



YOUNIQUE



PREVIEW

your gifting pt.1

TRAINER'S GUIDE



warm up

RECALL AND PREPARATION

Last week we learned that God has given a unique calling to each one of us. We saw that from Ephesians 2:10: “For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.” God has special things that he planned for you to do from before he made the world.

But how are you going to do those things? That’s what we’re going to begin to explore in this session, and we’re going to dig deeper into your life story to do it.

With a large group, interview two or three students in front of the group. In a small group, use two or more of these as opening discussion questions:

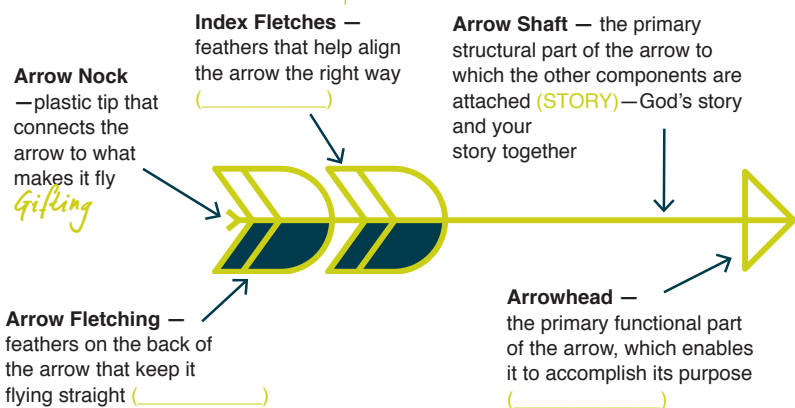
- What do people mean when they say that someone is “gifted”?
- Would you change the definition of “gifted” if you could, or do you like the way people commonly use it?
- Is it better to be gifted or be supported? Why?
- How does a person find out what their gifts are?

PREVIEW

Return to the Arrow

Last week we introduced you to the image of an arrow to illustrate your calling. The arrow shaft represents how our story works together with God’s story to form the main structure of our lives. This week, we want to continue with this picture of the arrow to talk about our gifting.

Our gifting is like the arrow nock. The arrow nock is the plastic tip at the end of the arrow that connects the arrow to the bow, and the connection to the bow is how the arrow gets its power. This is what gifting is in our lives. Our gifts are our connection to God’s power. Our gifting is what God’s supernatural grace looks like as it flows through our lives.





set up

SCRIPTURE & TEACHING

Leftover pizza is delicious, isn't it? Some people enjoy it cold right out of the refrigerator. Others like to warm it up and enjoy the cheese melted and toppings hot.

I heard of a guy who looked forward to leftover pizza, and he wanted it warm. But he didn't want to use the microwave, because he wanted the crust crispy. On the countertop he saw a toaster; it seemed like a great tool to warm up the pizza. So he turned the toaster on its side, slid a slice of cold pizza in the slot, and pushed the toast button. The bread got toasty. The cheese and toppings heated up. Everything was going perfectly. But then the freshly melting cheese slid onto the toasting coils. Not only did the cheese burn, but the whole toaster caught on fire! It made a smoky, metal-and-pepperoni mess.

The first moral of the story is that a toaster is the wrong tool to warm up pizza. But the other moral is that it's always best to have the right tools for the job you've been given.

David and Goliath

We see that very lesson in the famous story in the Bible of David and Goliath. What do you know about David and Goliath? Let's get into the who, what, where, when, and why.

By asking questions and filling in gaps in the students' knowledge, surface these answers:

Where: Israel

When: About 3,000 years ago

Who (main characters): (1) David—a young Israelite (possibly a teenager), youngest of eight sons, a shepherd, named as the next king by the prophet Samuel at God's direction. (2) Goliath—a gigantic warrior of the Philistines, who were neighbors and bitter rivals of the Israelites. (3) Saul—Israel's current king, once a warrior but now past fighting age; he lost God's support because he didn't take God seriously and obey him.

Why (setup for the story): The Philistines invaded Israel. Their army and the Israelite army camped facing each other across a ravine. Neither side could get an advantage. Every day for weeks Goliath would challenge Israel to send a warrior down to face him in single combat to the death; the loser's whole nation would have to slave away working for the winner's nation. King Saul offered a big reward to anyone who defeated Goliath, but every man in Israel was too afraid to take him on. Meanwhile, David came to the camp to bring supplies to his brothers in the army.



What (main plot): David heard Goliath challenge Israel and claim his gods could beat Israel's God. David was so outraged that he volunteered to fight for God's honor, and Saul let him. Goliath came at David in full body armor with spear, sword, and javelin. David was unarmored but hurled a rock from his sling that hit Goliath in the forehead and killed him. David chopped off Goliath's head with Goliath's own sword, and Isra-el's army chased the Philistines all the way back to their cities and cut them down as they went.

There's a part of this famous story that I want us to look at more closely, because it shows us something important about using the gifts that God has given us for the job he's called us to do. It comes from the part of the story right after Saul has heard that David was interested in fighting Goliath, so he summons David for a talk.

The big thought for today, is this: "Your gifts are a sign of your divine design." This is what we see played out in David's life from the verses that we have just read. It's only as David embraces his own unique gifting instead of trying to fit into Saul's armor that David is able to do what God has called him to do.

BIG THOUGHT

Your gifts are a *sign* of your divine *design*.

Read 1 Samuel 17:32-40.

Remember, David is not even supposed to be on the battlefield. He comes to the scene to deliver food to his three oldest brothers. David is supporting his family when he hears Goliath taunting his people and mocking his God. He can't believe his ears! This giant from the city of Gath is defying the one true God.

One big interpretive key helps us to see what is going on here in this chapter. It's something we often overlook, but something that throughout Scripture becomes a common theme. It has to do with David's and Goliath's names. Over and over again the Bible places significant weight in the names of the characters. In this story the giant's name is Goliath. **Goliath means "exposer"** and this is exactly what Goliath does to everyone he comes in contact with. Here he exposes Israel's lack of faith. He exposes Saul's fear. He exposes the army of Israel's cowardice. But in the end he also exposes David's faith and courage. **David's name on the other hand means "beloved."** And this is who we see David to be. David is beloved by God and



gifted by God in and through that love. David loves God and loves Israel and this love for God and Israel leads him to step into action when everyone else is paralyzed in their fear. It leads David to see an opportunity where everyone else sees a threat.

So David is stirred to get into the fight. He goes to King Saul and asks to be allowed to fight Goliath. King Saul cannot imagine this young, inexperienced shepherd joining the army much less being sent to fight the enemy's most highly trained and fiercest soldier.

Have you ever felt like David? Ready to go but overlooked and underappreciated? Sometimes people cannot appreciate all that we have to offer by simply looking at us. Certainly Saul did not see in David someone who could win the fight.

But David must have had some quality that was impossible for Saul to ignore, because eventually Saul allows David to meet Goliath on the battlefield. This is a huge risk for Saul—he puts his entire nation's fate on David's young shoulders.

But before David goes to battle, Saul mercifully offers David his own armor and his own sword to give David a fighting chance. The king's own weaponry is a precious and personal gift. It is probably one of the few full suits of armor and real swords in the whole army (which is made up mostly of farmers with sharp farming tools). It certainly was among the best gear in Israel.

Can you think of a time that you received a gift that was expensive, valuable, beyond anything you expected? Receiving something precious is a great honor that we don't easily refuse. But just because the armor is the best in Israel doesn't mean that it is best for David. Saul is one of the tallest men in Israel, and his armor was tailored to fit. So it is too big, bulky, and heavy for David. It overwhelms him because it was not made for him—he can barely walk in it, and besides, he isn't used to fighting in it. It doesn't fit his fighting style.

So David boldly tells his king, "Thanks, but no thanks." Saul may have won battles in his armor, helmet, and sword, but David wouldn't. As good as those gifts might have been for Saul, they were just not the gifts that David had been equipped with. So David takes off the armor and the sword and picks up the tool that is familiar to him: a sling. A sling is the tool for a shepherd. He uses it to protect the sheep from wolves and wild animals. This sling has been David's trusty companion in the other battles he has fought. He has seen God use his sling to deliver him from the lion and bear that tried to steal the sheep under his care. He has experienced God's power working through him in his sling, so that's what he goes with.



David's slinger's gear would have looked something like this. An ancient slinger would spin the sling very fast; when he let go of one of the two straps (ropes) in his hand, the stone would fly out. With practice, slingers could become extremely accurate, and their stone could have the stopping force of a bullet from a modern handgun! Can you imagine how much harder it would be to spin the sling fast and shoot accurately while wearing bulky armor?

We can learn from David. God is equipping each of us for the battle of our lives, but someone else's armor will not do. We often admire what we see in others—musical talent, athletic skill, academic achievement, a magnetic way with people. Because these are all good things, we can be tempted to try on the gifts of others even though they don't fit.

We must discover for ourselves the weapon that God has placed in our hands. There is no sense trying to live our story based on someone else's gifting. Instead, by identifying the unique gifts, talents, and abilities that God has given to you, you will be able to connect to God's supernatural power in your own life.

David wins the battle with his sling and five stones. In the same way, each one of us has been equipped by God with the tools we need to win in life. Remember, "Your gifts are a sign of your divine design". So let's take some time to identify our unique gifting as we think about the person that God has made us uniquely to be.



step up

TOOLS & DISCOVERY

For the next two sessions you're going to learn more about your gifting. (Remember, gifting is the nock part of the arrow; it's your connection to God's power working through you.) To start with today, we're going to look at the meaning of your name.

In ancient Israel, names were a big deal. People's names sounded like Hebrew words, and people knew what they meant. Parents gave their children names that meant something—they said something about the child, the parent, or what was happening around the family at the time.

A name was more than a sound or a string of letters. It was a statement about who the person was. A name was like words on a bottle that tell you who's inside the bottle. Let's take David for instance. David means "loved"—not just any kind of love, but affection or attraction. That's what we see in David's life. After he defeated Goliath, everybody loved him. Men loved him; women loved him. Even people who might have been his



enemies couldn't help but love him. And God loved him too; David would do some terrible things later in his life, but God would never stop loving him.

In the Bible, naming is an act of power. God names people because he has the power to make them what they are. Sometimes God told parents what to name their child because that's what he made them to be. Other times he changed a person's name after he took the person through a big change, like changing the words on the bottle to match the new stuff inside.

The amazing thing is that God gave some of his naming power to people too. (Did you know that the first human's first job in the Bible was to name the animals?) So today we're going to look at the names people have placed on you.

Trashing Labels

The power of naming things and people is significant, because with the power to name also comes the power to label. When someone calls us a "waste", "useless", or "stupid", those words lodge themselves deeply into our souls. The old children's rhyme says, "sticks and stones may break my bones but names will never hurt me", and it would be wonderful if that were true. But unfortunately, it's not. Bad names become labels that haunt us and overpower too much of our lives.

Many people know this to be true. But what most people miss is that even seemingly good labels are bad when they trap us in something less than we really are. A lot of people might tell you, "You're a good athlete," but you hear, "All you are is a good athlete." Or a parent might say, "You're good at English and your sister is good at math," but you hear, "You're not good at math." These names function as labels that put us in a box and don't respect all we have to offer.

However, in the same way that labels haunt us, good names help us. They empower us by calling out the possibility of what our lives could be. So today we want to shed the labels on our lives and start embracing our names.

Before doing this exercise, place a trash can in the center of the room. Also distribute a blank, small or medium-sized piece of paper to each student.

1. Take a moment to think about any labels (bad names) that you have been called that have affected your life. Write these labels down on the piece of paper.
2. Surrender these labels to God and ask him to take away the power of these labels in your life. Tear up the paper and throw it away as an act of shedding these labels.



Name Meaning

Fortunately, labels aren't the only things we're called. We also have our actual names. So we're going to look at how our first, middle, and last names have shaped us.

Now, you might think this is kind of crazy. Most of our names aren't words any of us recognize. They come from other languages, often ancient languages. Our parents may have given us those names not because of what they meant but just because of how they sounded or how they looked.

But God put the power of naming into human beings, and we can't shake it! We give people names that have power even if we don't realize we're doing it. So we're going to look at the names people gave you to get a glimpse of your ability, the stuff inside your bottle.

1. Using your phone, search for "name meaning [your first name]." Go to two or three of the websites to look at the definitions and write down what you find. I especially recommend ohbabynames.com and namestories.com. (A word of caution: Urban Dictionary doesn't help for this, because people just make stuff up and put it there.) Then repeat with your middle name and last name.
2. Write down the nicknames you've been given. Who gave you those names? Why? What do they mean?
3. Consider how your names might tie together or show themselves in your life. Use your imagination!
4. If your name is a place then investigate what that place is known for, what the place produces, or features of the place.

Discussion

If your group is larger than six people, break into groups of three or four. Ask all these questions of one person at a time. Before moving to the next person, ask for responses from the others in the group. Do they see something in the persons' names that matches up with their abilities?

- What is your full name, and what do each of your names mean?
- Which name definition do you like the best?
- Is there a name definition you aren't sure about—you don't see how it fits—or else you just don't like it?
- How do you think your names might fit together?

Name Calling		WHAT YOUR NAME MEANS				
YOUR NAME						
First Name						
Middle Name						
Last Name						
Maiden Name						
Nickname						
(Names spoken over your shoulder, Leader: 60)						

Fill out the following chart by looking up your name and finding out what it means.



Customize Your Arrow

To prepare for this exercise, you will need colored card stock tags, four to five inches long, with elastic strings attached.

1. Write your full name on a tag with the meaning of your name—either each name separately, or the meaning of all of it put together. (Leave the other side blank, because we'll write on that side next time.)
2. Attach the tag to your arrow between the fletching (feathers) and the nock (notch) by folding the bottom end of the tag through the string loop and pulling it tight around the arrow shaft.



wrap up

FORECAST & CONCLUSION

When you're looking at your names, it's not unusual to find one that just doesn't seem right. I don't mean, "My name means 'plumber', and I'm not a plumber." I mean something like, "My name means 'brave', and I don't feel brave at all," or, "My name means 'cowardly', and I want to be brave."

This sort of name mismatch happened to people in the Bible too, and God had ways of dealing with it. Sometimes God challenged people to live up to their name, and the calling he gave them required them to do it. Maybe that's what you need to hear today—maybe you need to know that God has a dream of you living up to your name, and he is right now working in your life to make that happen as you cooperate with him.

In other cases, God changed people's names; he gave them a new name. Now, it's generally not practical for you to change your own name, but you can reinterpret your name. You can look at your name from a different point of view. For example, if your name means "cowardly," you can consider how you're called to help people who are fearful and afraid.

One more thing. You may have seen the names that other people have placed on you. They might be encouraging, they might be embarrassing, or anything in between. They might be a reflection of God's dream of you, but they might not—they might be someone else's idea of you that does not reflect the way he sees you. What I want to do right now is to pray for you that over the next few days, God would speak to you about the names that he gives you and that he would replace any false names you have with his truth. [Pray.]