

DISCOVERING AND EMPLOYING YOUR GIFTS

In God's kingdom, serving is not something we do on occasion; it is a way of life. All God's people are called upon and gifted to follow the example of Jesus and be "a servant of all." In this lesson we will identify the qualities that will make us effective servants and explore some of the ways that we can serve God in the local church and our community.

I. OUR MANDATE TO SERVE

No one ever lived a life of greater service than Jesus Himself. When He calls us to follow Him, He calls us to a life of service. When God predestined us to be conformed to the image of Christ, He predestined us to a life of service.

A. Jesus Models Servanthood

When Jesus said "whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant" (Mark 10:43b), He was speaking of Himself. Even though He deserved to be served, He modeled a servant's life and attitude for all who would follow Him.

Mark 10:45 "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Philippians 2:5-8 "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: ⁶Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death--even death on a cross!"

John 13:1, 15-17 "It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love. ¹⁵ 'I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. ¹⁶ I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷ Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.'"

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B. Following In His Footsteps

We are saved to serve. When we accept the saving benefits of Christ we also accept the responsibilities of becoming His servant. When we serve Him we will invariably find ourselves serving other people. True servanthood is the willful giving of my very self through the expenditure of time, energy, or possessions in order to meet the needs of another as God would direct.

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Ephesians 2:10 "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

Galatians 5:13 "You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love."

Colossians 1:10a "And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work."

C. Servant Leadership

Since Jesus is the first servant as well as the head of the church, he models a quality of servant leadership that we want to emulate here at BRCC. No matter what our roles in the church, God calls us to view ourselves as servants. Pastors, small group leaders, ministry team leaders are all positions of servant leadership where character precedes gifting. These are very important values for us at Bay Ridge Christian Church.

II. HOW SHOULD WE SERVE?

If we are to fulfill our responsibility to be servants, we must know the qualities of a true servant. While a servant has many qualities, two stand out.

A. Under And Unto The Lord

Jesus' lordship establishes us in a life of service. When we say "Jesus is Lord", we are saying we are ready to serve and obey Him whenever and however He may call. Ultimately then, we must view our service as not just to people, but as service to Jesus Himself.

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2 Corinthians 5:14-15 "For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. ¹⁵And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again."

Ephesians 6:7 "Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men."

Colossians 3:23-24 "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, ²⁴since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving."

Matthew 25:40 "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'"

B. Humility

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Servanthood is to be characterized by genuine humility. If we are serving with genuine humility we will have nothing to prove and nothing to lose because our goal will be to glorify God in *His work*. This quality is revealed in how we respond to disagreements and/or disappointments because a humble servant is not seeking personal glory.

Luke 17:10 “So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.’”

Matthew 6:1-4 “Be careful not to do your ‘acts of righteousness’ before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. ²So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. ³But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

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III. GIFTED TO SERVE

God not only calls us to serve but provides us the means and gifting to serve effectively. God has given each believer specific gifts to enable us to serve in a particular area or ministry of the church. These are commonly know as "spiritual gifts."

A. Spiritual Gifts Explained

Spiritual gifts are discussed in many passages in the Scripture. A few of these are listed below:

1 Corinthians 12:4-11 “There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵ There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. ⁶ There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. ⁷ Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. ⁸ To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.”

Romans 12:3-8 “For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. ⁴ Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. ⁷ If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; ⁸ if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is

us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. ⁷ If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; ⁸ if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully."

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1 Peter 4:10-11 "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. ¹¹ If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen."

Additionally, many different Greek words are used to describe gifts in these passages. When all of these passages and terms are studied, several statements may be made about spiritual gifts:

1. Each person is given at least one spiritual gift. There is no such thing as a Christian who does not have a spiritual gift.
2. Spiritual gifts are related to God's grace. They are given by God and they are the result of God's grace at work in the life of the believer.
3. Spiritual gifts are empowered by the Holy Spirit. These are not just things we do well, but ways that the Spirit empowers us to do His work.
4. These gifts are given for the good of others. The gift is not to glorify the possessor but to edify the church or the world.

To sum up these points, the following definition may be used for spiritual gifts:

Spiritual gifts are concrete expressions of God's grace, manifested by the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, in order to enable us to build up the church and serve others in love.

B. Discovering Your Gifts

Some people find their gift obvious. Others struggle to discern what their particular gift might be. Here are some suggestions for how you can discover what your gift(s) are.

1. Ask God to show you your gifts.
2. Be actively involved in serving. Be available to serve in a variety of different ways. Faithfully attend small group meetings where ministry is being practiced. Look for areas where you seem to be particularly effective or fulfilled in serving.

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3. Ask yourself what motivates you. God often gifts us in areas where we are already motivated to serve or motivates us in areas where He has already gifted us.
4. Complete the Houts/Wagner Modified Questionnaire. After completing this questionnaire please return it to the class leader.
5. Confirm your gifts with leaders and those who know you best. Ask others what they see as your gifts. Serve in practical ways in the church wherever there is need and allow your “gift to make room for you.”

C. Growing In Your Gifts

Our gifts are usually not fully developed but grow with use. This growth is a result of both practice in using our gifts and increased anointing from the Spirit as a reward for faithfulness.

IV. GETTING STARTED USING YOUR GIFTS AT BAY RIDGE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

- A. It is important to use your unique gifts alongside others at Bay Ridge Christian Church. You can begin this process by researching the possibilities. Here are three suggestions:
 1. Look at the various opportunities to serve and minister that are available in the church. Information regarding this can be obtained from an elder or small group leader.
 2. Call the leaders of the ministry you are considering for additional information.
 3. Which ministries do you feel would best express who God has designed you to be? Consider the following:
 - What do you have a desire to be a part of?
 - Your passion—are you interested in contributing to the success of the ministry?
 - Your spiritual gifts and talents—would what you have to offer seem to align with the needs of the ministry?
 - Your available time—how much time will you have to serve?

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- B. It is wise to get involved and start small. Don't be preoccupied with your function; rather go with and maintain the attitude of a servant (not my will but Thy will be done —Luke 22:42b). Initially it is best to serve the leader and the team in whatever capacity best serves them. Do not despise the day of small beginnings (Zechariah 4:10)

 - C. Ministry involvement in the church can occur on three levels:
 - 1. The structured ministry of the church. These would include any ongoing commitments made in various aspects of church life. Examples include leading or hosting a small group, working with children, or serving on the worship team. These ministries provide ongoing accountability, relationship development, as well as the privilege of “sharpening the iron.”
 - 2. Short term needs. These are ministries that arise in the church that require a short term commitment. When the task is completed, the ministry ends. Examples include working on a Christmas play or packing bags for local people with HIV or AIDS. These type of projects develop a sense of a servant's heart. These projects can refresh our hearts as well as challenge us in the development of our gifts.
 - 3. Spontaneous ministry opportunities. These ministry opportunities are provided to each of us by the Holy Spirit. Examples would include praying for someone during worship, reading a Scripture that the Lord has given you during the meeting, or using the gift of prophecy. These spontaneous ways encourage us in our dependence on God since there is no organizational structure to lead us. It is essential that we respond to these unique opportunities as the Lord provides.

 - D. Ministry involvement outside the church can occur on three levels:
 - 1. The structured ministry of community groups. These would include any ongoing commitments made in various aspects of community life i.e., working at a crisis pregnancy center, volunteering at a jail, service on a community board, etc. These provide long term opportunities to use our gifts to serve the community with the gifts God has given us.

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- 2. Short term needs. These are opportunities that arise in the community that require a short term commitment. When the task is completed, the ministry ends. Examples would include helping set up a community picnic or party, serving on election day, or volunteering to help build a house with Habitat for Humanity. These type of projects develop a sense of a servant's heart. These projects can refresh our hearts as well as challenge us in the development of our gifts.

 - 3. Spontaneous ministry opportunities. These ministry opportunities are provided to each of us by the Holy Spirit. An examples would be helping a neighbor in need with finances or practical help. These spontaneous ways encourage us in our dependence on God since there is no organizational structure to lead us. It is essential that we respond to these unique opportunities as the Lord provides.

Teaching Tapes Available for Further Study on Spiritual Gifts:

We have a complete tape series available for further study on spiritual gifts. This series is composed of 5 tape albums and contains 23 teachings related to spiritual gifts. The albums are:

- Part 1: Spiritual Gifts: Enabling Us to Minister for God
- Part 2: Defining Spiritual Gifts
- Part 3: A Look At Various Spiritual Gifts
- Part 4: The Place of Miraculous Gifts Today
- Part 5: Discovering and Using Your Gifts

If you are interested in any of the tape albums in this series, it may be checked out from the church library.

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