is really service to God. The joy you feel comes from him. As you perform your many unseen tasks that enable ministry to thrive at Good Shepherd, your spirit of love and cheerfulness will perhaps be the more visible part. As your heart is gladdened in the rendering of the service, Christ’s radiance will shine through in the works that are performed and in the lives that are touched.

Our Christian experience is deeply enriched in so many ways by the people who exercise the gift of service. It is a wonderful gift.