

Friends for God Discussion Guide

Discover Your Mission Now

Week 5 Serve

Big Idea

To bless people on the Jesus Mission, we will serve individuals and communities at their point of need that are identified as we listen.

Icebreaker

What is a funny, unique talent you have that most people don't know about?

Introduction

"Preach the Gospel at all times and when necessary use words" (Francis of Assisi). I don't know about you but I have heard, read and seen that quote more times than I can count. And I'll be honest, each time I see it, I think, "I don't have time for that." Or "I don't think that's totally true, soooo...maybe that doesn't apply to my situation." Or "I don't really like to serve, so I'm just gonna say Francis was a sissy and we don't have to listen to him." But in my more serious moments, when the Holy Spirit usually surprises me with a kidney punch, I'm reminded that what this Italian Catholic friar was saying, is that our role in the Kingdom is simply meet the needs of those around us as we listen to what God is saying.



1. Have you seen this at work – someone who has preached the Gospel without using words?

This year, one of my neighbors lost his job. His job loss was due to customer service issues and in his line of work, it has made it almost impossible for him to get past a 2nd interview; in fact, he hasn't...for the past 10 months. I'm very concerned for their family, but for anyone who knows me, I have hard time moving beyond being "very concerned". Maybe you can relate.

Well not this time! This time I decided to move beyond just being "concerned" to helping in any way we can. In this case, we felt that a good next step would be to give them gift cards. Gift cards for a restaurant and movie and offered to watch their kids for them as their family lives out of state and they can't really afford childcare. Ok, for some of you, this is not a big deal and you might be thinking why did it take me so long to do such a thing. To you I say good point! For most of us, we are slow to act on these things and we need to step it up when it comes to serving those around us. We need to ask God to show us where and how we can meet the burdens of those in our lives. We've got to be willing to take risks and keep from hoarding our time, talents, and resources from those who need it most...to be a B.L.E.S.S.ing to those individuals and communities around us.

Scripture - 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 (MSG)

4-11 God's various gifts are handed out everywhere; but they all originate in God's Spirit. God's various ministries are carried out everywhere; but they all originate in God's Spirit. God's various expressions of power are in action everywhere; but God himself is behind it all. Each person is given something to do that shows who God is: Everyone gets in on it, everyone benefits. All kinds of things are handed out by the Spirit, and to all kinds of people! The variety is wonderful: wise counsel, clear understanding, simple trust, healing the sick, miraculous acts, proclamation, distinguishing between spirits..."

1. This passage is primarily teaching about unity in the church, but there are plenty of other nuggets in it. From where does this passage say our gifts come? (raise your hand and say God). Ok, that's the churchy answer and it happens to be the biblical answer this time.

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2. Do you really believe our gifts are from God? And do we act like they are? Discuss.
3. If this passage says everyone benefits, how have you benefited from the gifts God has given you? How have you been blessed by someone else using their gifts to serve you?
4. I like how The Message (MSG) puts the gifts in such plain language: wise counsel, clear understanding, simple trust, etc. Do you know what your gift(s) is (are)? How have you served someone or served your community in one of these ways?

Matthew 25:14-30 (MSG)

A Story about Investment - 14-18 "It's also like a man going off on an extended trip. He called his servants together and delegated responsibilities. To one he gave five thousand dollars, to another two thousand, to a third one thousand, depending on their abilities. Then he left. Right off, the first servant went to work and doubled his master's investment. The second did the same. But the man with the single thousand dug a hole and carefully buried his master's money. 19-21 "After a long absence, the master of those three servants came back and settled up with them. The one given five thousand dollars showed him how he had doubled his investment. His master commended him: 'Good work! You did your job well. From now on be my partner.' 22-23 "The servant with the two thousand showed how he also had doubled his master's investment. His master commended him: 'Good work! You did your job well. From now on be my partner.' 24-25 "The servant given one thousand said, 'Master, I know you have high standards and hate careless ways, that you demand the best and make no allowances for error. I was afraid I might disappoint you, so I found a good hiding place and secured your money. Here it is, safe and sound down to the last cent.' 26-27 "The master was furious. 'That's a terrible way to live! It's criminal to live cautiously like that! If you knew I was after the best, why did you do less than the least? The least you could have done would have been to invest the sum with the bankers, where at least I would have gotten a little interest. 28-30 "Take the thousand and give it to the one who risked the most. And get rid of this "play-it-safe" who won't go out on a limb. Throw him out into utter darkness.'

5. This is a tough passage, but God has something to say to us, what do you think it is?
6. Why does this manager seem to reward risk as stated in vs. 28-30? How do you think this reflects God's character?
7. Where would you place yourself on the scale for how you're using the talents God has given you to serve others around you and within the community in which you live:

1	-----	3	-----	5
buried in the sand		in my hand		invested

8. Where is God giving you a high five when it comes to investing the talents and gifts into someone's life? Where is he challenging you to make a bigger impact in serving others?

Next Steps

Take a step to discover what your spiritual gifts are.

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Session 5 Leader's Guide – Answers to prior questions

1. This really isn't a difficult thing for us to do. However, as Christ-followers in the Western world we are most used to simply espousing what we think vs. what we do feel. However, if we're going to help people get that we love them and we want nothing more for them to have a saving relationship with Jesus Christ, it means, that many times, the best way to show that, is to serve them.
2. If we believe our gifts are from God we remove: arrogance, pride, timidity, stupidity and a myriad of other "ities". We need to acknowledge, as Christ-followers, God has blessed us with the Holy Spirit. This acknowledgement means that the Creator of the universe lives in us. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19). By realizing all these gifts come from God, we can find freedom in what we're good at...what we're great at! Baking, singing, caring for people during difficult times, knowledge, faith...all from God. Which lets us just relax, play an active role, and let the Holy Spirit lead.
3. This passage reminds us that the gifts God has given Christ-followers are not designed for consumption as we are used to doing in our previous life (before Jesus). Instead these gifts are designed to bless others; to serve them. Looking around and thinking back to times where this has happened to us, will get us on track to helping others experience that too.
4. Maybe when we hear the phrase "spiritual gifts" it can be a bit overwhelming. Almost too ethereal, untouchable. However The Message paraphrases these gifts in ways in which we can connect. Maybe you've helped someone deal with a loss in his/her family or assisted someone financially during a difficult time. Or helped a co-worker not take his/her job so seriously; alleviating immense amounts of stress in their life.
5. This passage has several teachings in it, but the emphasis is on doing something with the talents God has given us. Not to "play-it-safe" as many do. Instead God wants us to take a risk, try some things. Don't just bury them in the sand and hope you will keep things just the way you are. Take a long hard look at what God has given you and ask God to bless your efforts as you reach out to serve those around you.
6. I think this passage reminds us that God does not ask us to be successful, but faithful. As quippy as that sounds, God is simply reminding us, "I am with you." If God is with us, then risk is not alone; it is always in the presence of God. And what is risk, when you have Jesus on your side? In a culture where we have insurance plans, retirement plans, lawyers, police officers, doctors...etc, it can be easy to get to place of playing it safe. However, God reminds us here, that we are to take risks; go out on a limb and see how God can use us to bless those around us.
7. This scale can help people share their inadequacies and where God is doing amazing things through the way God has gifted them. Some will be accurate in their sharing. Others will be too hard on themselves (be sure to affirm areas where you see them taking risks). Still others will be too generous – and I would be open with them about where they could take more risks. Be sure to give space for people to share, but be willing to push back as your group sharpens one another (Proverbs 27:17).
8. Ok, the scale was for reflection, this one is for getting specific. We are looking for examples here. We want those who aren't risking his/her talents to realize they need to do that – to serve others. We want those who are doing that, to celebrate the courage God has given them to make such an impact. It's time to get practical and get it done – let's be a blessing and help individuals and communities through serving.