

Grow Your Service

Eph 2:10 - Phil 2:12-13 - Matt 23:11-12

Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – Aug. 20th, 2003

Intro:

- This morning we are continuing our very short series called “grow” which leads up to the launch of our growth groups in September. First we focused on fellowship, acknowledging that you are designed for it, you will thrive in it, and you must commit yourself to it. Then last week, Michael talked about humility’s vital role in being able to meaningfully connect in life-giving and freeing ways.
- Today our topic is “Grow Your Service,” with the aim that each one of us will leave here today being encouraged, equipped, and engaged with God’s gifting and calling on our lives. There are three truths I want you to know about your life: you are gifted, you are responsible, and you are accountable. Let’s look at the first of these three.

You are gifted by God.

- How do I know this is true? Because God Himself says it is true.

1 Cor 12:4-11 ESV

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5 and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; 6 and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. 7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 8 For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

- Each person has been given a gift by the Holy Spirit, all of them under the Lordship and Sovereignty of Jesus, to be manifest (be seen/utilized) for the good of everyone. They are empowered by the Spirit and given to each one as He wills it.

1 Cor 7:7b ESV

Each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another.

- Each person has their own gift, and the gifts are of different kinds. All are needed, all are necessary, and He distributes them according to His will (see Heb 2:4).

Eph 2:10 NIV

For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

- You are God’s workmanship. He created and crafted you with your interests and intellect, your abilities and aptitudes, your desires and dreams.

- Your “being” is expressed in your “doing.” You were created in Christ Jesus to do good works. And these good works have been prepared in advance for you to do. We all have something to do that has been designed for us to do. I can’t do your things, and you can’t do mine. But we all have something to do. There is 100% employment in the kingdom of God. As long as you have the breath of God in your lungs, you have good works to do.

You are responsible to use your gifts.

1 Peter 4:10-11 ESV

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: 11 whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

- Each one of us is to use our gifts in the service of others. When we do this, we are stewards of God’s grace; in so doing, God will be glorified, others will benefit, and we will be rewarded both now in satisfaction and later in glorification. We were made for this, and we can only do this in Christian community.
- Another place our gifts are to be used is in the greater community of the world.

Matt 5:13-16 NIV

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

14 “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

- We were made to do good, to keep the corruption of society at bay, and to shine the light of the goodness of God so that in it, others can see God. Society suffers if we don’t do what we are gifted and called to do, and the kingdom of God is slowed.
- Our faith must be evidenced in our actions, both in the congregation and in the community. Our faith must be connected to our actions. The Apostle James made this exact point as he wrote to the church by the Holy Spirit.

James 2:14-19 ESV

What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? 17 So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

18 But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

- If you say you believe in Jesus, but you don't follow Jesus by doing what He commanded, do you really have faith? Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Our faith is proved genuine by doing what Jesus commanded, which is primarily to "love one another – just as I have loved you, you are to love one another" (John 13:33).

Phil 2:12-13

Dear friends, you always followed my instructions when I was with you. And now that I am away, it is even more important. Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. 13 For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.

- The work we do is the result of our salvation, not the foundation of our salvation. Salvation is received by grace, applied to us through faith. We are to "work hard" to show the results of our salvation, doing so because we love God. If we love God, we obey God (see 1 John 5:2). We indeed should have both a deep reverence of God and a holy fear of Him in connection with our love of Him. As C.S. Lewis says about Aslan, "He is good, but he is not tame."
- And here is really good news for those of us who lack the desire and the power to do what pleases God, we can ask Him for all of these things!

You are accountable for your gifts.

2 Cor 5:10 ESV

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

- This is non-negotiable. You and I and everyone have a court date, and we will be given what we are due. This is not about entrance into heaven, but this is about reward. (Also see Matt 12:35-37, Rom 14:12, 1 Cor 4:5, Heb 4:12-13, 1 Cor 3:10-15, Heb 9:27.)
- This is what the "parable of the talents" is about as well (Matt. 25:14-30).

Matt 25:29 ESV

For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.

- There will be an accounting by the "master" of what we did with what He has given to us. There will be either further reward and glory or "weeping and gnashing of teeth." This is serious stuff that we must keep in mind.
- A similar teaching was given in Luke 12:35-48 as Jesus tells the parable of a master and his servants who do or do not do what they were instructed to do.

Luke 12:48 ESV

Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.

- Those who are given much, much will be required of them, much will be asked of them. Those who abused their power or were slack in doing the will of the master were held to a higher account. This we must keep in mind.

Matt 23:11-12 ESV

The greatest among you will be your servant. 12 For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

- Know that the ones who serve are considered the greatest in the kingdom of God, and the ones who think they should be served are called the least (see also Matt. 5:19, Luke 9:48). Look not to exult yourself but look to help other people. In this you will have the greatest satisfaction and joy.

Conclusion and Communion

- You, indeed, are gifted, every one of you. You are responsible for using your gifts and will be accountable for your gifts. Your gifts and your calling are for you, but it is not about you. These things must be done in the congregation and in the community because of the grace of God for the glory of God. Christianity is not a spectator sport, and we are all in the game, have things to do, and will be rewarded accordingly.
- Think about these things. Make space, time, and energy. Be intentional, be consistent, be abundant in these things, and you will feel God's power, sense God's joy, and be fulfilled and rewarded in and with true eternal glory.
- Pray and transition to communion.