

# Church of God

## Sunday School



### WHOLE-LIFE STEWARDSHIP #2 – TALENTS AND GIFTS

#### DAILY READINGS:

- Monday:** Joseph was a hard worker and faithful (Genesis 37:1-2; Genesis 39:1-6).
- Tuesday:** Gifts are given according to ability (Matthew 25:14-15; 1 Corinthians 7:7; 1 Corinthians 12:11).
- Wednesday:** Not everyone has the same gifts (Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 12:4, 27-31).
- Thursday:** Gifts are given to profit the church (1 Corinthians 14:12; 1 Peter 4:10).
- Friday:** Gifts are not given to make one proud (Proverbs 18:16; 1 Corinthians 15:9-10; 1 Corinthians 12:7).
- Saturday:** What are some examples of spiritual gifts (Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:1, 8-10)?

**MEMORY VERSE:** *"Neglect not the gift that is in thee . . . Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all."* —1 Timothy 4:14-15

#### God Gives Talents and Gifts

Can you remember a special occasion when you received a present? Perhaps it was for your birthday or a holiday. Did you lay it aside or put it on a shelf, unopened? Did you say, "No, thank you," and walk away from it? Of course not! No doubt, there was excitement and high expectations as you unwrapped and opened the present. Did you know that God has given you talents and gifts? Just as with the wrapped present, you might be unsure of exactly what they are. What must God think when young people fail to open, or put forth effort to discover what those talents and gifts are? Can you imagine His hurt when they say, "No, thank You," and walk away? Still other young people feel that God has not given them any special talents or gifts. They feel that they are not especially good at anything. However, research by Baylor University found that "the average person has a combination of talents that makes him or her able to do something better than 10,000 other people." God (the owner of all) is giving you (the manager, or steward) gifts and talents, and He has a specific plan for how He wants you to discover, develop, and use them.

By definition a *talent* is "a special ability that allows someone to do something well" (*Merriam-Webster*). While this often includes a natural ability or skill, it requires development. It might include abilities in the areas of music, writing, art, photography, cooking, sports, working with children, doing research, working well with numbers, and handling money. There are many areas that young people can be talented in. How can you know what your talents are and how can you use those talents in the way God (the owner) desires? A good place to start would be the Bible.



#### Bible Examples of Talents

One way to learn about your talents is to study people in the Bible. What might have been some of the talents of Joseph in the Old Testament? He definitely had a talent for leadership, organization, and management of property. You can read how he successfully managed Potiphar's household, the prison, and eventually all of Egypt. In the midst of terrible life circumstances, how did he discover, develop, and use those talents? Joseph did not let slavery and false accusations hinder him. He was obedient to his father and to those who were in authority over him. He worked diligently at the tasks given him and soon was given more and more responsibility. After many years, those talents were instrumental in saving Egypt (and many others) from seven years of famine.

If you read about the life of Moses, you will soon realize that he had a talent for leading and caring for people. Scholars believe the number of people Moses led out of Egypt to be well over 2 million. Can you imagine how difficult

that must have been? Yet, God gave Moses all that he needed. Consider the development of those necessary talents. For years Moses was trained in the best schools Egypt had to offer. There he learned how to lead and also how to read and write. (Consider how this prepared Moses for writing the first five books of the Bible.) Then God used Moses' time in the desert as a shepherd to prepare him for being patient and longsuffering. For 80 years, God prepared Moses for the task of leading God's people out of bondage to the Promised Land.

Look for other stories in the Bible of people who had outstanding talents. (Consider Samson, David, Elisha, and Paul.) How did they begin? What were they doing until they understood what their talent was and how they were supposed to use it? Did they ever use their talents for themselves? If so, what kind of trouble did that cause them? This is an excellent method to help you in your own journey.

### Spiritual Gifts

While talents are usually a natural ability or something that one has developed through practice and training and are used in many areas of life, spiritual gifts are specifically given to be used in the work of God. First Corinthians 7:7 tells us that every Christian has at least one God-given gift. Many of these gifts are listed in 1 Corinthians, Chapter 12, and in Romans, Chapter 12. Some of these are wisdom, knowledge (understanding), faith, healing, prophecy, discernment, helps, ministering, exhorting, and giving. All the gifts work together (just as a physical body does) in the Church of God (the body of Christ). It is impossible for one person to do it all, but when each one uses his or her gift as God intends, the gifts will work together. Compare it to building a physical church building. The architect draws up the blueprints, the banker provides the money, then concrete workers, bricklayers, construction workers, painters, carpet layers, roofers, and others work together to complete the final building. So it is with the spiritual church. All gifts are important and necessary!

#### What Are You to Do With Your Talents and Gifts?

God (the owner) has given talents and gifts to us (stewards) to use as He sees fit. As you begin to discover your talents, keep in mind that as the steward (manager), it is best to ask the owner how He wants that talent to be used. Look for opportunities to use your talents for God. God gives spiritual gifts "severally as he will" (1 Corinthians 12:11). The word *severally* means "specially assigned." God knows your strengths and your limitations, and He gives gifts "according to his [or her] several ability" (Matthew 25:15). It is important to learn what God has given you; your spiritual gifts are a special gift from God. Not everyone has the same gifts. God knows exactly what to give to you. He knows what you can handle and what you cannot. Romans 12:6 tells us that there are different gifts. First Corinthians 12:4 describes them as "diversities of gifts." As you begin to understand what these gifts are, it will help you to understand God's plan for your life.

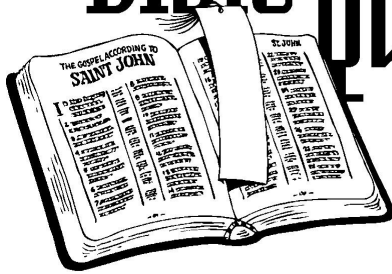
Talents and gifts are not given to make you popular, proud, or selfish. Nor are you to boast to others of how accomplished or talented you are. It is good to always keep in mind that it is "by the grace of God" that you are what you are (1 Corinthians 15:10). Proverbs 18:16 tells us that your gift will make room for itself. In other words, you do not have to boast; your gift will become obvious to God's people when you use it humbly and faithfully. First Corinthians 12:7 (AMP) tells us the purpose of spiritual gifts: "for the common good." In other words, your gift is to be used to "build up the church [spiritually]" (1 Corinthians 14:12 AMP).

How might you begin discovering and developing your talents and spiritual gifts? Begin with the basics: reading your Bible, praying, meditating, and attending church services. God can talk to you when you are doing the basics. Next, consider adding new areas of service. For example, you might try to learn to play an instrument or join the church choir. Go to church work days, visit local nursing homes, send cards to people who are sick or who have recently lost a loved one. Encourage other young people through a text or through social media. Look for ways to help with extra chores around your home. As you launch out, ask God to help you understand what spiritual gifts He has given you. Are there some areas you enjoy more than others? Do you seem to be better at some things than others? Ask your parents or spiritual leaders for help in recognizing your gifts. Lastly, desire to be used of God. First Corinthians 14:1 tells us to "desire spiritual gifts." First Corinthians 12:31 (AMPC) says to "earnestly desire and zealously cultivate the greatest and best gifts."

God is trusting you with His property (talents and spiritual gifts). "Neglect not the gift that is in thee" (1 Timothy 4:14) for Romans 14:12 tells us that "every one of us shall give account of himself to God."



# Bible Quiz



1. What is the definition of the word *talent*? \_\_\_\_\_

2. What are some examples of talents? \_\_\_\_\_

3. What talents do you think Samson had? Did he ever use his talents for himself? If so, what kind of trouble did that cause?

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4. How are spiritual gifts different than talents? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. What are some examples of spiritual gifts? \_\_\_\_\_

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6. God gives gifts "severally." What does the word *severally* mean? \_\_\_\_\_

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7. If you are tempted to boast about your talents, what does 1 Corinthians 15:10 say to keep in mind?

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8. What does 1 Corinthians 12:7 tell us is the purpose of spiritual gifts? \_\_\_\_\_

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9. What are some areas you might try to help you discover and develop your talents and spiritual gifts?

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10. What does 1 Timothy 4:14 warn you not to do? \_\_\_\_\_

# Food for Thought

"Use what talents you possess; the woods would be very silent if no birds sang there except those that sang best."

(Henry Van Dyke)



**"Hide not your talents, they for use were made, What's a sundial in the shade?"**

(Benjamin Franklin)

"The person born with a talent they are meant to use will find their greatest happiness in using it."

(Johann Wolfgang von Goethe)