

Week Two, Monday
Subject: Spiritual Gifts

Spiritual Gifts and God's Service

Read Romans 12:1-2 in your Bible.

These two verses serve as an introduction to the subject of spiritual gifts that follows in verses 6-8. Notice that verse 1 speaks of giving our bodies as a living sacrifice. You may wonder how you can offer your body to God. This is where spiritual gifts come in. There is no way any one could ever repay God for saving us. That is why verse 1 mentions God's "mercy." "Mercy" means that God loves us and saves us, even though we don't deserve it. The following verse is a good description of God's mercy:

ROMANS 5: 8 (NIV)

But God demonstrates His own love for us in this way: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Now would be a good time to pause and pray to God. Why don't you thank God for loving you enough to let Christ die in your place?

The same mercy that saved you is the same mercy that Romans 12:1 states that gives you the desire to present your body a living sacrifice. You can please God when you let Him use the abilities that He has given you to serve Him.

Read Romans 12:2 again. Now list the two things you must do to allow God to use your spiritual gift.

- 1.
- 2.

That's right you must NOT conform to the world's pattern, and you MUST be transformed. A Christian is transformed by renewing his or her mind.

Check the things below that will help you renew your mind and enable you to please God with your spiritual gift(s).

_____ Listen to Christian music

_____ Read your Bible

_____ Watch television four hours every night

_____ Pray

_____ Take notes during the sermon

_____ talk about the weather

_____ Memorize Bible verses

_____ put your mind in neutral

Your memory verse for this week is Luke 9:23.

Don't forget to complete your "Spiritual Gifts Inventory."

Being Responsible for What God has Given Us

Write your memory verse for this week on the lines below.

“And He said to them all, ‘If any _____ will come after Me, let him _____
_____, and take up his _____, and _____.’” Luke 9:23

Read Luke 12:16-19 in your Bible.

A steward is a person that is responsible for another person’s possessions. Christians are stewards because we understand that God owns everything and He lets us take care of it for a few years. There are two views of wealth: 1.) wealth is controlled by persons and 2.) wealth is controlled by God. In today’s Bible passage, we see an example of the first view. This “certain rich man” thought he owned everything. He had a big problem with selfishness. Circle the first person words (I, me, myself, my) found in verses 17-19.

This man also valued the temporary things more than the eternal things. He found security in all the treasures he had stored in his barns. He found luxury in not having to work: “Take life easy.” He found pleasure in “eating, drinking, and being merry.”

Now read Luke 12:20-21

What happened to the man’s wealth?

What happened to the man’s plans?

What happened to the man’s life?

What happened to the man’s eternity?

The man thought he was in control, but overnight he lost his life, wealth and even his plans for bigger barns. Because he was not “rich toward God,” he lost the chance for an eternity in heaven.

Often, Christians are greatly influenced by the world’s view of wealth. We must remember that God is the one that has given us the ability to work and produce money, and God can take it away just as easily. How we handle our money says a lot about what we believe about God and ourselves. Most of all, it says a lot about who we think is in control. The main lesson of Luke 12:16-21 is that God is in control – not us!

Pray to God and confess any wrong attitudes about the resources God has loaned to you. Ask God to show you how He can better use His resources through your life.

Write one way you could better use God’s resources (including money).

Week Two, Wednesday
Subject: Stewardship

What Lasts and What Doesn't

Read Matthew 6:19-21

The problem with money is that it doesn't matter how much we have, we could always use a little more. Have you noticed that no matter how much you get paid, you always just get by? This is a built-in problem with the way the world views wealth. Can you list the two views of wealth that we mentioned yesterday?

- 1.
- 2.

In the Bible passage for today, can you see the two views presented? The one view tries to guard and protect treasures from moth, rust and thieves, because they think they own the treasure. The Christian realizes that his or her treasure is in heaven and because it belongs to God, God will take care of it. Such a view of wealth frees us so we can use our lives to serve God instead of chasing treasures. **Matthew 6:25-30** shows us the areas of freedom a Christian can experience. The Christian can be free from anxiety (verse 25), free from worry over food (verse 26), free from worry over how long he/she will live (Verse 27, NIV) and free from attempting to keep up with all the styles (Verses 28-30).

None of the earthly things we accumulate here on earth will be in heaven. In fact, many of the things we accumulate will not even last our earthly lifetime. The only things from earth that will be in heaven are Christian people. If people are the things that last, then we should invest more in people and bring people to Christ, than investing in possessions that don't last and don't satisfy.

To help you better understand the Bible's view of wealth, match the following verses with the correct phrases.

- | | |
|---------------------------|---|
| _____ 1 Corinthians 10:26 | A. God will meet your needs |
| _____ Matthew 6:24 | B. God owns everything |
| _____ Philippians 4:19 | C. God requires total allegiance to Him |

Thank God in prayer for His promise to meet your needs (Philippians 4:19). Remember, God owns the earth and everything in it (1 Corinthians 10:26). Express to God your willingness to totally follow God, even in how you use your money (Matthew 6:24).

This is "hump" day. Have you memorized Luke 9:23 and completed your spiritual gifts inventory?

Week Two, Thursday
Subject: Christian Living

Take Up Your Cross

Luke 9:23 is your memory verse for this week. Write it below.

When you became a Christian you also became a disciple. Jesus often described His followers as “disciples.” In Luke 9:23, Jesus calls us to make three commitments. First, Jesus said, “If any man comes after me, let him deny himself.” A disciple must deny self. This week you have been studying about wealth, money, possessions and your attitude toward these things. Can you see a connection between denying yourself and the Biblical view of wealth? To deny self means to make loyalty to Jesus the supreme commitment of your life. This commitment will affect how you use your time and energy, as well as your money. It is not natural for you to deny yourself. Denying self only comes when we let Christ be the center of our personalities.

“Take up your cross” is the second commitment as a disciple. Denying self is the negative side of discipleship, while taking up your cross is the positive side of discipleship. Taking up one’s cross involves turning with Christ to the world in need. You can do this by loving an enemy, forgiving a family member, witnessing, sharing in the financial support of the church, helping a person in need, befriending the lonely or many other things. The word “daily” reminds us of the need to be consistent in our Christian life. When Jesus took up His cross, he taught us two things: 1.) cross bearing involves voluntary commitment and 2.) it is an act of obedience.

Following Jesus is your third commitment as a disciple. Just as Jesus followed His heavenly Father, we are to follow Jesus. To follow Jesus means to be close to Jesus. When we are close to Jesus, we find it easier to serve Him, we are equipped with His power, we find rest in Him and we become an effective witness. Mark 1:17 says, “Come follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” The Christian is motivated to follow Jesus by the desire and promise of fellowship with Jesus.

Can you remember the memory verse from the first week? Write Psalms 119:11 below.

Take a few minutes to pray to God about the three commitments of a disciple, then list at least one way you can demonstrate your commitment in each area.

Self denial -

Cross bearing -

Following Jesus -

Week Two, Friday
Subject: Stewardship

How to Financially Give to Your Church

Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-7 from your Bible.

In this passage, Paul is writing to a church in Corinth about the matter of financial support of God's work. In verses 1-5, Paul uses the Christians at Macedonia as an example of how to give. Consider these principles on giving:

Obedience in giving is not dependent on our abundant wealth, but on God's abundant grace. In verse 2, you can see that the Christians in the town of Macedonia were experiencing severe trials and extreme poverty and yet they gave generously. Verse 1 tells us that the Christians in Macedonia were very aware of God's grace. **2 Corinthians 8:9** reminds us of what God's grace means. You might want to underline that verse in your Bible.

Financial giving sometimes stretches us. Notice in verse 3 that the Macedonians gave as much as they were able and then some.

We should want the opportunity to share in Christian work. In verse 4, the Macedonians begged Paul to share money with the "saints".

Giving first starts with giving of yourself to God. First these Christians gave themselves to God and then it was easier to give their money to Christian work (see verse 5).

For the last principle in giving, read the following verse:

2 CORINTHIANS 8:7 (NIV)

But 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.

Paul is telling us that as we grow as Christians, we grow in understanding the Bible, loving each other, honesty, faith and communication. But we should also grow in the area of giving. Principle number 6 is: ***Christians need to strive to grow in how we live and how we give.***

Pray today about how God would want you to grow (increase).

Quote Luke 9:23 to a friend this weekend and explain to them what the verse means to you.