Living Generously

Generous With Talents

SESSION GOALS

The point of every session is a main idea with the goal of informing our knowing, feeling, and doing.

MAIN IDEA: God has generously given you talents to generously use for His glory and the good of others.

Head Change: To know that we tend to prize certain talents above others, particularly in the church, leading some to believe their gifts can't add value, and neither can they. **Heart Change:** To feel grateful that your talents

have a unique place in the body of Christ, and that God can use your gifts in unexpected ways. **Life Change:** To aspire to build a generous church, using our gifts and ensuring others are free to use theirs.

OPEN

What are you the *best* at, in your family or group of friends? Have you got a party trick?

You might not feel like a particularly talented person, and perhaps you've never wowed a crowd with your abilities, but the truth is that God has gifted you with particular skills and strengths. In this session, Jonathan explores the idea that part of living generously is learning to use our talents to bless the world around us.

VIEW

As you watch, write down how Jonathan answers these questions.

What is the collective and individual challenge we face when it comes to understanding our God-given talents?

Why might some people in churches end up feeling inferior to others?

When it comes to generosity with your talents, why is it necessary to know yourself and value yourself?

What did the disciples think of Mary anointing Jesus' feet, and what does this reveal to us about the way God sometimes chooses to use our talents?

Show SESSION #4: Generous With Talents (7 minutes)

Reader

REVIEW

Jonathan opens the session by disclosing that, as a child, he had a particular talent for being argumentative – a talent he generously shared with anyone in earshot. Not everything we're good at is necessarily helpful to those around us. Do you agree? Why, or why not? Are you good at something bad? Do you think it's possible to channel destructive tendencies into constructive strengths? If so, how?

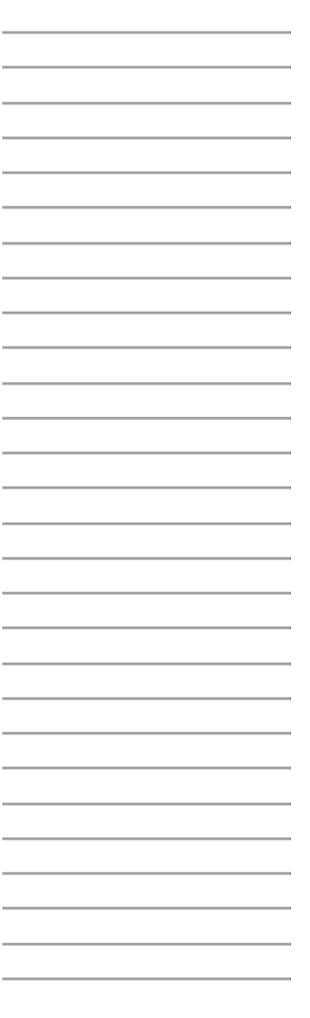
One of our challenges as disciples is to understand and practise the gifts God has generously given us. We all have talents that reflect whatever is true, honourable, just, pure, pleasing, and commendable (Philippians 4:8). Off the top of your head, list your top three gifts or talents. Pick one of them and share how you've used it to reflect what is true, honourable, just, pure, pleasing, and commendable.

Paul tells us there is one body (the church), made up of many different parts (1 Corinthians 12:12). To grow effectively, the body needs every part: the various gifts and talents of every member (1 Corinthians 12:22–23). What challenge does this present for the church? Do you feel your church recognises a diversity of gifts and talents? Are some talents prized more highly? If so, why? What's the solution? Is there a space in your local community for you to exercise your gifts? Have you caught yourself feeling either superior or inferior to someone else in your church, because of opportunities, or lack thereof, to use your gifts?

Jonathan emphasises the importance of understanding Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 12. We need to be so careful to celebrate and encourage all gifts and talents if we are to be the generous church we aspire to be. What's your next step?

Individually, we also need to know ourselves, and value ourselves. We each have a unique contribution to bring, for the glory of God and the good of others. **Do you believe there are you-shaped gaps in this world that only you can fill? If so, have you discovered the best way to look for them? What shape do they take? Which you-shaped gaps are you currently filling?**

Jonthan points out that Mary was better at exercising her talents than the disciples were at valuing them. Mary's talent was the tender and caring way she canointed Jesus' feet, which would within days be nailed to a cross (Mark 14:8). Mary felt compelled to use a



talent she had, and today we're still inspired by her proactive obedience. Do you feel as if your gifts or talents are sometimes misunderstood or not taken seriously? What does God think of your gifts and talents? How does generosity of time, attention, and wealth play out in your life as you seek to use your talents generously?

The disciples were astounded – even perhaps horrified – by Mary's act. She must've known they would be. She anointed Jesus' feet anyway. **How has God used your unique gifting in unexpected, unorthodox ways? How did you deal with the haters or detractors or those who simply didn't understand? Would you say you that, like Mary, you have the unswerving conviction to use your talents?**

The Quakers' *Book of Faith and Practice* says, 'Attend to what love requires of you'. It's a beautiful summary of Mary's generosity with her talents. She saw what love required (caring for Jesus), and she attended to it. **What does love require of you?**

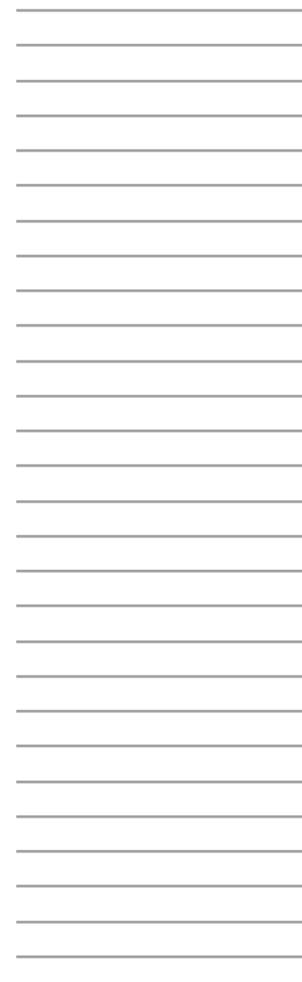
BIBLE EXPLORATION

Exodus 35:10 reads, 'Come, all of you who are gifted craftsmen. Construct everything that the Lord has commanded.' **Read the rest of the chapter. How many different skillsets would be required for the task at hand?**

Read Romans 12:6–8 and 1 Peter 4:10–11. **Do you possess any of the gifts mentioned in these passages? If you have no idea, how might you begin finding out?**

In Matthew 25:14–30, Jesus tells the story of a man who goes on a journey, entrusting different proportions of his property to his servants before setting out. **Would** others think of you as a one talent, two talent, or five talent person? Why? Regardless of how talented you believe yourself to be, how have you invested your gifts from God?

Reader



LAST WORD

May you grow in confidence as you recognise all the ways God has wondrously gifted you, and may you begin generously sharing your gifts with those around you. Let's also look for ways to honour and encourage people whose talents don't demand a stage or a spotlight but are crucial for the building up of the body of Christ.

DEEPER WALK

Select at least one activity below to complete before watching the next session.

Read: Read Ephesians 2:10 in a few different Bible translations. What strikes you? Look up the Greek word translated *masterpiece* or *workmanship*. What is your response to the truth that you are a poem God is writing and reciting for the first time in human history?

Write: Doodle some drawings depicting the things you're good at and love doing. Or bullet point them if that's more your vibe. If someone close to you looked at your list or your sketches, would they say, 'Absolutely! That's so *you*!' Or would they say, 'Really? I had no idea you could do that.' What would either response tell you about the way you're investing your talents in the lives of those around you?

Pray: Set a phone reminder for your lunch hour every day this week and use the prompt to pray that God would open your eyes to all the ways you can generously share your talents with a world in need of His good gifts channelled through you.