

Hillcrest Adult Education (Fall 2022): Faith in Action
Walk 7: Listening to God – Being Good Stewards of God’s Spiritual Gifts
Romans 12:6-8

Objectives:

1. Participants will come away with an understanding of their unique spiritual gifts and their purpose within the body of Christ.
2. Participants will reflect upon the fact that they are stewards of spiritual gifts, not owners.
3. Participants will consider the necessity of using their gifts in a manner pleasing to God.

Romans 12:6-8 (Primary text)

We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently, if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

1. First of all, we must acknowledge that Paul has not given us a conclusive list here, but rather examples of a larger point. Clearly, Paul here is instructing the Christian to use the gifts (whatever gifts you may have) for the betterment of the Body of Christ and advancement of the Kingdom of Heaven just mentioned in the earlier passage.
2. What is a gift? How is a spiritual gift different from a skill?
 - a. A spiritual gift is bestowed by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of benefitting the body of Christ (the church).
 - b. What are some differences between a spiritual gift and a skill?
 - i. It’s reasonable to conclude that a skill may be used for one’s own benefit, or not at all. However, a spiritual gift is to be used for the benefit of the church and/or advancement of the Kingdom of Heaven.
 - c. How can one know what his/her gifts are? Some ways to tell...
 - i. Is the church strengthened in some way when you use your gift?
 - ii. Pray to ask for guidance.
 - iii. Ask other Christians/church leaders
 - iv. Look for places where God seems to be working through you.
 - d. Reflect for a moment upon gifts you may have that, when used, seem to benefit the church (rather than you exclusively).
 - e. What are your spiritual gifts?
3. Consider Paul’s apparent main point in the passage. Here Paul seems to be giving instructions not that we have spiritual gifts (it seems to be a presupposition), but exhorts us to use our gifts in a manner beneficial to the body. He seems to emphasize the degree and quality of use.

4. Matthew 25:14-30

Parable of the Three Servants

¹⁴ "Again, the Kingdom of Heaven can be illustrated by the story of a man going on a long trip. He called together his servants and entrusted his money to them while he was gone. ¹⁵ He gave five bags of silver^[b] to one, two bags of silver to another, and one bag of silver to the last—dividing it in proportion to their abilities. He then left on his trip.

¹⁶ "The servant who received the five bags of silver began to invest the money and earned five more. ¹⁷ The servant with two bags of silver also went to work and earned two more. ¹⁸ But the servant who received the one bag of silver dug a hole in the ground and hid the master's money.

¹⁹ "After a long time their master returned from his trip and called them to give an account of how they had used his money. ²⁰ The servant to whom he had entrusted the five bags of silver came forward with five more and said, 'Master, you gave me five bags of silver to invest, and I have earned five more.'

²¹ "The master was full of praise. 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let's celebrate together!^[c]'

²² "The servant who had received the two bags of silver came forward and said, 'Master, you gave me two bags of silver to invest, and I have earned two more.'

²³ "The master said, 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let's celebrate together!'

²⁴ "Then the servant with the one bag of silver came and said, 'Master, I knew you were a harsh man, harvesting crops you didn't plant and gathering crops you didn't cultivate. ²⁵ I was afraid I would lose your money, so I hid it in the earth. Look, here is your money back.'

²⁶ "But the master replied, 'You wicked and lazy servant! If you knew I harvested crops I didn't plant and gathered crops I didn't cultivate, ²⁷ why didn't you deposit my money in the bank? At least I could have gotten some interest on it.'

²⁸ "Then he ordered, 'Take the money from this servant, and give it to the one with the ten bags of silver. ²⁹ To those who use well what they are given, even more will be given, and they will have an abundance. But from those who do nothing, even what little they have will be taken away. ³⁰ Now throw this useless servant into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

- a. There seem to be consequences for not using the gifts God has given us correctly. Read the Parable of the Talents told by Jesus and reflect on:
 - i. How the men with 5 and 2 bags differed?
 - ii. How were they the same?

- iii. How did the master treat them even though they had different results?
 - iv. Note especially that the servants were stewards of the gold, not the owners. If we view our spiritual gifts the same way (as stewards of God's property, not as owners of a skill) how might that affect the way we use our gifts?
 - v. Why was the master angry with the servant that had one bag?
 - vi. How does the parable in Matthew enlighten Paul's instructions in Romans 12?
 - 1. In his letter to the Romans, Paul seems to place great importance upon using spiritual gifts, not letting them remain dormant. Jesus seems to be saying the same with added emphasis upon consequences of leaving gifts unused. God takes spiritual gifts quite seriously and intends his children to use them for their intended purpose. It seems that NOT using a spiritual gift for the strengthening of the body is clearly not an option.
5. Reflect for a moment on that which has been entrusted to you. What gifts (talents) has God given you and, more importantly, how have you used them?
6. What does God seem to think about those whom he has gifted, but fail to use the gifts as intended?
7. Prayer suggestions:
- a. Pray that God will make you aware of your gifts.
 - b. Pray that God will make his will clear to you as you strive to be a good steward of his gifts in you.
 - c. Pray that God will strengthen your spirit as you listen closely to him, exercising your gifts for the health of the body of Christ and Kingdom advancement.