

Devoting My Talents

Message 2 of 4 in the series: "Devoted 2022"

A. God saved us so we can be His people, a whole nation of priests, teaching His Word, showing others the goodness of God through our transformed lives, and proclaiming the Good News of Jesus to a lost world.

"You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light. Once you had no identity as a people; **now you are God's people**. Once you received no mercy; now you have received God's mercy. Dear friends, I warn you as 'temporary residents and foreigners' to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against your very souls. Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors. Then even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will give honor to God when he judges the world. 1 Peter 2:9b-12 (NLT) (See also Exodus 19:5-6 & Hosea 1:6,9,2:23)

Note: Priests serve as intermediaries. They make the will of Holy God known to sinful people, and they show sinful people how to be made right with Holy God.

"For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. So **we are Christ's ambassadors**; God is making his appeal through us." 2 Corinthians 5:19-20a (NLT)

"**You are the light of the world**—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father." Matthew 5:14-16 (NLT)

Good News! God will give us the desire, power, and ability to do this!

"For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him."

Philippians 2:13 (NLT)

B. God has organized us like a human body, and through the Holy Spirit, He has given each of us talents, skills, and abilities so we can accomplish this gigantic task together.

"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 for doing certain things well**. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly."

Romans 12:4-8 (NLT)

"There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all. There are different kinds of service, but we serve the same Lord. God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us. **A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other**. To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice; to another the same Spirit gives a message of special knowledge. The same Spirit gives great faith to another, and to someone else the one Spirit gives the gift of healing. He gives one person the power to perform miracles, and another the ability to prophesy. He gives someone else the ability to discern whether a message is from the Spirit of God or from another spirit. Still another person is given the ability to speak in unknown languages, while another is given the ability to interpret what is being said. **It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have.**" 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 (NLT)

Note: God has gifted and called some of us to equip and train the rest of us. "Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. **Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ**. This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ." Ephesians 4:11-13 (NLT)

C. God wants us to devote our talents to serving God and serving others.

Devoted = loyal, loving, committed, true, given over to the display, study, or discussion of

“Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order to provide for urgent needs and not live unproductive lives.” Titus 3:14 (NIV)

1. Devoted people use their talents. “God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. **Use them well to serve one another.** Do you have the gift of speaking? Then speak as though God himself were speaking through you. Do you have the gift of helping others? Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies. Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ.” 1 Peter 4:10-11a (NLT)
2. Devoted people use their talents humbly. “Share each other’s burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ. If you think you are too important to help someone, you are only fooling yourself. You are not that important.” Galatians 6:2-3 (NLT)
3. Devoted people make the most of the talents they have and don’t waste time comparing themselves to others. “Pay careful attention to your own work, for then you will get the satisfaction of a job well done, and **you won’t need to compare yourself to anyone else.** For we are each responsible for our own conduct.” Galatians 6:4-5 (NLT)
4. Devoted people don’t quit when the going gets tough. “So let’s not get tired of doing what is good. **At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don’t give up.** Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone—especially to those in the family of faith.” Galatians 6:9-10 (NLT)

“You know that Stephanas and his household were the first of the harvest of believers in Greece, and they are spending their lives in service to God’s people. I urge you, dear brothers and sisters, to submit to them and **others like them who serve with such devotion.**” 1 Corinthians 16:15-16 (NLT)

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Connect Group Questions:

1. Read 1 Peter 2:9-12. Peter said that believers should see themselves as a holy nation of priests. Why do we tend to think only some Christians are qualified to serve in this role?
2. Where have you volunteered to serve in a church or ministry in the past? What did you do? How did serving impact your life?
3. What do the following passages teach us about spiritual gifts?
 - Romans 12:4-8
 - 1 Corinthians 12:12-27
 - Ephesians 4:11-13
 - 1 Peter 4:10-11

What talents/gifts do you think God has given you? How/where could you use them at Centerpoint?

4. What do the following passages teach us about serving others with the right attitude?
 - Matthew 20:25-28
 - Romans 12:9-17
 - Galatians 6:2-9
 - Philippians 2:3-4

In your opinion, how important is a good attitude when we serve in the church? Why?

5. Philippians 2:13 (NLT) says, “For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.” Have you experienced this?
6. Discuss the “Talents” section of the Centerpoint Devoted Steps card. How would you like to grow in serving the Lord with your talents in 2023?
7. Spend some time as a group praying for our church. Ask God to help us become a church devoted to using the gifts and talents he has given us to serve others and to serve Him. Ask God to spur every one of us on to love and good deeds. (Hebrews 10:24)