

Kingdom Training Level 7: Finding My Mission

Lesson 4: Understanding Your Gifts

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. 1 Peter 4:10

References: Purpose Driven Life, Rick Warren; Every Good Endeavor, Timothy Keller; Leaf by Niggle

1. God's Gifts

- **God the Giver:** All gifts come from GOD! Every good and perfect gift is from above! (James 1:17)
 - Giving is God's nature (John 3:16); God is a father who longs to give us gifts (Matthew 7:11)
 - Salvation (Romans 6:23, Ephesians 2:8, Hebrews 6:4, 1 Peter 3:7)
 - Wisdom (James 1:5, Acts 6:10, 2 Peter 3:15)
 - Grace (Ephesians 1:6, 4:7, 2 Corinthians 9:14, 2 Timothy 1:9)
 - LEADERS: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers (Ephesians 4:11)
 - His greatest gift to us is the HOLY SPIRIT (Luke 11:13, Acts 1:4,2:38,10:31, 2 Timothy 1:7)
- **You Are a Gift!** You are God's Mission! No false humility allowed! Everyone has gifts.
 - "Now Jesus has another pair of hands, feet, ears, a mouth, and new heart to love with!"
 - God created you! No room for belittling anyone gifts!
 - God chose you! Never underestimate the power of God working in you!
 - The widow could have doubted the value of her contribution (Luke 21:1-4)
 - God's gifts are unique! No use in comparing our gifts to someone else's (2 Cor 10:12)

2. Finding Your SHAPE [Rick Warren, Purpose Driven Life]

Explore who you are.. take responsibility for doing the creative best you can with your own life. (Galatians 6:4-5 Msg)

S = SPIRITUAL GIFTS
H = HEART
A = ABILITIES
P = PERSONALITY
E = EXPERIENCES

UNWRAP YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Each of us finds our meaning and function as part of his body (Romans 12:5, Msg)

- **Created to Serve God** (Ephesians 2:10)
- **Saved to Serve God** (1 Corinthians 6:20) service = ministry
- **Called to Serve God** (2 Timothy 1:9); the church dies when its members stop serving (1 Cor 12)
- **Commanded to Serve God** (Matthew 20:28)
 - Maturity is not thinking what can I get out of the service, but what can I give?

Preaching, Serving, Teaching, Encouraging, Giving, Leadership, Showing Mercy (Romans 12:6-8)

- God gives gifts "according to GRACE"; these are not "supernatural" gifts - Everyone can do these!
- Some have the "gift" – a special ability that comes with responsibility
- We are commanded to use our gifts – to GIVE – this is not optional!

Leadership, miraculous, serving... desire the greater gifts... the most excellent way (1 Cor 12:28-31)

- The greater gifts build up the body ... the greatest is LOVE! (1 Corinthians 13)

LISTEN TO YOUR HEART

As a face is reflected in water, so the heart reflects the real person. (Proverbs 27:19)

Heart = your passion = where you are both EFFECTIVE and ENTHUSIASTIC!

- What do I really enjoy doing?
- When do I feel the most fully alive? What am I doing when I lose track of time?
- Do I prefer serving with a team or by myself? Do I enjoy competing or cooperating?

APPLY YOUR ABILITIES

God has given each of us the ability to do certain things well. (Rom 12:6a, TLB)

God has a race marked out for YOU! (Hebrews 12:1) *“What I’m able to do, God wants me to do!”*

- What am I really good at? What do people tell me I’m really good at?
 - Natural talent – something you were born with, from God through birth
 - Abilities must be recognized, developed, and matured
 - This is your God-given contribution to the world – dedicate your abilities to God!
- Be faithful in using our abilities and God will multiply them! (Luke 16:10, 19:26)

USE YOUR PERSONALITY

God works through different men in different ways (1 Cor 12:6, Phillips)

- The unique way we use our abilities: introvert vs extrovert; thinkers vs feelers; routine vs variety

EMPLOY YOUR EXPERIENCES

God... who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God (2 Corinthians 1:9)

- Use your life experiences to help others: family, educational, vocational, spiritual, ministry, & pain
- Aldous Huxley, “Experience is not what happens to you. It is what you do with what happens to you.”

3. Using Your Gifts

The Paradoxes of Giving

- You can never “out give” God! (Luke 6:38) but the poor can OUTGIVE the rich (2 Cor 8:2)
- What you give away is what GROWS (Luke 16:10); When you are broke, you can GIVE (Ps 34:18)
- God blessed you so you would give (2 Cor 9:11); Giving makes you happier than receiving (Acts 20:35)

The Heart of a Giver

If you wait for perfect conditions, you will never get anything done. Ecc 11:4

- Do the best you can with what you have!
- Giving takes the heart of a SERVANT (Luke 17:10)
 - Our ability to give reveals our maturity
 - Interruptions & inconvenience define a servant
- Be faithful to your ministry and finish the task! (Proverbs 13:4)
- Maintain a low profile: Unnoticed? = God noticed! (Matthew 6:1-2)

REFLECTION

1. How hard is it for you to Understand Your Gifts? Why do you think that is?

2. How does recognizing other’s gifts help you to see the need for the Body of Christ?

Leaf by Niggle by JRR Tolkien

Niggle was an artist who paints to please himself, living in a society that has little regard for art. He determined to paint one great picture from his incredible imagination. So Niggle acquired a huge canvas and began to paint.

He painstakingly started with one single leaf giving attention to every detail in absolute precision. In his mind Niggle finds birds in the trees and snow-topped mountains that are visible through the branches. And so the painting grows but he actually makes little progress on this masterpiece because of His artistic perfectionism combined with his unusually kind heart – which leads him to help anyone in need who asks for his help.

His good deeds eventually did him in – while rescuing a doctor and his wife from a rainstorm, he became deathly ill. Niggle knew that he would soon be going on a journey, which he wouldn't survive and, indeed, he died on the journey after only finishing one leaf. "The Leaf by Niggle" was framed and hung in the local town museum, though noticed only by a few.

When Niggle arrives in heaven, to his surprise he found the entire scene that he imagined – leaf, tree, landscape, and snow-topped mountains – completely finished and part of the True Reality that would become his paradise into eternity!

God gave Niggle this amazing talent. Although in his lifetime he was unable to complete his masterpiece, God himself took the brilliant vision and the unique talent of Niggle and completed the painting for him.

Timothy Keller in his book, *Every Good Endeavor*, paints a similar picture of our lives. We are all given a unique and beautiful combination of heart, experiences, abilities, and passion. Keller quotes Ephesians 2:10, that we are God's workmanship, translated in some versions "masterpiece," saying that God gave us those gifts to fulfill something much more beautiful than we can imagine. Keller challenges us to wrestle with our vocation – whether it be making coffee, sweeping streets, teaching, or building something – to find not only meaning, but dignity, culture, service, in work, believing that each one's calling is that person's unique way of living out God's mission.

Keller describes a common bond that we should feel with all members of our human race who work in a way that builds our culture and civilization, regardless of their beliefs. He challenges us to recognize the good in what we and others who work for a common good do in contributing to society. We should appreciate their contributions to our society, even recognizing each individual as a gift from God without being condescending or having to qualify our appreciation because it isn't a "spiritual gift."