



The Marks of Discipleship: Christian Service

Day One: *We All Have Something to Give.* Each of us has been given gifts! Our gifts are given freely, for us to grow and use for God's glory. Our gifts never run out. Read the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30. This story reminds us that using our talents multiplies them. Our talents are refined every day, every month and every year of our life as we use them to bring glory to God. Today, make a list of talents with which you have been gifted by God. Thank God for giving you these talents in your prayers.

Day Two: *Variety in Our Gifts.* Along with our talents, we have spiritual gifts: administration, apostleship, encouragement, evangelism, faith, giving, healing, hospitality, knowledge, and leadership. Spiritual gifts are given to carry out God's purpose in the world, while talents may be used for various purposes. Read 1 Peter 4:10 and 1 Corinthians 12:4-11. All spiritual gifts have three things in common: all believers have them; therefore, each believer has something to contribute; they are given freely by God, not because of some work we have done. Each of us has a different combination of gifts, making each of us unique and special. Like our own fingerprints, our gifts are our mark in the world. Which spiritual gifts do you believe God has given you? Think of others that aren't on the list above. Think of one way in which you have used that gift. As you pray today, highlight one of your gifts.

Day Three: *Why? Serving whom?* Why are we given these talents and gifts? In addition to making us unique and special, they are tools to glorify God. Many of us may know our skills but not how to use them to glorify God. Read Matthew 9:9-13. Matthew had great skills which he used in dishonest ways, glorifying himself, rather than God. When Jesus invited him to follow a new path, Matthew used those same skills to serve God instead. Matthew's life was transformed. Yet the skills he used were the same. We, like Matthew can listen for God's voice and as a community of believers, help each other grow our gifts and talents by asking - "Who are you serving?" Read Hebrews 10:22-25. These verses instruct us to draw near to God and to encourage one another. Today, pray with someone else about how he/she is using his/her gifts.

Day Four: *For the Larger Community.* Another question we need to ask is, "Am I using my gift for the good of the larger community?" This is one way to test if we are using our gifts to glorify God. Read Ephesians 4:11-13. Our gifts are to prepare us for service and build up the church. How are you building up the church with your gifts? In what areas of service are you involved? Read the story of Jonah in the book of Jonah, but especially note chapter 3. Jonah did not see himself as one who could transform a city. But, after some tremendous convincing, Jonah saved an entire city. God may be calling you to such great things as well. With God's help and our gifts, we can do miraculous things. In your prayer time, ask God what larger community you are being called to influence.

Day Five: *For One Person.* While each of us has a larger community, we also have individuals to influence. Many of the spiritual gifts are much more private than public. A great story to illustrate this is that of Ruth and Naomi in Ruth 1. Ruth was compassionate, loyal and a friend to Naomi. Her influence with that one person played an important part in Jesus' family tree. Not only that, but Ruth went against the common cultural practices to do so. She made a bold statement through her helping one friend. Who is one person with whom you could offer to share your gifts? Begin by praying for that person today and set a goal to connect with him or her in some way.

Day Six: *Supporting Others.* While some people are called to use their gifts and talents to work directly in the church, some support in other ways. Read Acts 16:14-15, 40. Lydia supported the leaders of her time with her home and hospitality. There are Lydias everywhere in the church – some serve on church council, teach Sunday School, and others share the extra food from their table with those in need. The Christian church needs full-time ministers and volunteers at all levels; it needs people up front leading and people behind the scenes setting up; it needs clergy and lay people. For some, supporting ministry is just something we do because it needs doing. For others, supporting ministry is working in our area of strength. No matter where you lie on the continuum, God is calling you to support others in some way. Make your prayers active today by supporting someone or some ministry.

Day Seven: *Using Your Gifts for Mission and Ministry.* We are created in God's image to bring glory to God. Read Genesis 1:27 and 2 Corinthians 8:11-12. Our world is filled with places where you can make a difference. Young people here at church would love to meet with you an hour each week, service organizations need committed people to serve those in need, and new opportunities are waiting for people to get them going. As God said to Abraham, "You are blessed to be a blessing." So are you as one of Abraham's descendants. Go for it! In your prayers, commit with God to a mission or ministry that uses your gifts and talents.