

# SPIRITUAL *Gifts*



# TRANSFORMED BY HIS GIFTS

By Pastor Andrew Farhat

## **What Makes True Greatness?**

What makes true greatness? Are we considered great by how much we have, or by what do with what we have? Are we considered great by “getting” or by “giving” of ourselves in God’s kingdom? Jesus said: “What good is it if a man gains the whole world, but forfeits his own soul” (Matthew 16:26)? What good is it if we have all the money, power, and prestige, but we failed to make an eternal difference in people’s lives? This life is a temporary assignment. We are here for a short time. The Bible compares our lives to a “mist” (James 4:12) and says we are like “grasshoppers” (Isaiah 40:22) while we are here on this earth. Conversely, the New Heavens and the New Earth is where we will spend most of our existence. Therefore, what eternal difference do we want to make? How many people do we want to be there with us? I’m guessing that, if you are a follower of Jesus, you want as many people to be there as possible! So, then, what makes us great during this time we are here on this earth?

John chapters 13-17 record some of Jesus' last words on Holy Thursday, the night prior to his crucifixion. Jesus' "hour" had come. That is, the "hour" for him to be crucified! How does Jesus want to be remembered? Jesus "laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him" (John 13:4-5). Jesus did what!? The task of washing other people's smelly feet was the task of a menial servant that was hired by the household! Jesus "was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant" (Philippians 2:6-7). Jesus was God and the greatest man that ever lived. He left us an example that gives our lives vision, healing, and power. He gives us a vision that, if grasped, can make a huge difference in our families, in our church, and in our community. That vision is that: True greatness is found in serving others.

Jesus' ministry was like that. Instead of riding to Jerusalem on horses and chariots like a king, he rode "humble on a donkey" (as foretold by the prophet Zechariah 9:9, written in 480 B.C.). Instead of retaliating at those who were mocking him while being crucified, he said: "Father forgive them for they do not know what they do." Instead of living a "blessed" life as defined by the world, he accepted the death of a criminal in order to bring humanity to a restored relationship to the Father.

Memorize these words of Jesus: "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be servant of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:43-45).

## **Repent of Self-Centeredness**

A friend of mine described his experience of being delivered from alcoholism. He said that he was having trouble admitting that he was an alcoholic. After all, who would want to admit to that? However, he said Jesus spoke these words to Him: "I will take your alcoholism from you. But, I cannot take from you what you will not own."

The first thing we all must do is own our self-centeredness. Of course, life would be easier if we could just all spend most of our time on our favorite hobbies, or reading our favorite books, or making life primarily about leisure. Who would not want that? However, we see in the Scriptures that God has chosen us for a higher purpose.

The Apostle John writes: “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:8-9). First, we must own our sin and give it God in confession. Second, we receive his forgiveness. Third, we respond to His forgiveness with obedience to His Word. His Word to us is this: “If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you” (John 13:13-14).

Why would we want to give up sitting in our chairs next to our families (or friends) and serve on a Sunday team? Why would we want to give up a weeknight and serve food at a homeless shelter? Why would we \_\_\_\_\_? There are so many ways to the serve the Lord! The answer: “By serving you, I am serving my Lord Jesus Christ.” By welcoming people into the worship center, by video recording a worship service, by serving in children’s church, by serving at a homeless shelter, etc. I am serving the cause of Jesus Christ!

## **Discover Your Gifts**

Sometimes we serve where there is a need. Most of the time, we serve in the way that we are gifted by God. The Apostle Paul writes: “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (1 Corinthians 12:4-7). On a basketball team, there is a point guard, shooting guard, small forward, power forward and center. Can the point guard play center? He could. But, it may be rough. Can a center play shooting guard? Most centers have historically had poor free throw percentages! I would not be great at serving on the altar guild. However, I think I could do better at serving as a greeter! We are uniquely wired by God to make an impact!

- The gift of **service** means you have a strong desire to serve and could plug into multiple serving teams (Rom. 12:7; 1 Cor. 12:28).
- The gift of **teaching or knowledge** means you could teach a life group, bible study, children’s church, or be a reader (Rom. 12:7; 1 Cor. 12:28).
- The gift of **leadership** means you could lead a Sunday team such as the greeters (Rom. 12:8).
- The gift of **acts of mercy** means you could visit the sick in hospitals or their homes. It means you can be a Stephen’s Minister and give a listening ear to those who are grieving or suffering (Romans 12:8).

- The gift of **wisdom** means you could give free counseling to those who are struggling (1 Cor. 12:8).
- The gift of **administration/governance** means you could serve on the School Ministry Team and assist our principal or serve on the Board of Administrative Services as Treasurer or Secretary (1 Cor. 12:28).
- The gift of **evangelism** means you could assist with the Love Your Neighbor Class and mobilize local missions (or just do local missions yourself) or you could participate in foreign missions such as Haiti, India, or Israel.

## **Get Plugged In**

All Sunday teams are listed here:

- Welcome Ministry
- Ushers
- Altar Guild
- Screens
- Communion Assistant
- Reader
- Service Assistant
- Cameras
- Switch between Cameras on the Switcher
- Praise Band
- Safety Team
- Coffee Team
- Children's Church
- Live Stream Host

## **Administration/Governance**

- Elders
- School Ministry Team
- Board of Administrative Services

## **St. John's Ministries**

- Stephen's Ministry
- Counseling
- Homebound Ministry Team
- Hospital Visitation Team

- Seniors Ministry

### **Serve Your City**

- Christ's Body Ministries

### **Head: These questions help us understand Scripture**

1. What would happen if we all used the gifts God gave to us? What would happen if we didn't?

### **Heart: These questions help us wrestle with our beliefs for our lives**

2. Under the section: "Get Plugged In," what team or ministry are you most drawn to?

### **Hands: These questions help us do something after hearing the Word**

3. What ministry do you want to participate in? (Please let your life group leader know)
4. What is your biggest takeaway from this study?