



# GIFTS – USEFUL IN GOD’S KINGDOM

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16 October 2022

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## Church Alive

We are on our journey in our series Church Alive. We’re trusting that each one of us will be awakened in our God-given gifts and callings in a fresh way and begin to serve one another and make a difference in our city.

## Useful in God’s Kingdom

### Introduction

#### Story: The wealthy business owner

There was a wealthy business owner who owned three factories, a massive one in Johannesburg, the flagship! There was a second one in Cape Town, which was also fairly large and a small one in East London. Wanting to expand his interests overseas he went to Dubai for three weeks. He left managers in charge of his factories while he was gone. The one in Jo’burg grabbed the opportunity and worked really hard. He motivated the staff, made the production line more efficient and was able to produce double the output they usually do in regular times. Similarly in the Cape Town branch, they also applied themselves and almost doubled their output.

But the manager in East London was scared something would go wrong. What would happen if the machines broke or the customers were dissatisfied? So he kept the factory clean, but did not operate the machines; he just waited for the boss to return. They would all still get their salaries, the factory was in pristine shape, but they hadn’t produced anything.

How do you think the owner will respond on his return?

The managers in Johannesburg and Cape Town would probably get promotions or a bonus, and the East London manager would get demoted or even fired. He had lost his employer money and damaged his business, because they still had to pay the utilities and wages, but had no income or goods to show for it and they were behind on their orders so would put extra pressure on the next team.

Does this story sound familiar? Jesus told a similar story in Matthew 25, the parable of the talents. Talents here are sums of money entrusted to the servants.

#### *Matthew 25:14-30 ESV*

<sup>14</sup> *“For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. <sup>15</sup> To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away.*

<sup>16</sup> *He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. <sup>17</sup> So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. <sup>18</sup> But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master’s money. <sup>19</sup> Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. <sup>20</sup> 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.'*<sup>21</sup> 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.'<sup>22</sup> 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.'<sup>23</sup> 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.'<sup>24</sup> 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,'**<sup>25</sup> so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here, you have what is yours.'<sup>26</sup> 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?'<sup>27</sup> 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.********

<sup>28</sup> So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents.

<sup>29</sup> 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.

<sup>30</sup> And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

This parable is speaking of our faith in Jesus. How are we going to respond to his offer of salvation? Are we going to receive it and bear fruit, or reject it (bury it) and end up eternally separated from the Father.

Salvation is a free gift received by faith; it is not earned by works. But works should follow salvation, as we walk in love and obedience to Christ.

Ephesians 2:8-10

<sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,<sup>9</sup> not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

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

Having clarified that, what can we take from this parable?

1. We will all give an account of our lives one day
2. What have we done with what God has given us – the gift of His precious Son and the gifts and talents He has entrusted to us?
3. God gave talents to each one according to their ability – each one had the capacity to handle what He entrusted to them.
4. The servant who only received one talent made excuses for not doing anything with it. Perhaps he thought his contribution was insignificant?
5. Those who were faithful with what they were given received more and were promoted.

What are you doing with what Jesus has entrusted to you?

Do you know what gifts He has given you and what He has called you to do?

Do you know your part in the Body of Christ, the church?

## Gifts and Callings

We are now entering the 4<sup>th</sup> phase of our Church Alive series, where we will be examining our gifts and callings and encouraging one another to come alive to them, to start to become active in His body – to find our place and start to function in it effectively.

We started out by understanding our identity in Christ - that we are His beloved children, chosen and dearly loved and valued by Him. We have each been given a divine purpose ordained before the foundations of the world.

We then learned that we are part of this amazing Body, the church and that we need to be connected in community, in close loving relationships, walking with one another across generations, helping one another follow Jesus and become more like Him.

We then discovered that we are indwelt and empowered by the Holy Spirit and learned how we can hear and respond to His voice.

Now we will bring all of these together to discover our place and function in Jesus's body, the church.

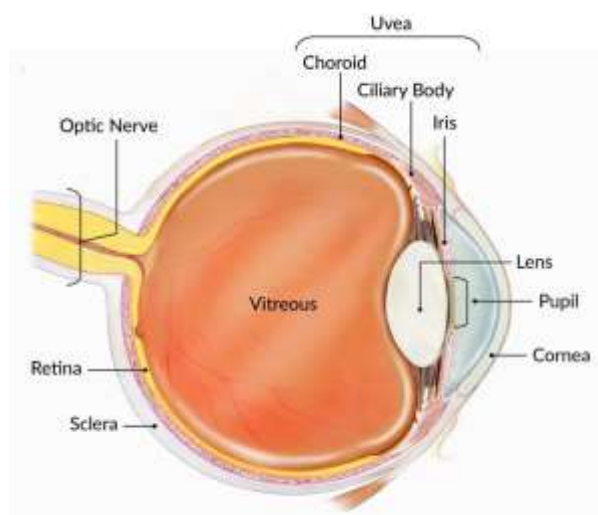
1. We are all part of the church and called to function effectively in it so it can grow

*Ephesians 4:15-16 ESV*

<sup>15</sup> Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, *into Christ*,<sup>16</sup> 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.

Illustration: The human eye (see diagram)

All the different parts of your eyes work together to help you see. First, light passes through the cornea (the clear front layer of the eye). The cornea is shaped like a dome and bends light to help the eye focus. Some of this light enters the eye through an opening called the pupil. The iris (the coloured part of the eye) controls how much light the pupil lets in. Next, light passes through the lens (the clear inner part of the eye). The lens works together with the cornea to focus light correctly on the retina. When light hits the retina (the light-sensitive layer of tissue at the back of the eye), special cells called photoreceptors turn the light into electrical signals. These electrical signals travel from the retina through the optic nerve to the brain. Then the brain turns the signals into the images you see. Your eyes also need tears to work correctly.



Why am I giving you a biology lesson? To illustrate how each part of the body needs to function so we can be effective. "... *When each part is working properly, makes the body grow...*"

To have sight, every part of the eye needs to be working properly. If one part is not working, it will affect our ability to see. We will need to use additional apparatus in order to see clearly, or we may even be blind in that eye.

If you are in the Body, you have a contribution to make! No one is excluded from this. We all have a purpose and have at least one gift to share with the body to help it grow. The more we all work together, **the lighter the load and the more effective we will be for God's kingdom**. We need your part! **No matter how insignificant you think it may be...**

## 2. We all have a purpose

### a. Our shared purpose

The great commandment and the great commission.

*Love God, love your neighbour; reach out to others and disciple them... teaching and baptising them...*

- i. WORSHIP: I was planned for God's pleasure. To know and love God.
- ii. FELLOWSHIP: I was formed for God's family. To love one another.
- iii. DISCIPLESHIP: I was created to become like Christ. To grow to become like Christ.
- iv. MINISTRY: I was shaped to serve God. To use my resources, talents, and gifts to serve God and one another.
- v. EVANGELISM: I was made for a mission. To be a witness and share the good news about Jesus with others.

We achieve all of this better together (as a body, working together). In doing this we have:

### b. Our specific purpose

This is your unique shape, your specific contribution; the thing God made you for in His kingdom. This is the journey we are now embarking on.

## 3. Discover your purpose

In the weeks to come we will examine the spiritual gifts in the Bible, looking at the motivational gifts in Romans 12, the gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12 and the fivefold equipping gifts in Ephesians 4 in more detail.

My Personal Journey card – This is a tool you can use to help clarify the call of God on your life so you can walk in it and be useful – **effective in God's kingdom**. Fill it in as you prayerfully consider and discover these aspects, to arrive at what you sense is His calling on your life:

- Your natural talents and strengths:
- Your passions:
- The experiences that have shaped you:
- Your spiritual gifts:
- Words from God to you: (*promises, prophecies, His voice*)

It takes faith and courage to follow Jesus.

**Let's encourage one another on this journey and become a church that is truly a light in a dark world!**

### My story

I was 23 years old and on a good career path. I had completed my postgraduate studies in accounting and was in my final year of articles and about to write my board exam to be admitted as a Chartered Accountant when I met Jesus.

On the outside it looked great! **It looked like my future was bright and full of promise and I'm sure that was true financially.** However, I was miserable, broken and very insecure. I had a career, but no sense of purpose or destiny. But when I met Jesus, everything changed. My life turned right side up!

As I walked with Him and read the Bible, through Scriptures and other confirmations His calling on my life became clear to me.

I did pass my board **exam (with God's help) and qualified as a Chartered Accountant.** All that studying and training certainly shaped me and taught me discipline and endurance, however it was not my passion. God had called me to serve in His kingdom.

How to navigate that calling, however, has not been easy. Deon and I have both been serving God in ministry since before we were married, but in those years have had to work to provide for ourselves, raised four children and helped support others through difficult stages in their lives.

Balancing work, life and our service to God is not easy, however, it cannot be an excuse for being dormant in the Kingdom of God. It is not always easy, but it is an exciting adventure with God, and He is always with us, encouraging us on!

New Testament example: The apostle Paul (sufferings and great joys and victories – Jesus comforted and encouraged him Acts 18:9&10)

Old Testament example: Joseph (betrayal, falsely accused, great trials) but what an outcome! He became second in charge in Egypt and saved the people of Egypt and Israel with his strategies.

**Jesus said we would suffer persecution but let's be like the disciples who rejoiced to be counted worthy of suffering for the sake of Christ, considering how much He suffered for us!**

### Conclusion

The title of this message is "Useful in God's kingdom". The verb "useful" **means** "Competent, capable, able, proficient, effective and handy."

**Let's not only be proficient at our professions and careers, but be proficient in the kingdom – capable and effective.**

**Like Jesus, let's be about our Father's business.**

Imagine if –

- All those who have the gift of compassion utilise it in helping those who are struggling
- Those with gifts of healings start to heal those in need of physical healing
- The givers really start giving
- The teachers teach those who are in need of knowledge

Imagine how the body would be built up and be effective in the world - how much God would be glorified!

**Let's get on with the job!**

Let's -

- Discover His gifts and callings in our lives,
- Develop in them and
- Do it!

**Don't wait until you know everything perfectly, start serving God and He will direct you and make it clear. Become part of a community group or a serving team.**

**Let's be a church that is alive, glorifying God on the earth!**

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Are you involved in building Jesus' church in some way?
  2. Do you know what God has called you to do?
  3. If so, are you functioning effectively in what God has called you to do? If not, what is needed to help you get there?
  4. How do you balance life, work, family and serving in God's kingdom?
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