



Five Stones for Service By Katy Gifford

Opening Prayer: Lord, help us ever to see that the service we give is not for us, but for You to be glorified. May our humble efforts bless others and, as we serve, may others always see You in us. Amen.

David and Goliath is a well-known story to most people. When no one else would, David, a young boy, volunteered to go to battle against the Philistine giant, Goliath. David had no armor or training. He had a sling and five smooth stones. The Lord equipped him with all he needed to take down the giant.

The Lord also equips us to serve Him and His people. Although God's blessings are numerous, we will look at five gifts He gives His people.

The Means of Grace

In Confirmation classes, students are taught that the Means of Grace are Word and Sacrament. Through Scripture, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper we, as Christians, are able to know Jesus as our Lord and Savior. How do these gifts equip us for service?

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.

We are given God's Word in the Bible so that we realize we need a Savior. We need to be corrected because we sin. We don't know what is right and wrong without Scripture to show us God's expectations for our lives. Scripture also is used to train us or to teach us how to live lives as God's righteous children.

John 20:30-31 Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

We are given the Word of God so that we can have faith in Christ.

Romans 6:4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father; we too might walk in newness of life. Baptism brings us into unity with Christ in God's family. By Christ's death, our sinful nature is put to death. As baptized children of God and through Christ's resurrection, we have life eternal in Him.

Luke 22:14-20 And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. ¹⁵ And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. ¹⁶ For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." ¹⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves. ¹⁸ For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." ¹⁹ And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁰ And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."

Christ gave the Sacrament of Holy Communion to His disciples, and to us, so that our sins are forgiven. His body and blood are the payment for our sins. A payment none of us can pay on our own. We need Christ's sacrifice to have new life in Him.

Personal Gifts and Abilities

We are all different. We have different looks, preferences, strengths, and weaknesses. God knows what He is doing when He places us where He does. He allows us to use what we have and who we are to spread His Word and His love. He will give us what we need to glorify Him as we serve Him. Do we all need the same gifts?

I Peter 4:10-11 *As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: ¹¹ whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

We have received “a gift,” not “the gifts.” Our gifts differ by design. Why? Read verse 11b — in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. We are all made differently so that God can be glorified.

I Corinthians 12:4-6 *Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵ and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; ⁶ and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.*

Again, there are many gifts, but as we serve with others we need to remember that we serve One God. There is one reason we have all these abilities, gifts, and talents ... so God can be glorified.

Philippians 1:6 *And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*

Not only does God give us our gifts and abilities, but he has given us faith in Him and He will complete that faith when we arrive in Heaven to live eternally by His grace.

Fruit of the Spirit

Galatians gives us a wonderful list of “fruit” we, as Christians, ought to share in our lives. The list is not a multiple choice or potluck where you can choose what you want to include in your lives. We are to have them all. After reading **Galatians 5:22-23**, consider how all of these are needed to effectively serve the Lord.

Galatians 5:22-23 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*

We all know that it is easier to be patient, kind, or full of love and joy at some moments more than others. Yet, isn't the goal to show all of these in our lives at all times? Gifts of the Spirit (Romans 12 & I Corinthians 12) are given to individually. Even those who may receive the same gifts are given them in a different combination than another, so that we can show love to those around us. We use our fruit when we practice all of these.

Family of Christ

God doesn't put us in a situation to watch us succeed or fail on our own. He places us with others. We are in families, communities, churches, and circles of friends. God puts us together so that we can help each other to learn, grow, and share the faith of Christ. What do these verse share about the Family of Christ?

Romans 14:19 *So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.*

Mutual upbuilding is also known as edification. We build each other up — at the same time. This happens when we give compliments, put trust in another person's abilities, ask people to join in our projects, accept ideas and suggestions from others, and listen to each other.

The opposite would be to knock down. Ask yourself, “Am I helping or hurting?” Building up another person, or group of people, would be helping them to better themselves, while building

confidence in what they already can do. But when we criticize, ignore, or chide, even in what we may mean as teasing, it hurts, and knocks others down.

Added thought: To build up the Church and relationships in your congregation make a goal to never do any serving alone at church. Preparing for Holy Communion, water flowers, setting up snacks for a Bible study can all be done with another person. Not only does the work become lighter, but time to fellowship and pray together is created.

I Thessalonians 3:10 *For what thanksgiving can we return to God for you, for all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God, ¹⁰as we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith?*

Members of God's family pray for each other. Keep members of your own congregation in your prayers. Pray for congregations in your area, district, and throughout the nation. Remember, when we pray, we don't need to know the details of a situation, God already knows them. But we lift our voices in prayer to join others for the sake of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Ephesians 4:12 *And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood,^[e] to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶from 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.*

In order for God's family to be built up, He allows us to encourage each other. He calls us to do this and gives us what we need to get the job done. We can encourage, compliment, and appreciate each other. At times we may need to help a person to see their sin. That is where "speaking the truth in love" comes in. A visual for this is to be steel and velvet all at the same time. We need to be unbending when it comes to what God expects of His children, but as we approach people with the law, we need to say things with love, concern, and softly so as to not harm the relationship.

God's Work

We like to see what we have accomplished in life. Many have to-do lists. A record of items made or collected is often shared at gatherings. How do these tasks get done? How do the items come to be collected? Whose work is truly getting done?

Ephesians 2:10 *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

When we complete a task, whether it is visiting a homebound friend or collecting supplies for a homeless shelter, we need to remember that we are not the ones who thought to accomplish these tasks. God moves us to accomplish them and then even gives us the skills, materials, and drive to complete the project. How blessed we are to be chosen to not only be God's children, but also to go on His errands. We don't have to serve God. We get to serve Him!

2 Corinthians 5:1-10 *For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. ²For in this tent we*

groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, ³ if indeed by putting it on^[a] we may not be found naked. ⁴ For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. ⁵ He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. ⁶ So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, ⁷ for we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸ Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹ So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

We certainly do have a home waiting for us in Heaven. We have a family, many of whom are already in our heavenly home already. They spend their days praising our Creating, Redeeming, Sanctifying God. Someday we will join them in our Family Home. Oh, what a day that will be!

We are all made for God's purpose. What makes us able to serve God and His people is not who we are, but Whose we are. We are God's people. Created, redeemed, equipped — to serve the Lord!

Closing Prayer: Dear Lord, we know that You have made us all for Your purpose. Help us to know where we are to serve, what we are to do, and then give us what You need us to have. Grow Your love, faith, ability, and humbleness in us and those you place in our lives. In Your name, Amen.

Katy Gifford praises the Lord for 'stones' that equip her as she tells others about Jesus and serves His people as a teacher and alongside her husband, Pastor Dan, in Wheaton, MN.