

WD August 29, 2022

“Using Gifts Rightly”

What does one do when a child does not live up to their gifts? The child may be very intelligent. The child may be very athletic. The child may be able to solve problems in creative ways. And the child may have everything they need to be successful and do well. But the child may also have no ambition or desire to use any of those things constructively. The child may decide not apply themselves. In fact, the child may even find ways to misuse those gifts to avoid responsibility or seek out short-cuts to get ahead. It’s mystifying for frustrated parents and to those who know them.

However, none of this is new. God’s children often misuse the many gifts given to them. Some of us mistreat our bodies. Some misuse their eyes. Some misuse or take for granted their strengths and abilities. We have many examples where people were given gifts from the Lord but did not use them in a constructive way.

We have examples in scripture as well. One of them is Samson. The Lord made Samson into a Judge of Israel. He also gave him great strength. Because he was considered a Nazarite he was not supposed to drink wine or cut his hair. Sadly, he grew up to be a spoiled brat. Against his parents wishes, he went off and married a Philistine and then just as quickly divorced her. He eventually met Delilah who, as it turns out, was a beautician who specializes in cutting Israelite hair.

It always fascinates me that the Lord never took his strength away. And even as Samson’s hair started growing back allowed his strength to return. Samson definitely brought down the house with his new hair growth.

Another example is Solomon. Solomon was given great wisdom by the Lord. But as it turns out Solomon used all of his wisdom to serve everyone but God. 1 King 11 9-13 reminds us that Solomon allowed himself to be swooned by his 1000 wives and concubines. And we are told that his heart was turned away from the Lord..he did not keep the Lord’s command. He built altars to idols and used all of his resources for foreign idols. Solomon misused his gifts, his wealth, and his position as king for all the wrong things.

One could even argue that Pilate did not use his God given authority to save Jesus from the cross. And although that authority was abused Jesus acknowledged that it was still from the Heavenly Father.

Of course, we also know of those like the Apostle Paul who used his gifts for the benefit of the church. He was highly educated. He was a citizen of Rome. He was an Israelite and made an apostle by Jesus in Acts 9. He was also a talented writer and orator for the Gospel. And he was fearless and bold. He was also a people person who made many personal connections with disciples who would become leaders of the church.

Of course, another example of someone who used her gifts to glorify God was Tabitha in Acts 9. She liked to sew. She had the means to buy fabric and the skill to sew up clothes for the widows and orphans. And her community was blessed by her.

And then there is us. We all have something to offer too. Let’s take a listen to Matthew 25.

³⁴“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

³⁷“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

⁴⁰“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

We may not have long hair and great strength or extreme wisdom, or the skills of St. Paul but we have spiritual gifts. If you notice from Matt 25 our greatest spiritual gift is a willingness to do what we can. And anything we offer to the Lord becomes a spiritual gift offered to the Lord.

The key to all gifts is a desire to use them, rather than hoard them or not use them at all. We are designed so that whatever we do we do to the glory of God. Those gifts may be dollars, or time to give—usually the two things we are most guarded about. Then there are things like, compassion, artistic talents, a car

to drive, strength to lift something heavy, an ability to speak a foreign language, or just a bottle of water to share with someone who is thirsty. Could be anything that you may choose to offer to the Lord. Each is a treasure to the share. And you never know when the opportunity may come to offer what you have to the Lord. Coming home on Saturday I happened to pass a neighbor stranded on the side of the road. It was a simple thing to stop and give them a ride. At that moment my spiritual gifts was a ride and the ability to drive them home. All it took was time and room in my car. They, however, were very grateful for the ride. The key is whether or not you offer our gifts for the sake of serving the Lord in the moment. It's finding the ambition to motivate oneself to get up and offer our gifts. If the Lord is showing us the need, perhaps we are exactly who the Lord is calling to meet that need because we have exactly the gift that is best for that moment.

Why offer anything? Well, if Samson was pursuing the Lord more than Delilah the Philistines would have been completely destroyed. And if Solomon used His wisdom for the Lord rather than for the extension of his kingdom Israel or for making his wives happy, the kingdom of Israel would have never split up later on into a North and South. Even better, if we can be blessed simply by sewing clothes for others and share such blessings, we have made our community a little better place. We may only realize how much the Lord can do if we pursue him. Using God's gifts for godly reasons, in godly ways, will always be seen by the king and recognized as gifts for the king. Such things are honored by heaven. Such things demonstrate a humility before the king and they become instinctive. They become ingrained into our Christian Character and advance the Kingdom of God.

So never under-estimate what you may be able to offer. Never limit what God can do by what you can do. Try not to pre-judge what may be possible or not possible. Offering what you have will be enough. Remember that in the hands of the Lord even simple, ordinary, Roman nails are useful for accomplishing His glory. Two simple, ordinary pennies from a widow at the Temple glorifies the Lord. And a cup of cold water given to our children bring great rewards. And so there you have it. May the Lord bless are gifts.

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John 3:30