

Week Two: Serving God with our Talents

1 Peter 4.7-11 / Matthew 5.13-16

21st September 2025 – Revd Michelle Lepine

Summary of key points

‘For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared for us in advance to do.’ (Ephesians 2.10)

‘Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.’ (1 Peter 4.10)

‘In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.’ (Matthew 5.16)

Last week we were reminded that in 1 Chronicles 29 it says, ‘Lord, all things come from you, and of your own do we give you.’ This applies also to how we serve God with the gifts and talents we have.

It is easy to think that we don’t have any useful gifts to offer in service to God and one another. We are often modest about the experience we have gained and the things we do well. The verse from Ephesians reminds us, we each have something good to offer God, for his sake and the sake of continuing his mission and ministry for the whole of his creation.

We might consider the 3-step guide below in helping us identify and release gifts:

Step 1: Unwrap the gift – a beautifully wrapped gift might look pretty but it is worth so much more when unwrapped and able to be used. Think about the meaning of Matthew 5.15. We must take time to identify and discover our talents and gifts. This means trying new things, risking failure. It will also mean encouraging others in their gifts. Tell someone if they are good at something. Are we a church that isn’t afraid of getting things wrong and trying new things? Flourishing and growing churches are ones which encourage rather than criticize.

Step 2: Don’t waste your gift – use it – Matthew reminds us to let our light shine rather than hide it. We shine when we carry the light of Christ in us, so when we use our gifts for others, we are not being boastful but rather we are glorifying God. It is easy to keep our gifts for our own use. 1 Peter reminds us to use them for the good of others. When we use our gifts, we encourage others to do the same by releasing other talents.

Step 3: Give thanks to God – if you receive a gift, I expect you thank the person who gave it to you. It is a privilege to have skills and talents and to love a generous and gracious God who invites us to be part of his mission. Being grateful to God is one way to combat complacency and to not get stuck in a rut of doing what we have always done even when it is no longer meeting the needs of God's people or growing his church.

Finally, thank you for the gifts and talents you already bring to the life of the church and the ways you serve God and each other.

Application questions for discussion

Read the Bible passages again, ideally using at least 2 different versions, and then consider the following questions:

- Reflect on the gifts of someone you know and the ways in which they have used them to serve God and others. Maybe you have benefitted from them? Give thanks to God. Consider sending a card of thanks or encouragement to someone you know.
- Write a list or draw pictures of the gifts you have and the ways you use them now or in the past? Take time to pray about whether God is calling you to continue to use them, use them differently or whether you have gifts that you haven't yet discovered.
- How do you personally contribute to building a growing and flourishing church community by encouraging others and fostering a culture where it is ok to try new things, and where failure or mistakes can happen without fear or criticism?
- In what ways can we release, develop, include and integrate the gifts of children and young people in our worship so that we learn from them as well as help nurture their faith?
- Consider the different services, discipleship groups, and outreach activities at St Ed's. Reflect on the church hall J4 project. Prayerfully reflect on how God may be calling us to respond to the needs of the community. We have many needs at St Ed's. How could you serve?

Prayer activity

Spend time giving thanks to God for his generosity and grace, for your own talents and those of others. Ask him to show you one area of need in our parish and how we could respond to that need with the gifts of people in our church family. Pray that we would be a kind and growing church which shines the light of Christ.

You might enjoy listening to this song - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8rh4xEvMVQQ>

Further reading (optional)

Steve Smallman, *A Hug for Humphrey* (Little Tiger Press), 2006 (NB. This is a children's book but beautifully illustrates the theme.)