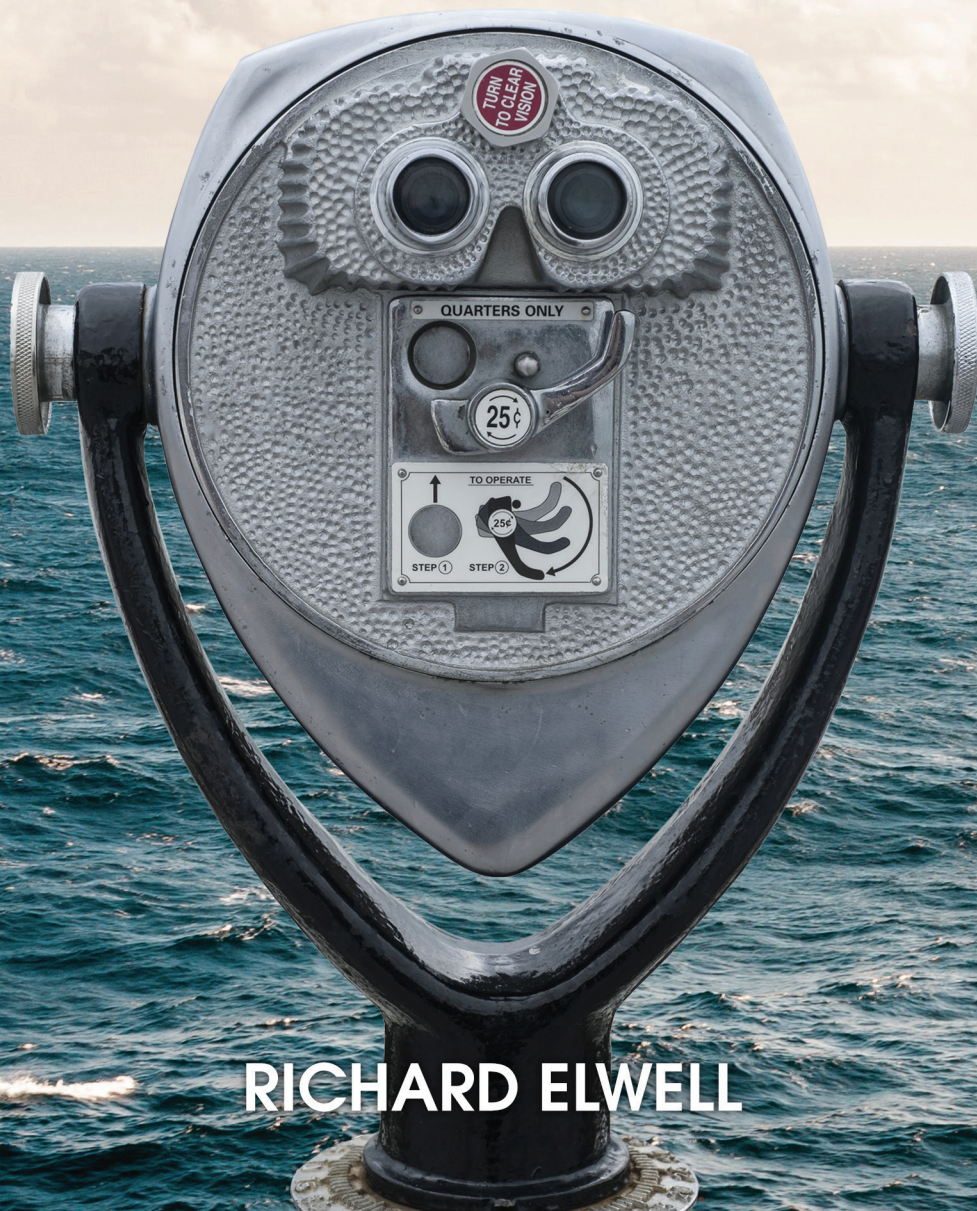


— WHAT IS MY — CALLING?

DISCOVERING OUR PURPOSE IN THE BODY



RICHARD ELWELL

WHAT IS MY CALLING?

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WHY IDEAS MATTER.

Ultimate Outcomes is a non-profit organization founded on the fruit of the 30 plus years Pastor Richard Elwell and his wife Marty spent in church ministry, developing studies that would help their congregants discern and apply God's truth. Richard was a firm believer that the outcomes in our lives are a result of what ideas we choose to believe and follow.

After Richard died of a rare liver disease in 2018, Ultimate Outcomes has taken on the mission of sharing the Elwells' insights with all who desire to live a better life and are willing to look to God for understanding of the way they are to go. To that end, it makes available for free download on its website: Bible studies, Sunday school curriculum, and sermon podcasts.

Richard earned a Master of Divinity degree from the International School of Theology and was the founding and senior pastor at University Park Church, San Bernardino, CA for over 30 years. His passion was always to make God's truth understandable and applicable to all who hunger for it. Marty holds a Master's Degree in Teaching Processes from Claremont Graduate University. Her passion has been to train women and provide curriculum for parents who want to raise their children up in the ways of the Lord.

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WHAT IS MY CALLING?

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PREFACE BY MARTY ELWELL

God gives us gifts to build up one another and the body and it is important to discern his calling and our giftedness. I think when I first realized that I had been given the gift of faith was when I face brain surgery at age 40 and was the mother of five children, one of whom was a newborn. As I contemplated what could happen to me and as a consequence my children, I reflected on Romans 8:28, “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” I realized at that moment that God is either who he says he is or he isn’t. I knew then that I didn’t want to live life without God being who he says he is. I cling to God’s promises and haven’t really wavered in my faith since then.

Recognizing that I had been given the gift of faith helped me in my relationships with others. Before I would rather look down on the lack of faith of others and think, “Why can’t they just believe God?”. Once I realized I had been given a gift, I saw that it was my calling to build up and encourage others in their faith and not criticize them for what they hadn’t been given. I certainly didn’t want anyone criticizing me in my areas of weakness.

I could see how God had used my gift of faith to help others. My faith encouraged my husband not to give up in the middle of seminary when we were out of money, but to trust God to provide. My faith helped my husband persevere through the difficulties of planting a church and the struggles of ministry. And at the end of my husband’s life, having the gift of faith helped me go through his illness and death without struggle or fear, which was also an encouragement for others.

Yes, God gives us gifts to bless and build up the body, but the use of them also builds up and blesses us. It is my prayer that as you work through the study, *What is my Calling?*, you would understand the importance of recognizing and using your spiritual gifts to contribute to the body, and in doing so be built up and blessed yourself.





OUR CALLING IS OUR PURPOSE

INTRODUCTION

The four fundamental questions of life and how we answer them affects how we live our lives. The answer to the first question will impact the answers to the next three.

1. Where did we come from? (origin)
2. Why are we here? (purpose)
3. What is the right thing to do? (morality)
4. Where are we going? (destiny)

How would you answer the first question?

The first lesson will look at the second fundamental question: Why are we here? It examines what is God calling us to do and how our calling relates to his purpose, the reason for the life God has granted to us in the handful of years we have here on earth.

LESSON FOCUS

Isaiah 43:6-7

⁶ I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Do not withhold; bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."

1. Biblically, what is our purpose?
To serve God's purposes. To bring honor and glory to God.
2. How does our calling relate to our purpose?
Our calling is how we are to fulfill our purpose. The specific way God designed us to serve him and bring him glory and honor.

3. What is the general calling of every Christian?
Our general calling is to love God and our neighbor and to fulfill our Christian duties.
4. What would be our specific calling?
Our specific calling is how we fit into and serve our family, church and society with personal gifts and talents.
5. Why is it important to know our specific calling?
We can't fulfill it if we don't know what we're supposed to be and do, how God designed us personally.
6. Why is it difficult to know our calling?
It is something we have to discover. God doesn't shout. We have to persevere and keep peeling back the layers. Sometimes what we are called to do contradicts what we want to do.
7. How do we discover our calling?
Prayer and the Bible. We listen to God through his Word and the internal work of the Spirit in our life. We listen to what other people say, where and how we are an encouragement to them.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

GOD'S CALLING OF ABRAHAM

Abraham, whose name was originally Abram, was the father of the Jewish people. When God called him, he and his wife had no children.

Genesis 12:1-4

Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

⁴ So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

Hebrews 11:8-10

⁸ By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.⁹ By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise.¹⁰ For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.

1. What are some things you can see in God's calling of Abraham?
It wasn't all that clear. It involved faith and required obedience. He needed to let go of something to embrace what God was calling him into. He had an eternal view of life.
2. What was God calling Abraham into?
He was called into a state of blessing so he would be a blessing to others.
3. How did God speak to Abraham?
We don't know how he heard from God as it doesn't say. It may have been the voice of God, a dream or a strong impression.
4. How does God speak to us?
Through prayer, his word, other people, dreams, strong impressions, providential circumstances, confirmation of others.
5. How is our calling similar to Abraham's calling?
It will take faith and require sacrifice. We will have to let go of what we are holding onto. We have to have an eternal view. We are all blessed to be a blessing.

At the time of the following passage, Abraham was around 86 years old. It was a custom at that time that a childless woman would have children through a servant.

Genesis 16:1-2

¹ Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. She had a female Egyptian servant whose name was Hagar. ² And Sarai said to Abram, "Behold now, the LORD has prevented me from bearing children. Go in to my servant; it may be that I shall obtain children by her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai.

1. What caused Abraham to fail in his calling?
It seemed impossible. He and Sarah were both really old. He was impatient and not willing to wait. He listened to bad advice and didn't keep God's promise in view.
2. What should Abraham's failure teach us about our calling?
To be faithful, persevere and wait on God. We will complicate things if we try to go ahead on our own apart from God.

JESUS' CALLING OF PETER

At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus called 12 men to be his special disciples. In the passage he calls Peter and his brother Andrew.

Matthew 4:18-20

¹⁸ While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."²⁰ Immediately they left their nets and followed him.

1. Before Jesus called Peter, did Peter have a calling from God? **yes** What was it?
To love and follow God, provide for his family, contribute to his community. We need to remember a calling can change over time.
2. How was Peter's calling to follow Jesus similar to Abraham's calling?
He had to leave one thing behind to take on a new calling. He had to trust without having a clear plan or vision.
3. Are all Christians called to follow Jesus? **Yes** Does our calling to follow Jesus mean we must quit our job?
May be or maybe not. We may be called to function right where we are or maybe we're to go into ministry somewhere else.
4. What does Jesus' calling of us to follow him mean for us?
We have to represent Christ in whatever we are doing, wherever we are. We have to drop the idea that we're here to serve ourselves. We want what he wants. We turn from following our own way and go Jesus' way. We pursue God, not the things of the world.

THINKING IT THROUGH

1. What would have been some good reasons for Abraham to disobey his calling?
He was well established where he was. It would be a long and dangerous journey. People would think that he was a fool, chasing a dream instead of reality.
2. How was Abraham affected by his obedience?
God's hand was on him. He left a heritage and has received honor throughout generations. Acts of obedience are always eternal.
3. How have we been affected by Abraham's obedience?
Jesus and God's law came through the descendants of Abraham. Through Abraham we have come to understand our purpose that the blessing of God is to be a blessing to others.
4. Why would we resist the call to follow Jesus?
We want to do what we want rather than submit ourselves to God and do his will. We lack faith. Our view is temporal, not eternal. We don't want to give up anything.
5. How is our future, and the future of others, affected by our obedience?
There is eternal reward and a heritage we pass on. We set in motion a chain of events that will have an impact on all generations that follow. We set an example for them. Only good, eternal and lasting benefits come from following Jesus.



Illustration: All people who live in the United States, including Native Americans, are descended from people who left their homeland to move to a new place. Their actions impacted who we are and what we have become.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

COMPARING OUR CALLINGS

Colossians 3:17-20

¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

¹⁸ Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. ¹⁹ Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. ²⁰ Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

1. In what ways are our callings similar to and dissimilar from each other?

Our general calling is the same; our specific calling varies. We are all called to glorify God, but we are each unique in the way we do it.

2. How do our callings relate to each other?

We work in cooperation and right relationship with others. We examine what is our part and how we are to fulfill it.

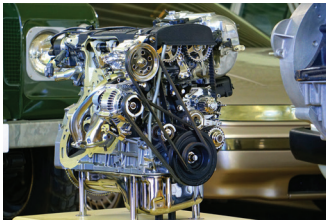


Illustration: A car engine has different parts with different functions. All parts have to be in operational order and work together in unison in order for the engine to function properly. There is no working car engine without the different parts.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

PERSONAL EVALUATION

1. In what way are you fulfilling God's general calling for you to bring him honor and glory?

2. In what way are you fulfilling his specific calling for you?

3. In what way are you experiencing God's blessing by fulfilling your calling?

PRAYER

Thank God that he gave you life to fulfill his purposes. Pray that you would want what he wants and hear and fulfill his specific calling for you.





OUR PRIMARY CALLING

INTRODUCTION

REVIEW

1. What are some of the things we learned about God's calling of Abraham?
It wasn't all that clear. It required faith. Abraham had to leave something behind. He had to wait on God to fulfill his promises.
2. What was Abraham called into?
He was called into a state of blessing to bless others.

LESSON FOCUS

This lesson will look at our primary calling, which is to enter into God's blessing for us so that we can be a blessing to others.

1. When we think about God's calling for our lives what do we usually focus on?
We focus on ourselves, what we are supposed to do to give our life meaning.
2. When we focus on what we are called to do, what part of our calling are we in danger of overlooking?
The blessing we are called to enter into, the filling of God in our life.
3. Why can't we be a blessing to others if we fail to enter the blessing God has called us into?
We don't have the strength or power to do what we are called to do. We don't have a reservoir from which to pull from. We will run dry.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

THE BLESSING WE ARE CALLED TO RECEIVE

Matthew 11:27-30

²⁷ All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. ²⁸ Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

1. What are we called to receive from Jesus in the passage?
Revelation of the Father, teaching from Jesus, rest for our soul.
2. What does Jesus' revelation of his Father prepare us to do?
To share him with others, teach them from our own personal knowledge.

John 7:37-39

³⁷ On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" ³⁹ Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

1. What are we called to receive in the passage?
The Spirit of God, living water that quenches our thirst.
2. What is the result of our spiritual thirst being satisfied?
We become a fountain of living water, God flows out of us.
3. How does that relate to Abraham's call?
We are blessed to be a blessing. We are filled with the Spirit to overflow with the Spirit.

1 Peter 2:9-10

⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

1. What are the three blessings we are called into in the passage?
To be God's chosen people, receive God's mercy, come into his light.
2. What do those blessings enable us to do?
Proclaim God's excellency.

Romans 9:19-26

¹⁹ You will say to me then, “Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?”²⁰ But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, “Why have you made me like this?”²¹ Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use? ²² What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, ²³ in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory— ²⁴ even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? ²⁵ As indeed he says in Hosea,

“Those who were not my people I will call ‘my people,’ and her who was not beloved I will call ‘beloved.’”

²⁶ “And in the very place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ there they will be called ‘sons of the living God.’”

What does God want to accomplish by calling us to become his beloved people? (vs. 23)

Make known the riches of his glory, to make us vessels of his mercy and glory.

1 Peter 3:8-12

⁸ Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. ⁹ Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. ¹⁰ For

“Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; ¹¹ let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. ¹² For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

1. What is our calling in this passage? (vs. 9-11)

To turn away from evil, to bless and do good.

2. How does our calling to be a blessing relate to our calling to receive God’s blessing?

They are dependent upon one another. What comes out of us has to be in us.

THINKING IT THROUGH

THE IMPORTANCE OF INFLOW AND OUTFLOW

1. What is the result of never entering into God's blessing?
We're dry and thirsty. We're not able to bless others.
2. What is the result of never being a blessing?
We never experience the delight of what God has called us to be.



Illustration: In Israel, the Jordan River flows into both the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. The Sea of Galilee is teeming with life as it has both an inlet and outlet. Nothing can live in the Dead Sea as it only has an inlet. Water can't flow out of it as there is no outlet and the water just stays there until it evaporates and becomes inhospitable to life.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

A CALLING WORTH SUFFERING FOR

2 Timothy 1:8-14

⁸ Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, ⁹ who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, ¹⁰ and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, ¹¹ for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, ¹² which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me.

¹³ Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴ By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.

1. What have we been called to? (vs. 8, 12)
We have been called to share in Christ's suffering, to continue on in the faith even in the face of opposition.

2. Why is that a worthy calling? (vs. 10)

Because Christ suffered and through his suffering abolished death and brought us into eternal life. Our true reward lies ahead.



Illustration: Improving your physical fitness entails working out and some suffering. One puts forth the effort because the result is worth the momentary suffering.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

PERSONAL EVALUATION

1. How are you seeking to find your rest in Christ?
2. How are you seeking to have your thirst quenched by Christ?
3. How are you pursuing the light of Christ that you are called into?
4. How are you experiencing the blessing of being a blessing?

PRAYER

Thank Jesus for calling you into his blessing. Pray that you would truly find rest and life in him to be able to share him with others even in the face of opposition.





OUR SPECIFIC CALLING

INTRODUCTION

REVIEW

1. What is our first and primary calling?
To enter into God's blessing.
2. Why is it important to embrace our primary calling?
So we can be a blessing to others. If we are dry, we can't give to others. God has to be flowing into us for him to flow out of us.

LESSON FOCUS

This lesson will look at our specific calling. Our specific calling is the way God has purposed and equipped us as individuals to become a blessing to other people.

1. How do we know the ways we are used by God to bless other people?
By the way people respond to what we do and how we feel in doing it. By blessing others in that way we gain a sense of value and are energized.
2. Does God ever want us to do what we have no desire to do? **yes** Explain.
Generally, we are called into things we enjoy, but there are things we don't like that we are called to do. Jesus didn't want to go to the cross.
3. When we benefit other people, who receives the greater blessing, us or them?
We both receive blessing, but we truly are lifted higher by being a benefit to others. We grow through it.

4. What are some wrong thoughts we can have that would make us not want to be a blessing to others? **Critical spirit – People don't deserve it. Elevation of self – I'm good where I am. Embarrassment – I'm not that capable. Wrong focus – If we don't die to self we won't be of benefit to others. Laziness – I'm tired. It's not worth the effort. Pride – I'm called to do more important things.**

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

THE COMMON GOOD

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

¹ Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. ² You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. ³ Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says "Jesus is accursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit.

⁴ 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.

1. What are the three areas in which we are empowered by God in a variety of ways? (vs. 4-6)
Gifts, service, activities
2. What is the purpose for each person to be gifted and empowered by God? (vs. 7)
For the common good, the blessing of the whole body.
3. Why is it important to recognize that God is the one who determines who receives each kind of gift? (vs. 11)
God is the one in charge and the credit goes to him, not us. God is the organizer. It's his story. If we believe that then we aren't jealous of what he gives to others or we don't become arrogant for what he's given to us.
4. How does our use of the gifts God has given us relate to our purpose in life?
Our purpose is to bring honor and glory to God using the gifts he has given us. Using our gifts, we play the part God has for us.

CALLED INTO ONE BODY

Ephesians 4:1-16

⁴ I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³ eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. ⁷ But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸ Therefore it says,

“When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.”

⁹ (In saying, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? ¹⁰ He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) ¹¹ And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood] to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴ so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

1. According to the passage what characterizes our calling?

We're called to be a functioning part of one body. We're called to bring everything together in unity. There shouldn't be division among us.

2. How do the gifts God gives us enable us to fulfill our call to unity?

We are unified because we need the gifts God has given to others. Each one has a part to play in a unified whole, providing what the body lacks.

3. What does the coordinated use of our gifts lead to? (vs. 13-15)

The growth and maturity of the whole body.

4. What happens when the body isn't mature? (vs. 14)

We're vulnerable to the ideas of the world. We don't have maturity to evaluate theology and think correctly about things. We're easily deceived without power to resist.

5. What happens to the body when each part is working properly?

The body is healthy and well-functioning with each doing its part. It builds itself up in love and is connected to the head (Christ). Each part contributes to the growth and maturity of the body. We are mutually dependent.

THINKING IT THROUGH

1. What are areas of giftedness God has given to you?
2. If you don't know your areas of giftedness, what are some ideas that would help you discover them?
What do I do that blesses others? What am I enthusiastic about? What energizes me? What are the ways you desire to be helpful to other people?
3. What will happen if we don't know or function in our areas of giftedness?
The body won't be built up and neither will we. We will both suffer loss. The body won't function as it should and neither will we.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

A CALLING WORTH SUFFERING FOR

Matthew 25:14-30

¹⁴ "For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. ¹⁵ To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. ¹⁶ He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. ¹⁷ So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. ¹⁸ But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money.

¹⁹ Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰ And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.'

²¹ His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'

²² And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me two talents; here I have made two talents more.'

²³ His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'

²⁴ He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, ²⁵ so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.'

²⁶ But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? ²⁷ Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest.

²⁸ So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'





DISCOVERING OUR CALLING- MANIFESTATION GIFTS

INTRODUCTION

REVIEW

1. What is the relationship between our purpose and our life's calling?
Our calling is the way God designed us to fulfill our purpose to bring him honor and glory.
2. What is our primary calling, out of which flows our specific calling?
Our primary calling is to enter into God's blessing (presence) and from that flows our ability to be a blessing to others.
3. What is the purpose of God that is fulfilled when we are properly functioning in our specific calling?
We enter into unity with one another, we bless one another and the body grows and matures.

LESSON FOCUS

In this lesson and the following two lessons, we will be seeking to discover the areas where God has uniquely gifted each of us. We want to know the part we each have been given to contribute to the common good, for the unified functioning of the body of Christ.

1. How does each individual part of the physical body fulfill its functional purpose?
Each part has to be connected to the larger whole to function properly and be of benefit. If it is cut off, it dies.
2. What would keep a person from being part of a larger whole?
Focus on self, an unwillingness to serve others or not wanting people to expect things from them. Thinking that others are unneeded.
3. How can we be confident we know what our part in the body is?
Positive effect on others, internal motivation and excitement, good at what doing, overall satisfaction.

THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

Romans 12:3-8

³ For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. ⁴ For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶ Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷ if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸ the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

Thinking about the variety of gifts God has given within the body, in what two ways can those gifts be categorized?

Miraculous (manifestations of the Spirit) or heightened natural abilities.

In terms of each of the spiritual gifts, there is a level of service that is the duty of each believer to fulfill. We will examine what God calls each believer to do and a biblical example of the spiritual gift in use. It is important to remember that the spiritual gifts are heightened forms of the calling every believer has been given.

The list of gifts we will be examining is taken mostly from Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:28-30 and Ephesians 4:11-12 and is divided into three categories: supernatural manifestation gifts, leadership gifts and action gifts.

This lesson examines the manifestation gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12:7-10: knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, spiritual discernment, speaking in tongues, and the interpretation of tongues.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

THE MANIFESTATION GIFTS

Under each spiritual gift, summarize what the scripture says is the calling of every Christian. Write a description of how the spiritual gift was exemplified in the scripture and what was the result of that gift being exercised.

1. Healing – effectively praying for and performing acts of healing

a. The calling of every Christian – James 5:16

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

The calling of every Christian:

We are to confess our sins and pray for the healing of others.

b. The gift exemplified – Acts 14:8-10

⁸In Lystra there sat a man crippled in his feet, who was lame from birth and had never walked. ⁹He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed ¹⁰and called out, "Stand up on your feet!" At that, the man jumped up and began to walk.

The description of the gift in the passage:

Paul discerned that a man had faith to be healed and he was the conduit of God's healing.

The result of the gift being exercised:

A man became physically whole. Credence was given to Paul's message.

2. Miracles – performing an act not explained by natural forces, praying effectively for God's divine intervention

a. The calling of every Christian – John 10:37-38

³⁷Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does. ³⁸But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father."

The calling of every Christian:

Remember and believe in the miracles of God. (Remembrance of God's supernatural power and his ability to intervene.)

b. The gift exemplified – Acts 20:7-12

⁷On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight. ⁸There were many lamps in the upstairs room where we were meeting. ⁹Seated in a window was a young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep as Paul talked on and on. When he was sound asleep, he fell to the ground from the third story and was picked up dead. ¹⁰Paul went down, threw himself on the young man and put his arms around him. "Don't be alarmed," he said. "He's alive!" ¹¹Then he went upstairs again and broke bread and ate. After talking until daylight, he left. ¹²The people took the young man home alive and were greatly comforted.

The description of the gift in the passage:

Paul brought a young man back to life.

The result of the gift being exercised:

People were comforted and must have been encouraged by the power of God.

3. Prophecy – communicating or interpreting messages inspired by God himself

a. The calling of every Christian – 2 Timothy 2:15-16

¹⁵Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. ¹⁶Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly.

The calling of every Christian:

We are to correctly handle the word of God and not get off on tangents that have no value.

b. The gift exemplified – Acts 21:10-14

¹⁰After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. ¹¹Coming over to us, he took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, "The Holy Spirit says, 'In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.' "

¹²When we heard this, we and the people there pleaded with Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. ¹³Then Paul answered, "Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

¹⁴When he would not be dissuaded, we gave up and said, "The Lord's will be done."

The description of the gift in the passage:

Agabus showed the people what was going to happen to Paul.

The outcome of the gift being exercised:

Paul knew what was going to happen to him, but he wasn't deterred. He was faithful to do what God had called him regardless of what was ahead.

4. Knowledge – having supernatural insight and understanding above the ordinary, being able to see what is really going on

a. The calling of every Christian – 2 Timothy 3:14-17

¹⁴But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, ¹⁵and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

The calling of every Christian:

Study the scriptures to be trained and equipped. Know the people who are teaching

b. The gift exemplified – Acts 17:1-4

¹When they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. ²As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, ³explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. "This Jesus I am proclaiming

to you is the Christ," he said. ⁴Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and not a few prominent women.

The description of the gift in the passage:

Paul preached in the synagogue and reasoned from the Scriptures.

The result of the gift being exercised:

Many Jews and Greeks were persuaded.

5. Discernment – distinguishing between true and false prophets, being able to tell what is of God and what is not, accurately evaluating what is true about something or someone

a. The calling of every Christian – 1 John 4:1

Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

The calling of every Christian:

Develop discernment. Test the spirits. Watch out for false prophets, weigh carefully what is said, where it is coming from, and the motivation for what is being said.

b. The gift exemplified – Acts 13:4-12

⁴The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus. ⁵When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their helper.

⁶They traveled through the whole island until they came to Paphos. There they met a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus, ⁷who was an attendant of the proconsul, Sergius Paulus. The proconsul, an intelligent man, sent for Barnabas and Saul because he wanted to hear the word of God. ⁸But Elymas the sorcerer (for that is what his name means) opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul from the faith. ⁹Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said, ¹⁰"You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord? ¹¹Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind, and for a time you will be unable to see the light of the sun."

Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about, seeking someone to lead him by the hand. ¹²When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord.

The description of the gift in the passage:

Paul, filled with the Spirit, recognized who Elymas was and prophesied against him. He called him a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right.

The result of the gift being exercised:

The devil was defeated in this situation and the procounsel was saved.

6. Tongues (speaking) – speaking in an unlearned foreign language or making ecstatic utterances unrelated to any human language

Tongues (interpretation) – understanding the tongues of another

a. The calling of every Christian – 1 Corinthians 14:26-28, 39-40

²⁶What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church. ²⁷If anyone speaks in a tongue, two--or at the most three--should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret. ²⁸If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and God.

³⁹Therefore, my brothers, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. ⁴⁰But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.

The calling of every Christian:

Don't forbid tongues. Make sure tongues is done in an orderly way and is accompanied by an interpretation.

b. The gift exemplified – Acts 2:1-12

¹When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ²Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

⁵Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. ⁷Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? ⁸Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? ⁹Parthians, Medes and Elamites... ¹¹(both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs--we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" ¹²Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"

The description of the gift in the passage:

The disciples spoke in the languages of the people who were present.

The result of the gift being exercised:

Each person heard the truth in a way he could understand. It caused the people to wonder and listen. The church was built up.

7. Faith – having a supernaturally strong trust in God’s intervention or reliance on God

a. The calling of every Christian – Hebrews 11:1-3

¹Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. ²This is what the ancients were commended for.

³By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

The calling of every Christian:

Believe that what God says (and what we can't see) is true.

b. The gift exemplified – Acts 20:17-24

¹⁷From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. ¹⁸When they arrived, he said to them: "You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia. ¹⁹I served the Lord with great humility and with tears, although I was severely tested by the plots of the Jews. ²⁰You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. ²¹I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.

²²"And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. ²³I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. ²⁴However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me--the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.

The description of the gift in the passage:

Paul had faith to persevere no matter what he encountered.

The result of the gift being exercised:

Paul was a faithful witness and left a legacy for all to follow.

THINKING IT THROUGH

On the chart that follows, rate yourself on how well you have been fulfilling your Christian responsibilities, whether or not you demonstrate giftedness, and what you would ask God to work in you in terms of each of the listed gifts.

Scale: 1-not at all, 2-very little, 3-some, 4-a lot, 5-to a great degree

SPIRITUAL GIFT EVALUATION – MANIFESTATION GIFTS								
Gift	Fulfilling Christian responsibility					Demonstrate Giftedness		Work that needs to be done in you.
	1	2	3	4	5	Yes	No	
Discernment								
Faith								
Healing								
Knowledge								
Miracles								
Prophet								
Tongues-Speaking								
Tongues-interpretation								

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

PERSONAL EVALUATION

1. How well are you fulfilling your Christian responsibilities in terms of the manifestation gifts?
2. How can you do better in fulfilling your Christian responsibilities?
3. In what area or areas do you demonstrate giftedness?
4. How are you applying that gift in your family, church and community?
5. How can you apply that gift more fully?

PRAYER

Ask God for his insight into how he has gifted you to serve and contribute to the body and community. Pray that he would show you areas of service, however small, where you can be of benefit to others.



DISCOVERING OUR CALLING- LEADERSHIP GIFTS

INTRODUCTION

REVIEW

1. What happens if believers don't function together as a body?
Lack of unity. The body isn't complete. We will be missing critical parts and the body doesn't function as it should. We won't reach maturity and be a blessing to others. God won't be demonstrated through our lives.
2. What keeps a body of believers from functioning as it should?
We aren't individually and corporately submitted to God, wanting to serve and honor him. We're not functioning in the unity God calls us to. We're focused on self, not the whole.

LESSON FOCUS

Remember that in terms of each of the spiritual gifts, there is a level of service that is the responsibility of each believer to fulfill and that the spiritual gifts are heightened forms of the calling of every believer.

This lesson examines the leadership gifts listed in Ephesians 4:11-12 and elsewhere: administration, apostle, evangelist, exhortation, pastor, teacher, and wisdom.



SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

THE LEADERSHIP GIFTS

Under each spiritual gift, summarize what the scripture says is the calling of every Christian. Write a description of how the spiritual gift was exemplified in the scripture and what was the result of that gift being exercised.

1. Apostle – spreading the gospel, planting churches and starting new movements

a. The calling of every Christian – Acts 1:8

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

The calling of every Christian:

We are to be God's witnesses by his power wherever he has placed us.

b. The gift exemplified – Acts 2:36-41

³⁶*"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."*

³⁷*When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"*

³⁸*Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

³⁹*The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off--for all whom the Lord our God will call."*

⁴⁰*With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." ⁴¹Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.*

The description of the gift in the passage:

Peter preached the Gospel with power and mercy.

The result of the gift being exercised:

3,000 were saved on that day.

2. Administration – overseeing or managing people and/or resources

a. The calling of every Christian

1 Timothy 3:4

He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect.

Proverbs 31:27

She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.

The calling of every Christian:

Everyone needs to manage and oversee his or her own household and family.

b. The gift exemplified – Acts 6:1-7

¹In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. ²So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. ³Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them ⁴and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."

⁵This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. ⁶They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

⁷So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

The description of the gift in the passage:

To manage the affairs of the church faithful men were chosen to oversee the distribution of food to free the others for evangelism. Picture of body working together.

The result of the gift being exercised:

The word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem grew rapidly.

3. Pastor – leading and taking care of the members of a church, shepherding God’s flock

a. The calling of every Christian – Ephesians 5:25-27, 6:4

²⁵Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, ²⁷and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

⁴Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

The calling of every Christian:

Every Christian man is to pastor his family.

b. The gift exemplified – 1 Timothy 4:12-16

¹²Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity. ¹³Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. ¹⁴Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you.

¹⁵Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. ¹⁶Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

The description of the gift in the passage:

Timothy labored for the truth even though many considered him too young. He was faithful in his work.

The result of the gift being exercised:

Timothy was an example. Others were saved.

4. Evangelist – sharing the good news of Jesus Christ in an effective way, which causes people to respond

a. The calling of every Christian – 1 Peter 3:15-16

¹⁵But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

The calling of every Christian:

To know what you believe, live it out and be able and ready to share. (Be prepared to give an answer.) Keep a clear conscience. (Uncover and confess sin).

b. The gift exemplified – Acts 14:1-7

¹At Iconium Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue. There they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Gentiles believed. ²But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. ³So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to do miraculous signs and wonders. ⁴The people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews, others with the apostles. ⁵There was a plot afoot among the Gentiles and Jews, together with their leaders, to mistreat them and stone them. ⁶But they found out about it and fled to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe and to the surrounding country, ⁷where they continued to preach the good news.

The description of the gift in the passage:

Paul and Barnabas spoke effectively and what they said was confirmed by miracles.

The result of the gift being exercised:

Many people believed, others were stirred up and the city was divided. They didn't give up in spite of opposition.

5. Exhortation – encouraging and challenging others to act on biblical principles

a. The calling of every Christian

1 Thessalonians 5:11

Therefore, encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

Ephesians 4:15

Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.

The calling of every Christian:

Encourage others and build them up, speak the truth in love.

b. The gift exemplified – Acts 11:19-26

¹⁹Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews.

²⁰Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. ²¹The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

²²News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. ²³When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. ²⁴He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

²⁵Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, ²⁶and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

The description of the gift in the passage:

The church was scattered and Barnabas went out to encourage believers to remain true.

The result of the gift being utilized:

A great number of people were brought to the Lord.

6. Teacher – communicating the gospel in a way that it shapes the values, attitudes and way of life of another

a. The calling of every Christian – 2 Timothy 2:24-26

²⁴And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. ²⁵Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, ²⁶and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.

The calling of every Christian:

We must be able to pass on what we know to others so that they might understand the truth and become repentant.

b. The gift exemplified – Acts 18:24-28

²⁴Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. ²⁵He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. ²⁶He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.

²⁷When Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. On arriving, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed. ²⁸For he vigorously refuted the Jews in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

The description of the gift in the passage:

Priscilla and Aquila instructed Apollos and he received their instruction.

The result of the gift being exercised:

Apollos taught with greater power and ability. He could share his gift more effectively and prove that Jesus was the Christ.

7. Wisdom – guiding people on beneficial paths, aiding others in making correct decisions and good choices, having insights into people and situations not obvious to others

a. Calling of every Christian – James 1:5-6

⁵If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. ⁶But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.

The calling of every Christian:

All of us need to go to the source of wisdom when we don't understand and believe what God says is true.

b. The gift exemplified – 2 Peter 3:14-16

¹⁴So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. ¹⁵Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. ¹⁶He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.

The description of the gift in the passage:

Paul wrote letters to the churches with the wisdom God gave him.

The result of the gift being exercised:

People were saved, they knew the way to go and were strengthened in their faith. We still learn from what Paul wrote.

THINKING IT THROUGH

On the chart that follows, rate yourself on how well you have been fulfilling your Christian responsibilities, whether or not you demonstrate giftedness, and what you would ask God to work in you in terms of each of the listed gifts.

Scale: 1-not at all, 2-very little, 3-some, 4-a lot, 5-to a great degree

SPIRITUAL GIFT EVALUATION – THE LEADERSHIP GIFTS								
Gift	Fulfilling Christian responsibility					Demonstrate Giftedness		Work that needs to be done in you.
	1	2	3	4	5	Yes	No	
Administration								
Apostle								
Evangelist								
Exhortation								
Pastor								
Teacher								
Wisdom								

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

PERSONAL EVALUATION

1. How well are you fulfilling your Christian responsibilities in terms of the leadership gifts?

2. How can you do better in fulfilling your Christian responsibilities?

3. In what area or areas do you demonstrate giftedness?

4. How are you applying that gift in your family, church and community?

5. How can you apply that gift more fully?

PRAYER

Ask God for his insight into how he has gifted you to serve and contribute to the body and community. Pray that he would show you areas of service, however small, where you can be of benefit to others.





DISCOVERING OUR CALLING— THE ACTION GIFTS

INTRODUCTION

REVIEW

1. Why has God given believers spiritual gifts?
To build up the body and bring it to maturity. To be a living demonstration of God at work in the body.
2. What happens when believers use their gifts as God designed?
The church is healthy and functioning as it should. It is a blessing and reflects God to the world.
3. What happens when believers don't use their gifts according to God's plan?
It's a dysfunctional body. It doesn't work the way it should. It lacks unity and ability to spread the Gospel.

LESSON FOCUS

Remember that in terms of each of the spiritual gifts, there is a level of service that is the responsibility of each believer to fulfill and that the spiritual gifts are heightened forms of the calling of every believer.

This lesson examines the action gifts listed in Romans 2:6-8 and elsewhere: giving, helps, hospitality, intercession, mercy, and service.



SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

THE ACTION GIFTS

Under each spiritual gift, summarize what the scripture says is the calling of every Christian. Write a description of how the spiritual gift was exemplified in the scripture and what was the result of that gift being exercised.

1. Giving – contributing to the needs of others, sharing, giving material goods and financial resources beyond the normal tithe without any benefit to self

a. The calling of every Christian

2 Corinthians 9:6-7

⁶Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. ⁷Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

Leviticus 27:30 - *A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD.*

The calling of every Christian:

Each man should give cheerfully and generously to God (a tithe is a good place to start.)

b. The gift exemplified – 2 Corinthians 8:1-7

¹And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. ²Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. ³For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, ⁴they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. ⁵And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will. ⁶So we urged Titus, since he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. ⁷But just as you excel in everything--in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us--see that you also excel in this grace of giving.

The description of the gift in the passage:

The Macedonians gave generously out of their trial and poverty.

The result of the gift being exercised:

They shared in service to the saints, blessed others, set an example and needs were met.

2. Intercession – Prayer for another person, usually to obtain God’s help.

a. The calling of every Christian – Ephesians 6:18

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

The calling of every Christian:

Always keep on praying in the Spirit for whatever needs there are.

b. The gift exemplified – Colossians 4:12-13

¹²Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. ¹³I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis.

The description of the gift in the passage:

Epaphras was always wrestling in prayer for the saints.

The result of the gift being exercised:

Believers were standing firm in spite of opposition.

3. Service – meeting practical needs of others without expecting anything in return

a. The calling of every Christian – James 2:14-17

¹⁴What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? ¹⁵Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? ¹⁷In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

The calling of every Christian:

When we see someone in need, we are to do what we can to meet those needs.

b. The gift exemplified – 1 Corinthians 16:15-18

¹⁵You know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints. I urge you, brothers, ¹⁶to submit to such as these and to everyone who joins in the work, and labors at it. ¹⁷I was glad when Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus arrived, because they have supplied what was lacking from you. ¹⁸For they refreshed my spirit and yours also. Such men deserve recognition.

The description of the gift in the passage:

Stephanas and others were devoted to meeting the needs of the saints.

The result of the gift being exercised:

Needs were met and the spirit of the believers was refreshed.

4. Helps – supporting and assisting others

a. The calling of every Christian – 3 John 5-8

⁵Dear friend, you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers, even though they are strangers to you. ⁶They have told the church about your love. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. ⁷It was for the sake of the Name that they went out, receiving no help from the pagans. ⁸We ought therefore to show hospitality to such men so that we may work together for the truth.

The calling of every Christian:

Support others in a manner worthy of their calling.

b. The gift exemplified – 2 Timothy 1:15-18

¹⁵You know that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes.

¹⁶May the Lord show mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains. ¹⁷On the contrary, when he was in Rome, he searched hard for me until he found me. ¹⁸May the Lord grant that he will find mercy from the Lord on that day! You know very well in how many ways he helped me in Ephesus.

The description of the gift in the passage:

Onesiphorus searched diligently to find Paul in prison so he could be of help to him.

The result of the gift being exercised:

Paul wasn't left alone. He was helped and encouraged.

5. Hospitality – sharing food, shelter, etc., with those who cannot repay

a. The calling of every Christian – 1 Peter 4:9

Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.

The calling of every Christian:

Show hospitality when you are called to do so with a right attitude.

b. The gift exemplified – Acts 4:32-35

³²All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. ³³With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. ³⁴There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales ³⁵and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.

The description of the gift in the passage:

The believers were of one heart and mind and shared whatever they had.

The result of the gift being exercised:

There were no needy persons among them.

6. Mercy – responding in compassion, extending forgiveness, helping elevate people who are suffering or in distress

a. The calling of every Christian – Romans 12:14-18

¹⁴Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. ¹⁶Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. ¹⁷Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. ¹⁸If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

The calling of every Christian:

Respond to people appropriately, correctly in each situation, knowing and applying the truth. Forgive as you have been forgiven

b. The gift exemplified – Acts 7:54-60

⁵⁴When they heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. ⁵⁵But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ⁵⁶"Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

⁵⁷At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, ⁵⁸dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul.

⁵⁹While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." ⁶⁰Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep.

The description of the gift in the passage:

Stephen forgave those who were stoning him to death.

The result of the gift being exercised:

Stephen was a faithful witness of the glory and power of Christ. (He must have had an impact on Saul.)

THINKING IT THROUGH

On the chart that follows, rate yourself on how well you have been fulfilling your Christian responsibilities, whether or not you demonstrate giftedness, and what you would ask God to work in you in terms of each of the listed gifts.

Scale: 1-not at all, 2-very little, 3-some, 4-a lot, 5-to a great degree

SPIRITUAL GIFT EVALUATION – THE DEEDS GIFTS								
Gift	Fulfilling Christian responsibility					Demonstrate Giftedness		Work that needs to be done in you.
	1	2	3	4	5	Yes	No	
Giving								
Helps								
Hospitality								
Intercession								
Mercy								
Service								

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

PERSONAL EVALUATION

1. How well are you fulfilling your Christian responsibilities in terms of the action gifts?
2. How can you do better in fulfilling your Christian responsibilities?
3. In what area or areas do you demonstrate giftedness?
4. How are you applying that gift in your family, church and community?
5. How can you apply that gift more fully?

PRAYER

Ask God for his insight into how he has gifted you to serve and contribute to the body and community. Pray that he would show you areas of service, however small, where you can be of benefit to others.





RESPONDING TO OUR CALLING

INTRODUCTION

REVIEW

1. What are some criteria which can help us determine our spiritual gifts?
Benefit to others, sense of blessing, energized, like doing it
2. What is the difference between spiritual gifts and the calling of every Christian?
Every Christian is called to do something in each of the spiritual gifts. It is a gift when the ability to exercise it is heightened above the basic calling.

LESSON FOCUS

This lesson will examine our response to the gifts God has given us.

1. What is the necessary precondition we must be in before we can effectively exercise our spiritual gifts?
We have to be united with Christ and filled with his Spirit. We have to come to Christ.
2. What happens if we try to exercise our gifts when we are disconnected from Christ?
There's nothing there, no power. It gains nothing. We burn out. His love must be in us to flow out of us.



SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

THE VINE AND ITS BRANCHES

John 15:1-6

¹I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. ² Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³ Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.

1. How does our relationship with Christ relate to what God has called us to do?
It is the source of our fruit, our good actions. If we are cut off, we can't produce fruit.
2. Why can't a gifted person truly accomplish anything of value apart from Christ?
It isn't of God. It has no lasting worth. A dry branch can't produce good fruit.
3. Why is more important to focus on our relationship with Christ than our accomplishments?
It is the source of what has value and is lasting. It is what enables us to serve and bless others.

1 Corinthians 13:1-3

¹If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³ If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Why don't loveless deeds have value and how does that relate to Jesus' illustration of the vine and the branches?

They are empty, useless because they don't flow from God who is the source of love and what is good.



Remember: A simple act of help born out of love for Jesus gains more than great deeds without love.

GOOD WORKS

Philippians 2:12-13

¹² Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

1. How should we view our good works?

It is God's work through us, done by him for what pleases him.

2. What is a wrong view of good works that we often have?

We think of them as our own. We pat ourselves on the back for having done them.

An indication of a wrong view is complaining when others don't value what we do.

Ephesians 2:4-10

⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— ⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

What is the relationship between God's grace and our good works?

God's grace saved us so we can do good works. Good works are the outcome of salvation, not the source.



THINKING IT THROUGH

1. Why did God call us to himself?

God calls us to himself to be in a relationship with him and bless us.

2. What does God want from us?

He wants us to remain with him so we will be like him and be a blessing to others.

3. Who deserves the credit for our good works? Why?

Only God deserves credit. He is the source. We are just vessels.

4. What are sincere and continuous good deeds evidence of?

Good deeds demonstrate a connection to the vine, a relationship with Christ.

5. If we withhold our giftedness from the body, what is that evidence of?

We are full of self, not full of Christ. There is a disconnection from the vine.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

WHAT IS LOVE?

1 John 4:7-12

⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

1. What is the essence of God's love to us? (vs.10)

The sacrificial giving of his Son for our sins.

2. How then do we show his love to others?

We give ourselves sacrificially to benefit others through a connection to his love..

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

PERSONAL EVALUATION

1. Do you serve out of guilt or compulsion or does your service to the body come naturally out of God's love for you and your love for him?
2. How do you know the difference?

PRAYER

Thank God that he is the source of all that is good and beneficial. Pray that you would maintain a right relationship with him through Christ, so that you are able to do good works for his good purposes.





THE REWARD OF FULFILLING OUR CALLING

INTRODUCTION

REVIEW

1. How does the metaphor of the vine and the branches in John 15 summarize the essence of what has been learned about our purpose and calling in life?

Our primary calling is to be connected to Christ. If we are connected, then we will produce good fruit in keeping with our particular calling to bless others.

2. In what ways are our individual callings the same, and in what way do they differ?

We are all called to unity in the body and service for the common good. We differ in how we specifically fulfill our part in accomplishing that. There is a variety of gifts. No one has all of them. They are spread throughout the body so we can bless others.

LESSON FOCUS

This lesson will look at the ultimate reward and outcome for living our lives in service to Christ.

1. How does looking at the outcome of a choice affect what we choose to do?

Something is worth doing if it is beneficial in some way. To make a good choice we need to weigh the costs versus the benefits.

2. What is the difference between short-term and long-term choices and outcomes?

Short-term looks at the immediate result and appeals more to our flesh and instant gratification. You don't take into consideration secondary consequences. Long-term means you keep a long range goal in mind and can delay benefit for greater gain.

3. Are life's most valuable rewards generally based on short-term or long-term outcomes?

Long term.

4. What are examples of that?

Am I studying hard now in order to go to college and get a good job or am I messing around with my life? How are my choices today affecting the type of person I will marry? Am I delaying gratification and developing my character or giving into sin?

5. Why is serving Christ always the most beneficial choice?

Not only does it affect our life positively at the moment, it will have the best outcome for all eternity. It will cause us to make good choices and live life well.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

ETERNAL OUTCOMES

John 3:16-21

¹⁶ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. ¹⁹ And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. ²⁰ For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. ²¹ But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.”

1. What does it mean to believe in Jesus?

To rely on and trust in Jesus and his truth and know what he has done for us through his death and resurrection.

2. What does it mean to have eternal life?

Living forever is one aspect of eternal life, but so is living in God’s presences and having no boundaries in terms of time, quality and space, which means life will get continually better.

3. What does it mean to perish?

To be lost and come to an end, be separated from God’s presence forever.

4. What does coming into the light enable us to see?

The reality of life and our existence. That everything good comes from God. God has done the work, not us, and the credit goes to him.

John 8:31-36

³¹ So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, ³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." ³³ They answered him, "We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will become free'?"

³⁴ Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. ³⁵ The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. ³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

1. What does the command, "Abide in my word," mean?

Living in the truth of God. The ideas that we believe and hold onto are from God. Our actions come from what we live in.

2. What does the truth set us free from?

The power of sin and the deceptive ideas that would take us captive and lead us to sin. What we hold on to and practice is what we are a slave to.

Matthew 25:22-23

²² And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me two talents; here I have made two talents more.' ²³ His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'

1. What is the reward for faithfully using the gifts we've been given?

Entering into Christ's joy, knowing that we have pleased him, and being given more responsibility and authority.

2. When will our rewards be realized?

In life and after we die, at judgment

THINKING IT THROUGH

1. How do you know if you have your eyes set on life's ultimate prize or if you are seeking immediate gratification instead?

What does your mind dwell on? Are you able to delay gratification for long-term benefit? Do you spend all your money now or are you saving for the future? Do you wait patiently for God's plans to unfold



Illustration: The Stanford Marshmallow Experiment was a series of studies on delayed gratification done in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In these studies, a child was offered a choice between one small reward provided immediately or two small rewards (i.e., a larger later reward) if they waited for a short period, approximately 15 minutes, during which the tester left the room and then returned. (The reward was sometimes a marshmallow, but often a cookie or a pretzel.) In follow-up studies, the researchers found that children who were able to wait longer for the preferred rewards tended to have better life outcomes.

2. What can help you set your eyes on what is eternal?

Meditating on God and his promises. Keeping in mind all that God says. Not expecting life to be perfect, recognizing what truly satisfies.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

LOOKING AHEAD

Hebrews 11:8-10, 24-26

⁸ By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹ By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰ For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.

²⁴ By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵ choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. ²⁶ He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.

What did Abraham and Moses have in common?

Faith. They both were looking ahead to their reward. They looked beyond the here and now, believing that the best was yet to come. They trusted God.

1 Corinthians 9:24-25

²⁴ Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. ²⁵ Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.

How does Paul tell us to live this life?

Live it in light of eternity to gain the prize that lasts forever.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

PERSONAL EVALUATION

1. Are you living today for today or are you living today for eternity?

What demonstrates that?

2. Do you know the talents God has given you?

How are they being invested for your future reward?

PRAYER

Ask God for his insight into how he has gifted you to serve and contribute to the body and community. Pray that he would show you areas of service, however small, where you can be of benefit to others.



