

**SESSION OBJECTIVE: VARIOUS TEXTS**

To gain a general understanding of the Biblical evidence of spiritual gifts.

Service, Exhortation, and Generosity

Tonight we will look at some lesser discussed but equally important gifts

Service

The gift of service is one that is more generalized in nature. It comes from the Greek word *διακονία* (*diakonia*), and it means simply, “rendering friendly services.” It is the word from which we get our English word *Deacon*, which is an office of service in the church. It is generalized in that there are a variety of ways to serve in the church of God. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:5, “And there are varieties of service; but the same Lord.” Service is in many ways a leveling gift. What I mean by that is that it levels the playing field. It is built up within the flesh to see various degrees of importance in an almost competitive light, and the gifts do not escape this paradigm. People desire prophecy, tongues, and miracles, but few pray for the gift of service. However, service is a vital need in the church. There are many so-called “lowly tasks” that need doing that are as important as preaching and teaching, and that they are lowly model Jesus as much as the loftier gifts as well.

JESUS' EXAMPLES OF SERVICE

Traditionally, the word service in the New Testament period is used to mean, “waiting at table.” It is conveyed in Jesus’ words in Luke 17:8: “But will he not say to him, ‘Prepare something for me to eat, and properly clothe yourself and serve me while I eat and drink; and afterward you may eat and drink?’” It carried a personal nature that usually had nuances of subservience and lack of status. To serve, then, is to lower oneself before the person you are serving. This is precisely what Jesus modeled. He said, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” He, “emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant” (Phil. 2:7).

DEACONS

Paul unfolds the office of deacon, which is a subset of this gift, in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. He writes:

“Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. 9 They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. 10 And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. 11 Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. 12 Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. 13 For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.”

The deacon is an office of service that is held to a higher standard because of the public nature of this leadership role. The qualifications are similar to that of an Elder, with the exception of a few differences. The more standard understanding of service is perhaps not as visible, but as important. It's also important to note that the qualifications of these offices are qualifications that all Christians should aspire to.

The Gift in Use

Understanding the biblical view of service helps us understand the gift of service. The gift of service is the ability to lower oneself below others to meet their basic needs through even the most lowly of tasks. Someone who possesses this gift may have the following strengths and characteristics:

Potential strengths and characteristics:

1. Someone who is a doer by nature.
2. Sees the value in the small details.
3. Enjoys seeing things get done.
4. Is available.

Places to use the gift of service:

1. Host Team
2. Kids/Student Ministry
3. Funeral / Bereavement Ministry
4. Basic Church Duties
5. Life Groups

Exhortation

The gift of exhortation is one that can also simply mean, “to encourage,” but in its context it is often found being used to urge other Christians to continue in the difficulty of the faith. It is a gift that is commonly found in teachers and preachers, but is also important on a lay level. Below are a few places where we find this gift in action.

1 THESSALONIANS 2:9-12

“For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. 10 You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers. 11 For you know how, like a father with his children, 12 we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.”

2 TIMOTHY 4:1-5

"I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: 2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. 3 For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, 4 and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. 5 As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry."

2 TIMOTHY 4:1-5

"Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you."

1 PETER 5:1-3

"So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: 2 shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; 3 not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock."

HEBREWS 3:12-13

"Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. 13 But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."

ACTS 11:19-24

"Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews. 20 But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus. 21 And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord. 22 The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. 23 When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose, 24 for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord."

Places to use the gift of exhortation:

1. Small Groups
2. Teaching
3. Discipleship
4. Any Christian setting

Generosity

Contribution is really the better name for this gift since that is what is actually being spelled out. The one who contributes should do so from a place of generosity, not expecting anything in return. The interesting part about this gift is that it is not necessarily tied to money. While money can be a way this gift is used, it is far more broad-reaching than that. Someone with this gift could be defined in this way: "A person who makes themselves and their resources available to those in need." Below is a breakdown of the passage in the New Testament where this word is found.

LUKE 3:11

“And he answered them, “Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise.”

ROMANS 1:11

“For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you.”

ROMANS 12:8

“The one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.”

EPHESIANS 4:28

“Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.”

1 THESSALONIANS 2:8

“So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.”

Places to use the gift of contribution:

1. Community ministry
2. Life Group / Life Bible Study