

Faithful Stewards of Our Talents

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[0 : 00] I know that most of you in this room are familiar with the phrase gifted and talented, especially from school. Some of you were in, or maybe even are right now, in a gifted and talented class.

Of course, some of you were never in a gifted and talented class. Some of you in this room, I know you have or do teach a gifted and talented class.

I don't have a problem at all with schools doing things like that. GT classes have their place for sure. But the fact is, they only test students for certain kinds of gifts and talents.

Most students don't meet the criteria to be in those classes. But students, just about every student would meet the criteria to get into some kind of gifted and talented class.

Now, I know some of you teachers, thinking very cynically here, you've got students that their gift or talent is to be a terrorist. Disrupt your class.

[1 : 13] Threaten you. I know. I hear a lot about those kind of students. But let's think about it more seriously.

God has designed every person in such a way that we all have certain gifts and talents.

And I know that some of you teachers who see some of your most disruptive students, you see within them the potential. Because you see a gift or a talent that maybe has not been in an environment where it could develop and especially not flourish.

Maybe that's your goal to try to bring it out. But each of us in this room, every single one of us, no matter what our age is now, we were created by God with specific gifts and talents that He intends for us to recognize, identify, develop, and then use in a way that will serve Him, serve His purpose, and benefit other people.

And the question is, at the beginning, are you doing that? Are you developing your gifts and talents, your God-given, God-designed gifts and talents, in a way that you can identify specific ways you are serving God, pleasing Him right now in your life by using them, making a difference in other people's lives?

[2 : 50] With what God's given you, you're investing or helping them. Today, I want us to finish our stewardship series by looking at our God-given responsibility to be faithful stewards of our talents.

Most of you were here when we've looked at how God has given us the responsibility to faithfully manage our time, our treasures.

We're just looking at how God has given us the responsibility to take everything He's given us and use it wisely, manage it to the best of our ability.

Stewardship is a very important concept that every Christian needs to understand and practice, because one day, we're going to give an accounting to God for just how well we have managed what He's entrusted to us.

I want you to look at an article. It'll be a reminder for some of you, because I showed it the first day we began this series. Stewardship in all of life from the ESV Study Bible.

[3 : 56] Look at this. A good explanation of what we all need to understand. Whatever a person owns, he or she is to manage as a steward who is responsible to God.

Stewardship responsibilities extend not only to the creation, material possessions, and natural resources, but also to other things such as talents or skills that have been given by God.

Time and opportunities. The wonderful responsibility of bearing and raising children and spiritual gifts and ministries. I want us to begin looking at our responsibilities, stewardship responsibilities, by noting what the Bible says about the way God has created us.

God creates every individual uniquely and purposefully. God created everyone in His image. God created human beings in His image.

Look at what it says in Genesis chapter 1. So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him. Male and female He created them. Every human life was created in the image, the likeness of God.

[5 : 11] And nothing else in creation was created that way. Only human life, because of this, only human life is sacred.

Now I know I'm a dog lover. Not a cat, but a dog lover. And I know that people in this room have dogs, cats, animals. And you would say, my dog, my cat, my animal's life is special. And no doubt it is. And I think we have a responsibility to take care of whatever we have. We have a responsibility to be good stewards of the animals that God has given us.

As much as we love them, as important as they are to us, their life is not sacred. Because they are not created in the image of God.

Only humans. That makes us of worth and value unlike any other living thing in this world.

[6 : 14] But God doesn't make us in His image all the same, obviously. God creates us uniquely. Look at what the psalmist says in Psalm 139.

For you formed my inward parts. You knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you. For I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

You are not you by accident. God made you. God created you to be you. From the time of conception.

That's why human life is sacred. Human life in the womb needs to be protected. Human life in the womb that is destroyed is killing a living human being. It's wrong.

It's morally, biblically wrong. We need to protect human life. But the point I want to make here is God created you in His image. But look around.

[7 : 15] No one in this room was created just alike. No matter where you go in life. No matter where you go in life. You're never going to find anyone that looks or acts or thinks exactly like you.

Because God knitted us together. Individually. Uniquely. And the next point. For a purpose.

God created us purposefully. Look again in Psalm 139. Your eyes saw my unformed substance. In your book were written every one of them.

The days that were formed for me. When as yet there was none of them. God created us the way that we are.

For a specific purpose in this world. The prophet Jeremiah understood that God created him for a special purpose. To be his spokesman. Be his prophet.

[8 : 16] I want you to look at this. What Jeremiah understood. The word of the Lord came to me saying. Before I formed you in the womb. I knew you. Before you were born. I set you apart.

I appointed you as a prophet to the nations. Several Bible writers describe how God has a purpose for our lives. By using the image of God forming us like a potter forms his clay.

Here's one example from Psalm 119. Your hands have made and fashioned me. Give me understanding that I may learn your commandments.

Now I want you to note there's two truths there. Your hands have made and fashioned me. That's the point I'm trying to make here. But David understood that God had created him just as he is for a purpose.

And David wanted to know. He wanted to have understanding. So that he could be faithful to God. In carrying out his purpose. He wanted to be able to do God's will.

[9 : 22] To keep God's commandments. And so it's sort of a double truth there. But look at one more. Isaiah chapter 64 verse 8. But now oh Lord you are our father.

We are the clay. And you are our potter. We're all the work. Of your hand. Here's what I want us to see in all these verses.

It's coming to a point. The Bible is clear that our lives are not just our own. We truly belong to God. He created us in his image uniquely and purposefully. You look in the mirror. God created you like you are.

Now we can be the best that we can be. You know we can do everything we can do. Try to make ourselves. Some of us need to work even harder. Try to make ourselves look better. What God has made.

[10 : 24] But we need to understand that God made us as we are. And God gave us talents. He gave us gifts. He gave us abilities. Some we just have.

We're born with. Some we have developed. Really worked at. Refined. But God has designed you to be you. And gifted you.

For a specific purpose in this world. And I don't mean some kind of unique. Far out something. But to be the person. He's called you to be. In your home. With your family.

Where you work. Among the people God's put you with. The people that you go to school with. People that you play sports with. Or involved with in whatever way. And we'll come back to the question.

How are you using what God has given you? How are you using what God has given you. Gifted you. Talented you with.

[11:24] As a husband. To impact. In a positive way. Your wife. As a father. As a father. Your children. As a wife.

Your husband. As a mother. As a child. As the person you are at work. Or whatever responsibilities you have in life. How are you taking.

Or are you seeking to take what God has given you. And use it to serve him. By serving other people. Are you using this to.

Impact other people's lives. In the most positive way. That you can. In your relationship with them. That's what God's calling us to do.

Generally speaking. Now I want us to dig a little deeper. To what the Bible says about. Being faithful with the talents. God has given us. As Christians. Number two. God recreates every Christian.

[12:21] Purposefully. And uniquely. When the world was created. When God created everything. In Genesis one and two. Everything was good. Wasn't it? Everything was perfect.

There were no flaws. But something happened. Because you look around at this world. And you look in the mirror. And you look at one another. Nothing. And no one is perfect.

Is it? Well. Well. The Bible tells us. In Genesis three. The original couple. That God created. Adam and Eve. They chose to disobey God.

They chose to sin. And then when they did. They corrupted everything. That's why we enter the world. With a sinful nature. That's why you don't have to teach your children.

To tell a lie. To fight with a brother or sister. To disobey you. They have that sinful nature. They want to live life. Their way. Not your way. We all want to live life.

[13:19] Our way. Not God's way. We're natural born. Rebels. Because we have a sinful nature. And as we grow. And mature. We find different ways.

To act on that sinful nature. And actually do. Sinful things. The only way that. Anyone can be rescued. From this sin problem.

Is through God's. Is through God's. Gracious salvation. That comes. Through faith in Jesus Christ. If you are a Christian. That means that God has done.

A special work. Of re. Creation. In you. What Jesus called. A new birth. God has worked in you. To give you the desire.

To turn from. Your rebellious way. Selfish way. Sinful way. God has given you. The faith. To understand. That when Jesus died on the cross. He actually took. The paid the penalty.

[14:15] For your sin. Took your punishment. God has worked in you. His. Miraculous. New birth. You've responded. By turning from your sin.

And trusting in Jesus. God put his spirit in you. So you are now. A new creature. New creation. The scripture says. We're going to think about it. Right now. As.

You are. You have been. Recreated. By God. As a Christian. Now. God saved you. For the purpose. Of displaying. You.

As a work. Of his. Art. I want you to look with me. At a passage of scripture. From Ephesians. Chapter 2. A lot of you are familiar. With the first two verses. Eight and ten. Eight and nine.

Rather. But I want you to really. Zero in on verse ten. When we get to it. Let's look at it. For by grace. You've been saved. Through faith. And this is not. Your own doing. It's the gift of God. Not a result of works.

[15:13] So that no one may boast. Look closely. Verse ten. For we are his workmanship. Created in Christ Jesus. For good works.

Which God prepared beforehand. That we should walk in them. That word workmanship. It was used in that day. It was used in that day. To describe various kinds of. Works of art.

Like a painting. A sculptured stone. Or even a piece of literature. This verse. Could be translated. More literally.

We are his work of art. Or even. We are his masterpiece. I want you to think. What Paul is saying here is. If you are a Christian.

God. Considers you now. His. Workmanship. You're his work of art. You are his.

[16:13] Masterpiece. It could even be said. Now the next phrase. Explains how God does this. It says. Created in. Christ Jesus. The word created.

Refers to God's. Sovereign work. Of salvation. When God saves us. He recreates us. As I said a moment ago. By putting his spirit. In us.

And through the power. Of the Holy Spirit. We are called. To live in a way. That demonstrates. That shows. How God is. Worked in us. By the power.

Of the Holy Spirit. We can live. In such a way. That we show. We reveal. That we've been changed. By God. When he saved us.

Have you ever thought about. How you. And it all begins. At home. For all of us. But at school. At work. Wherever. Have you ever thought about.

[17:08] The people who see you. Know you. Interact with you. They're supposed to see. An example. Of God's work. In you. That's exactly.

What Paul is saying. In verse 10. For we are his workmanship. Created in Christ Jesus. For good works. That's what people see. Which God prepared. Beforehand.

That we should walk in them. Verses 8 and 9. Make it clear. We do not. Save ourselves. By doing good things. Good work. Do not save anyone. But verse 10.

Clearly says. That we are saved. By the grace of God. Through faith in Jesus. In order to do. Good works. That God has prepared. In advance. For us to do.

Now hang with me. One. Just real quickly. On. On this idea. The good works. Described here.

Refers to the God. To our godly behavior. In general. Living a faithful.

[18:04] Christian life. That Paul. Sort of. Identifies. A lot of it. In chapters. 4. 5. And 6. Of Ephesians. We're in Ephesians 2. 8 through 10.

Well he goes on. In chapter 4. 5. And 6. To point out. Ways. That we. Demonstrate. We're God's workmanship. He points out good works.

He talks about. Doing things like. Using your spiritual gifts. To serve other people. He talks about. Being sexually. Pure. He talks about.

How vital it is. That we be people. Who are known. For speaking the truth. Not lies. He even says. Some things about. Learning to deal.

With our anger. Appropriately. And in a timely way. He says. That a part of our good works. We need to learn. To forgive people.

[18:59] Forgive. Like God forgave us. And he has some things. To say. About loving. And serving. And serving. The people. That God has put into our lives. When he talks about.

The responsibility. Of husbands. Of wives. Of parents. Of children. There's a section. In Ephesians chapter 6. It talks about. Slaves and masters. And the application today.

Is talking about. What kind of boss. You ought to be. What kind of an employee. You ought to be. Where you work. How many people.

Who interact with you. On a regular basis. See. These good works. On display. In your life.

Now. We all fail to demonstrate. These good works. More often than we like to admit. All of us do. I'm going to say. A lot of people.

[19:54] In this room. When. You left home. This morning. Or at least. Arrived at church. In less than a good mood. Because somebody. Was late.

Somebody. Said something. You didn't like. Something happened. And when you got here. This morning. You were ready. To get out of the car. And separate. From people you rode here with. I've been there.

Done that. That's just life. But. Think about. The big picture. Are there more times than not.

Is it more. True. Today. That when you first became a Christian. That people can see. Evidence.

That God is at work in your life.

God is smoothing. Some of your rough edges. God is helping you. To clean up your language. God is helping you. To work on that temper. God is helping you.

[20 : 56] To be more compassionate. To demonstrate your love. In more tangible ways. That's what God has. Saved us.

Worked in us. Prepared us. To be and do. In this world. Demonstrate to people. We are his. Workmanship. By the good works.

The Christian character. That we're developing. And demonstrating. But let's look at one more way. That God works in each of his children. God saved you. To fulfill a unique purpose.

In his family. That is the church. Look at this. In Romans 12. Just as our bodies. Have many parts. And each part. Has a special function. So it is.

With Christ's body. We are many parts. Of one body. And we all belong. To each other. In his grace. God has given us. Different gifts.

[21 : 51] For doing certain things. Well. And then from. First Peter. Four. Ten. As each has received. A gift. Use it. To serve one another. As good stewards.

Of God's very grace. God gives every Christian. At least one spiritual gift. That he intends for us to use. In the life of this church. In the ministry of this church.

I think sometimes. When it comes to spiritual gifts. Sometimes we as Christians. Overly spiritualize. This idea. We wind up being more confused.

Than informed. About what spiritual gifts really are. I like the way Wayne Grudem. Just sort of boils. This spiritual gift idea down. And defines it like this.

Look at it. A spiritual gift. A spiritual gift. Is any talent. Or ability. Which is empowered. By the Holy Spirit. And able to be used. In the ministry of the church. That is just.

[22 : 47] My favorite definition. Of a spiritual gift. It is something. That God. Gives us. To use. In and through. The church. But it may be.

A natural talent. That. That you had. Before you ever became a Christian. Or it could be. Something special. To use. To use. Paul's imagery. Each one of us.

Is. A body. Part. In this. Spiritual body. Called the church. And if we're going to be. A healthy church. All of us.

Must use. Our gifts. Talents. Abilities. For the. Good of the church. The good of the body. The good of the family.

Just think about it. Over. Thanksgiving day. Actually. I was throwing a football. At home. With the family. And I got hit. In the finger.

[23 : 46] And this little pinky. Got jammed. And this has been bothering me. Ever since then. This little finger. Has been sore. It sort of irritated me.

To have to deal with it. You don't want to be. In the life of this church. A sore finger. That everybody knows you're here.

Because you're just an irritant. You inflict pain. And discomfort. By your. Presence. But at the same time.

You don't want to be. Something that doesn't function. Like a. Like your foot. Going to sleep. You ever been somewhere. Like at a doctor's office. And you wait forever. And maybe you're sitting. In such a way. You don't really realize it. Your foot's gone to sleep. And you think. They're going to call me. Right now. And I can't get up. Without falling. Flat on my face. You don't want to be.

[24 : 42] That foot. That's asleep. That does nothing. Of value. In the life of the church. You.

Are a member. Of the body of Christ. Called Pickens First Baptist. If you remember here. And you're a Christian. You have God given. Gifts.

Talents. Abilities. Are you using them. For the good. The growth. Spiritual. Numerical. Of this church.

Are you using it. For the benefit. Of people around you. Or are you. Causing. An irritant. Or. Causing us. Not to be able to function. Just because you don't function. One more thought. Are you faithfully. Serving the unique purpose. That God created. And recreated you to do.

[25 : 40] In this world. And in this church. The best tool. I've ever seen. For trying to discern. God's specific purpose. For our life.

And for our ministry. Is Rick Warren's. Acronym. Shape. I've shown it on several occasions. I want to show it. Quickly here. Because I think it can help. Anyone.

In fact. If you are. Particularly. A young person. And you think. I don't know what I want to do. In my life. Look at this acronym. It can help you understand. How God's made you. How God has shaped you.

To live in this world. But the point is. We need to see how God has. Shaped us. To serve him. In the life of the church. That's the point. Right now. Let's look at it. Your shape.

First is your spiritual gifts. Your God given. Spiritual gifts. That we already looked at there. If you're just looking for. What. What I need to do in my life. Think about your strengths. Let S stand for strengths.

[26 : 36] For you. But then look at heart. What's your heart's desire? Where are your interests? You know. If you just really don't like children.

I mean. It's like. You're glad for other people to have them. Just don't. I don't want to be around them. I don't have anything to do with them. Then you don't have a heart for children. So you should not work in a wanna.

You shouldn't be involved in our nursery. If you just despise children. That's not your calling. For sure. But what is? Where does your heart sort of move you?

A is for abilities. Your natural talents. The abilities that you have developed. What can you do? God's not gonna call you to do something in this church.

That you just absolutely cannot do. That's not how it works. Your personality. Your personality. Your uniqueness. Your individuality. Some people are more introverted.

[27 : 37] Some are more extroverted. Some people. If you thought you had to stand up. In front of a large group. And do something. You would slip out right now. And never come back.

I can understand that. Some people. You've got to be around. A group. Your gift is such. You've got to do it. With people. That's your personality.

The last one experiences. Your life experiences. Good and bad. What have you learned? What have you discovered about yourself? That's a strength. That's a weakness.

What can you do? What can you not do? I want to encourage you. If you don't know. How God has shaped you.

To serve him. Through this church. Spend some time. This afternoon. This week. Ask God. To make it clear. How he has shaped you.

[28 : 34] To be involved. In the life and ministry. Of this church. If you think about it. You pray about it. You're still not sure. Just do something. Experiment.

Experiment. We learn a lot of things. By trial and error. We learn. There's some things. I just cannot do. Because we tried it. We learn. Sometimes. There's something. That I can do.

Just by giving it a shot. Ask people. Who know you. And will tell you the truth. How they think. Maybe. God has shaped you.

Now. I want to encourage you. Let somebody. You ask somebody. That you think. Will tell you the truth. Be prepared. When I first started preaching. I was. 20 years old.

21 years old. And I go to places. And no matter what. People always came up to me afterwards. Talked to me. How good it was. I told this. One time. A long time ago. I went one place.

[29 : 27] There was this older lady. Who was kin to me. I didn't know her. But she told me she was kin. I figured she was. Telling the truth. And she came up to me afterwards. And she looked at me and smiled. She said. Don't worry about it. You're going to get better. And.

And I appreciated that. It let the air out of my bubble. You know. Brought me back down to reality. And sometimes. You may need to tell somebody.

Don't worry about it. This ain't your gift. Or you will get better. Or something like that. But I want to encourage you. Look for ways to serve God.

By doing his good works. In terms of living like a Christian. Living like. Or showing Christ like character. Right where you are right now.

In whatever. Your home. Work. School. Community involvement is. Everyone in this room. Is not considered. A gifted. And talented.

[30 : 26] Individual. In the big scheme of things. Everybody in this room. Was not a gifted. And talented. Student. In school. But if you are a Christian. You are a gifted. And talented.

Church member. I want you to understand that. Take it seriously. God has given you. Those gifts and talents. For you to wisely. Manage. And one day.

He's going to call you. To give an account. Of how well you've managed them. How well you've used them. Ask God to help you. To live your life. In such a way. That when judgment day comes. You're not going to be terrified. But by his grace. You're going to be. Ready. To stand before him.

And tell him. How you have at least attempted. To be a faithful manager. Of the time talents. And treasures.

[31 : 26] That he has given you. Let's pray together. Father. Father. Show us now. How you have shaped us.

Confirm to us. How you've shaped us. And Father. I pray that people in this room. Who are serving you. They know how you've shaped them. They are serving. Affirm them.

Encourage them. Help them to know dear God. That first. And foremost. They are serving you. And help them.

Father. To be faithful. And leave the results. With you. Father. If there are people in this room. Who. Who are out of shape. They're attempting to serve you.

In ways. That they really aren't. Shaped to do. Help them to see that. And to change. Help them not to be miserable. In what they do. Help them not to.

[32 : 31] Not want to come. Because they don't want to do. What they. Have previously committed to doing. Help them to find their true. Shape. Where serving you. Will be a joy. Or they'll be affirmed.

But Lord. If there are people in this room. Who. Are not doing anything. With what you've given them. Convict them. That's sin. That's laziness. Or selfishness. Or just plain indifference. Help them dear God. To identify. How you have shaped them. Then find a way. To serve you. In and through this church.

Lord. Even help us all. To recognize how you have. Gifted us. To be in this world.

Making a difference. As your workmanship. Let's just in attitude of prayer. Respond to the Lord. As he speaks to us. That's what this time is all about.

[33 : 37] But I would be happy to pray with you. Consider it a privilege. If you'd like for me to pray. During these next few minutes. Like you. Do not let am■■■. Let's be right back.

Ta ■. Then weekends. As your workmanship. Then there is everything.les that you'll be bare thinking. For me. To be honest. Use it. So no, there's something you. Quick hand. Give me your life. Kiss it and put it Amen. Beweet us. To live your feelings.

If you'll call us. Let your efforts. Let's watch victory. Let your knees bet. Water. For me to give a rest. input ■■■■. Say it a namelijk. To live hands for me. Put works. To live in this place. To live your body.

I'll have much. So no, there's anything you.