

Fit or Misfit? (Part 6): The Gift of Service

by Richard Siple

The gift of service is a motivational gift that involves serving others and meeting their practical needs, and it is essential for the functioning of the church.

Duration: 36:50

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Matthew 10:42, Matthew 25:34-40, John 12:1-7, Romans 12:6-7

Topics: "Serving Others", "Christian Service"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of the gift of service and helps in the eyes of God. He references Matthew 25, where Jesus teaches about the significance of serving others, stating that whatever is done for the least of these brothers is done for Him. The speaker also highlights Jesus' own example of practical service in John 13, where Jesus humbly washes the feet of his disciples. Overall, the sermon emphasizes the value and importance of serving others as a way to honor and glorify God.

Transcript

The gift of service. You may open your Bibles tonight to Romans chapter 12, and in a moment we will read verses 6 and 7. Let me begin tonight by asking you five questions while you're turning there in your Bibles. Five questions.

Number one, and you don't have to answer these out loud now, you just answer them to yourself, okay? I will let you get away with not answering out loud, okay? They're not just rhetorical questions, they are serious questions, but you can answer them in your own heart. Number one, if you do something physical for someone, do you find yourself feeling really good about it? Number two, do you sometimes do things for people before they ask you, and then find out they didn't want it done? Number three, if you find yourself doing things for people and they show no appreciation for what you have done, do you inwardly struggle with hurt feelings? Number four, when you see a missionary presentation showing some dirty, starving, illiterate, slum children, what grabs your heart the most, their physical or their spiritual condition? Number five, have people ever told you you are nosy? And if they haven't told you, are you? If your answer to these questions or to most of them is yes, it is very likely that you have the motivational gift of service, or as many call it, the gift of helps. If that is true, you will be most useful and satisfied in a ministry of helps in both the church and the world.

So let us consider motivational gift number two, the gift of service or the gift of helps. And our text again tonight is Romans 12, and I'm just going to read verses six and seven. 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. And we had that last Sunday night. If it is serving, let him serve.

And it doesn't mean just a man in the sense of male. It means a human being. Now, what is the importance of the gift of helps or the gift of service? How important is it? Well, the great example of practical service for others was given by none other than Jesus himself.

So if you turn to John 13, and maybe you can do that quickly, John 13, I'm going to read verses three to five and then 12 to 15. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power and that he had come from God and was returning to God. Now, this is absolutely fantastic.

Here's Jesus. And if you were to see him, he would appear just as any other man born of a woman and grew up and became a man and was a carpenter. And here he is.

But he knew that the Father, God, the Father had put all things under his power, the universe, everything. If you can somehow get your mind around that. He knew that he had come from God, from the highest heaven, from his Father as the Son of God, and that he was returning to God.

I knew all that. He knew that he had infinite power over all the universe. He created it.

He sustains it. He rules over it. And he knew he had come from his Father's throne and he was going back there to sit on the throne.

He knew all that. Now, that's really very important for what follows. So he got up from the meal, they're having their Passover supper, took off his outer cloak and wrapped a towel around his waist.

After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with a towel that was wrapped around him. And this ministry was reserved for the lowest servant in the household because people walked with sandals and it was dusty and it was hot and their feet were dirty and sweaty and smelly and nasty. And they took off their sandals and brushed the dirt off and then washed their feet and dried them with a towel so their feet were clean and felt fresh while they were eating.

Nobody had done this and so Jesus did it. Verse 12, When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his cloak and returned to his place. Do you understand what I have done for you? He asked them.

You call me Teacher and Lord and rightly so. Here's the Lord, the Master, the Rabbi, the one disciples follow. That is what I am.

Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Is the ministry of service, the ministry of help, important? Here, the King of the Universe, the Master of all that is, is setting the example of doing it in the lowliest possible way.

Ministering as a servant at the feet of his disciples. And we really need to see this tonight because I believe it's extremely important for people with this gift to see how wonderful it is, how important it is, how God has honored it, and how he blesses it. Then in Luke 22, 27, Jesus talking again.

He says, For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Well, that's easy. Is it not the one who is at the table? But I, said Jesus, am among you as one who serves. For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life.

See, that's tremendous truth, tremendous truth. And then one of the greatest passages in the New Testament on this is Philippians 2, 5 to 7, which has become a pivotal passage in my own thinking, my own Christian thinking. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus, who being in very nature God, did not consider his natural equality with God something to be held onto, clutched, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant.

So there it is. So we start in with this gift talking about its importance. I don't know how you could exalt it any more than the way Jesus and the Word exalts the gift of helps, the gift of being a servant.

Jesus continued to give it great importance in some of his most remarkable teaching, Matthew 25, if you want to turn there, and I'm going to read verses 34 to 40, a very familiar passage. 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.

For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat. Well, a lot of you have already done that for me, and you've done it for many others. I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink.

I was a stranger, and you invited me in. I needed clothes, and you clothed me. I was sick, and you looked after me.

I was in prison, and you came to visit me. Then the righteous will answer, Lord, when did we see you hungry, and feed you, or thirsty, and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger, and invite you in, or needing clothes, and clothe you? When did we see you sick, or in prison, and go to visit you? The king will reply, tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me. See, as I think about the gifts that God has put at one at least motivational drive in every life, I think how sad a thing it is that we do not see it as God sees it.

That we have a tendency to denigrate it, to make it less important than it is in his eyes, in his mind. And this great gift, great gift of service and helps, he exalts very highly. Matthew 10 42, and if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones, because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.

I am totally convinced, after many years ministry in the church, the servers make possible the ministry of the prophets, administrators, teachers, and exhorters. And without them, the others have no hands or feet. The body of Christ is without hands or feet, if it's without the gift of service, the gift of helps.

Notice in John 12 verses 1 to 7, how Martha's gift made possible the prophetic ministry of Jesus and Mary. John 12 1, six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor.

So a group of people in there having a wonderful time honoring Jesus at the table. Martha served, sure. While Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him, that is the one who had been raised from the dead.

Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume. She poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

This perfume would have taken a year's wages for the average skilled laborer. There were some people got upset about it. Verse 7, Jesus replied, it was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial.

Now, here is the setting in which Mary is going to do this very dramatic thing, because she had been the one, remember, that sat at Jesus' feet. And this was another time when Mary and Martha had him in for dinner. And Martha got upset because Mary was sitting at his feet, and Jesus was teaching her, which was his ministry.

And she was the kind of gifted person that needed to listen to that. And Martha was getting dinner ready, and the food was getting cold. And she got upset, and she fussed at Mary and fussed at the Lord.

But here she is, and she's still doing the thing that she's gifted to do. And because she's doing it, she makes possible the setting of this tremendously dramatic and awesome worship of the Son of God and the anointing of his body for his coming burial after he gives himself for our salvation. So again, here at the heart of the minister of Christ are these who have the gift of service.

Now, it's description. Let me give you some description of this gift. And I'll be doing it in a couple of different sections, but here I'm going to give you quite a lengthy description.

So if you want to write some of this down, you can. The one with the gift of service is a doer, a detailed person. Now, remember when I'm going through these things, some of them might not apply to you, but if most of them do, then fine, that's you.

Okay? A detailed person who has an ability to detect needs. I just love people who seem to know what to do. You know, sometimes I don't know what to do, but there are people who just seem to know what to do, and they just step in and do it.

It's such a blessing. They want to meet the needs of others. They focus more on practical things than the spiritual needs.

They ask, how do you want me to do it? They need detailed explanation as to how something should be done. They would rather not do something than do it wrong. You want to do it right.

They have a great desire to please. They will remember what someone likes so that they can serve that person better. Really.

Now, if you have a place where you go for coffee on a fairly regular basis, have you ever noticed how there's some of the waitresses that remember exactly what you want? Now, they don't know, but they have the gift of service, and it's totally natural for them to remember, and they'll even remember that you want a small decaf in a large in a medium-sized cup because you want it weak and plenty of room for cream. I'm not kidding. Others, they don't remember it.

You got to tell them every time, but some, they just remember it. You say, well, they, you know, they must work at it. I don't think most of them work at it.

It's just the way they're made. See, that's their gift, so they just do it like that. They sense whether or not others are sincerely appreciative.

They can feel quite threatened by a prophet or an administrator, and I pastored a church in Regina for 14 years, and my personal secretary was a person with a gift of service, and I am a prophet, so I had to watch myself because every so often, I'd find her wiping her eyes, and I knew I'd said something, and I'd have to get it straightened out, but what a blessing she was. You know, she still tries to serve me after all these years. I've been gone from there since the end of 91, and she's still the same, a great servant.

These kind of people are not, they don't necessarily like confrontation. They would rather not make major decisions. Let somebody else make the decisions.

I'll get it done. They'll do most of the work themselves. They will overlook personal comfort to accomplish the task.

They tend to belittle what they do and are willing to give the credit to others. Nevertheless, they need sincere appreciation, really do, no matter what they say. They have a hard time saying no.

Gets them in lots of trouble. They can be judgmental of others who may not be getting everything done like they are, so watch that if you have the gift of service, being judgmental of others who don't have the gift because it's obvious that you're getting it done, and they're not. Now, just be careful about that.

They may be pushy, insisting that something needs to be done. They are, without doubt, the best workers. If you ask them to paint a Sunday school room, they want to know what colors, how, when, when does it need to be done, all the questions, and then once they know everything about it, they'll get it done.

They're going to have a banquet. How many people are coming? What kind of food do we want? What time will it be? Where will it be? How will we take care of the tables? What do you want on them? What kinds of decorations? The whole business. And just make sure that we know what you're doing next so that we can serve well.

Absolutely. We had a great banquet last night because there were some people who are servants who made it great. This is the kind of person that wants to stay and finish cutting out the Sunday school figures when everybody else is ready to go home.

Or if they're painting the Sunday school room, they want to finish it. Or if they're on the church board, they want to complete the issue in the board meeting. Before they leave, they will say, wait, let's finish it.

Treat servers with care and consideration, brother and sister. You may phone them and ask, will you do this? They will say yes. And as soon as they hang up, they're just sick about it.

How am I going to tell Tom? He said, if I take on one more thing at that church, he's leaving. So be careful about these people because you can tend to pile on them more than they can do and be inconsiderate of what's happening in their life or at home or on their job. Don't ask a to do something he cannot do like artwork.

If he can't draw a straight line, well, most people can't or to lead a children's choruses. If he can't carry a tune in a basket or teach Sunday school, you know, some people say you should teach a boy's class and they twist his arm and force him into it and make him feel guilty because he's not doing it. And somebody

has to do it.

And you had children. And how come you're not willing to teach this boy's class? The answer is simple because that's not my gift and I'm going to mess it up. And that's why, you know, when I have been really in charge of these things, I never allow people to go out and twist people's arms to get them to do things.

Because I believe if you pray it through that God will bring the people who are gifted as they need to be to do the job they need to do. And when you get somebody with a gift of helps and force them into a spiritual ministry where they don't belong, you're going to create a problem. Are you listening? Absolutely.

They come and tell me about it. They will find it hard to refuse, but will become terribly frustrated when they can't do it. They may even leave the church over it.

They usually take only five minute coffee breaks and 15 minutes for lunch or eat it over the computer. They think what they are doing is not spiritual. They are in danger of saying, I'm the only one around here that does anything.

Am I describing you tonight? Let me give you some biblical examples of this particular gift. If you're sitting here and saying, well, that's not me. When are you going to get to me? You've got to get your calendar and mark it and be here every Sunday night until we're finished so that the night I land on your gift, you're going to say, oh, that's me.

Here are some bible examples of this gift, the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31, 10 to 31. And now, you know, a lot of women read this and they get in terrible bondage. Honey, don't do that.

Most of you don't have this gift. Some of you do. But I mean, this woman has a gift of service.

Okay. She is an example that there are women who are good wives and good mothers and good homemakers who don't have the gift of service. Okay.

Okay. Some of you men say it's not okay. Yes, it is okay.

And some of you ought to help in that area. If you have that gift, here it goes. Proverbs 31, 10, a wife of noble character who can find she's worth far more than rubies.

Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value. She brings him good, not harm all the days of her life. She selects wool and flax and works with eager hands.

She's like the merchant ships bringing her food from afar. She gets up while it is still dark. She provides food for her family and portions for her servant girls.

She considers a field and buys it. She plants a vineyard. She sets about her work vigorously.

Her arms are strong for her tasks. She sees that her trading is profitable. Her lamp does not go out at night, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

On it goes. I mean, it's a great description, not of every Christian woman, but a great descript description of a woman who happens to have the gift of service. Got it.

Okay. Peter's mother-in-law Luke 4, 38 to 39. There's such interesting little snippets in the Bible.

And he, that is Jesus arose and left the synagogue and entered Simon's home. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever and they made requests of him on her behalf and standing over her. He rebuked the fever and it left her and she immediately arose and waited on them.

She gets out of bed. It says, wait a minute till I get my bathroom. She runs a comb through her and wash their hands.

Wait a minute. Wait a minute. Wait a minute.

Who wants coffee? I've got some cake back here. Yeah. That's wonderful.

That's wonderful. As soon as God heals her, she's out of bed and waiting on everybody in the place. That's not every woman.

It doesn't need to be, but this woman, Peter's mother-in-law has the gift of service. Here's Dorcas, Acts 9, 36, 39. In Joppa, there was a disciple named Tabitha, which when translated as Dorcas, of course you have Hebrew and you have Greek, who was always doing good and helping the poor.

About that time, she became sick and died and her body was washed and placed in an upstairs room. Litter was near Joppa. So when the disciples heard that Peter was in litter, they sent two men to him and urged him, please come at once.

And Peter went with him. And when he arrived, he was taken upstairs to the room and all the widows stood around him crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them. So she was always making clothes for the poor.

She was always waiting on people doing good and ministering. That was her gift, by the way, she got raised from the dead. But at the moment, what I'm pointing out is the example of this woman with the gift of service.

Anesimus, Philemon, verses 1, 4, 8, 16. Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus and Timothy, our brother to Philemon, our dear friend and fellow worker. Philemon was a wealthy man who had become a Christian, had a large household and slaves.

I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers. Therefore, although in Christ I could be bold and order you to do what you ought to do, yet I appeal to you on the basis of love. I then as Paul, an old man and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus, I appeal to you for my son Anesimus, who became my son while I was in chains.

Formerly he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me. I am sending him who is my very heart back to you. I would have liked to have kept him to wait on me.

See, here's Anesimus, a servant, a slave who ran away from his master, but he got into the city where Paul was ministering and he came to Christ. And now he's a Christian and now Paul, who had led his master to the Lord in another city, is writing to him, giving the letter to Anesimus saying, take it back to your master. And he's saying, you know, you owe me your eternal soul, so I could order you, but I'm not.

I'm begging you. Here is a servant who was not profitable to you, who ran away, who cheated you, but I'm sending him back now as a Christian that he may be not only a brother but a servant again, this time a real servant. So Anesimus' conversion changed him from a resentful shirker to a spirit-empowered worker, a

servant of Christ.

Let me add some other things about this particular gift. If a person with this motivational gift is a pastor, now listen to this carefully. If a person with this motivational gift is a pastor, especially if he's a senior pastor, which will be very difficult, he will be tempted to paint the church, clean it, mow the grass, do the repairs, do the bulletin, help members repair their houses, do taxi service, taking everybody wherever they need to go, help widows with their washing, and be a servant to the whole congregation.

You say, man, that'd be great. No, no, no, it would not. You say, well, it sounds good to me.

No, I've seen it. It doesn't work. It doesn't work, you see, because that man is up against a serious problem because a pastor cannot do this.

All the people in the church will love him, but they will not be properly challenged and fed because his study will grow cobwebs and his preaching and teaching will be shallow. Sorry, that's the way it will be unless he has tremendous discipline by God's grace. To succeed as a pastor, he will need to practice great discipline and be helped by someone with organizational skills to do what he needs to do.

He will at least need a wife with administrative gift who will organize him and make sure he does what he's supposed to do. She'll have to lock him in his study every morning and make him study and prepare the sermons properly, or he never will because Mrs. Jones needs us to take her to somewhere to do something. Absolutely.

So a person with this gift will do well in any occupation or ministry where they can serve others in practical ways. In closing, let me give you a true story of a servant. Very interesting.

While Mr. Berquist was the chief executive of a school in Florida, a large Bible college, he received a call from Ralph. Ralph told him he would like to move to Florida and work part-time in custodial work. He was being retired after 30 years of work in that field.

Mr. Berquist was thrilled at finding competent custodial help since it was desperately needed. When Ralph arrived, he was received with enthusiasm almost like a conquering hero. Because of his experience and interest in keeping the buildings and grounds in order, he was put in charge of the entire custodial crew.

Things didn't work out as expected. Discontent and inefficiency began to show up among the staff. Ralph himself seemed frustrated even though he was working with all his energy.

Finally, Ralph came to talk with Mr. Berquist about resigning, and Berquist couldn't believe it. It was not until the possibility of losing Ralph confronted him that he stopped for a good talk with him. He didn't talk about the job but about Ralph's basic design, his motivational gift.

Within a few moments, he discovered that Ralph did not like to have authority over other workers. He liked to work by himself. He wanted to be responsible for his own assignments and no one else's.

The idea of planning another person's work, monitoring and correcting it made him weak with worry. On the other hand, he loved to be outside working by himself. Mr. Berquist appointed him superintendent of the campus and told him to do whatever he wanted to do to keep the grounds in shape.

He was delighted. Almost overnight, the campus was transformed into a beautiful park. Now, if this is your gift, you know exactly what I'm describing.

You say, Oh yeah, that'd be me. I understand that guy. That's exactly the way I would have experienced that.

Peter said in 1 Peter 4, 11, 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 forever. God's servants.

These people are so important that without them, listen, that without them the whole work of God and the human race would grind to a halt. Absolutely. If you are a servant, if God has given you the gift of helps, thank God.

And as the scriptures say, concentrate on your service to God's glory. Let us bow in prayer. Father, we thank you tonight for the great wisdom of our Lord as he gave gifts to the church, as he gave men to ministries.

Men and women, we thank you, Lord, for the wisdom and care that you have taken to provide the different kinds of gifted people that are needed in this world and needed in the body of Christ. Thank you, Lord. How I thank you for those who have the gift of helps.

I thank you for the blessing they have been to me over the years, for the way they have blessed my life and enabled me to do your will. I give you praise. I thank you, Lord, for every person in this congregation with this gift.

Encourage them, O Lord. Encourage them, strengthen them, bless them, and multiply them for your glory. In Jesus' name, amen.

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