

Why can we feel negative about serving?

If we hold back from discovering and using our gifts, who actually loses out?

How can obedience in serving bring us personal joy and fulfilment?

How are you already using your gifts to serve others?

Jesus calls those who neglect to use their gifting, 'you wicked lazy servants'. Why?

On Wednesday I will be looking at how we discover who we were created to be; our God given identity. As Christians we stand in God's grace and it is here that we have the opportunity to respond to God's love so our lives can be reshaped. This involves the deliberate choices that Jesus calls us to make in discipleship. This is for our good, for our pleasure and for God's glory. God's intentions towards us are always love, and therefore his words in scripture - which he calls us to obey - reveal to us the true description of what our lives should look like; our true identity. So for instance, as we were discussing last week, we are to love as he loved us, and to serve each other in love as he served us in Christ by dying for us. As our lives take on this shape of self giving love we rediscover our true identity. The call from God to all of us is to have our lives shaped by obedience to 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, or Romans 12: 9-19 – because God loved us in this way to. But God did not make us clones. We will not all end up exactly the same.

Each of us was made in order to show a unique aspect of God's love to this world. In all of us, an aspect of his character is given emphasis. This is our **unique** identity. It is an aspect of his grace that he has entrusted to us, so we can bless others through it. (1 Peter 4:9-10). This is an exciting privilege. A discovery of our God given design. It is a gift to us, but also a tremendous responsibility. We have been entrusted with an aspect of his love and grace which he wishes us to show others. Gifts are many and varied in the bible (Romans 12:6-8, Ephesians 4:11-13, 1 Corinthians 12:7-11, 12:28-30) These gifts are not exhaustive either. God has been endlessly creative and there are many ways in which we can show his creativity in service.

Discipleship calls us to be serious about discovering and using our gifts in order to distribute God's grace to others. We have been entrusted with an aspect of it and the responsibility to do something about it rests with us. But this is also our joy, and in this we discover our God given shape and identity – so really it's an exciting and fulfilling journey.

In the talk I will be looking at the ways in which we discover our gifts. Also I will be talking about the way in which we will have to put down things in ourselves (fear, over sensitivity to criticism, misunderstanding about service) that may prevent us from serving in our unique God given way. We do this in order to pick up and run with the gifts that God calls us to use to bless others (and ourselves in using them).

There is also a warning in this – reflected in the final question. Jesus says in the parable of the talents (Matthew 25: 14-30) that all are given a gift to serve others. God gives us only what he knows we can manage. Those who do not take the time to discover their created purpose to serve and who don't give out what God has given them receive a stinging rebuke.