

Lesson Three: Five Smooth Stones

God created us in his image. There is good in us. He gifted us, and blessed each of us with a variety of talents and abilities. Jesus tells us (quite strongly) not to bury our talents, but to use them for the master. And he links these talents with the call to serve him by serving those who are hungry, thirsty, strangers, in need of clothing, sick, or imprisoned. Paul calls these talents gifts, and shows us that we are each uniquely gifted by God, but that we should bring these gifts together and serve as a body.

The boy who would eventually become David, the great king, once stood looking down into a valley. In the depths stood Israel's crisis embodied in the giant, Goliath. Now, we know the end of the story. David defeats Goliath, and is very clear by whose power the victory is won. The victory belongs to God alone. But God does it through a young shepherd boy, a sling, and a stone. Before David goes down to meet the giant, he goes to the stream and gathers 5 smooth stones for his sling.

Before we meet the giant, let's figure out what God has given us to throw at him. The following are five smooth stones in the form of five basic questions for assessing our God-given resources.

Scriptures to Consider

- Genesis 1:27 *imago Dei*
- 1 Samuel 17
- Matthew 25:14-46 — both parables.
- 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12:3-8.

Some Caveats:

- Most of the questions below would be more than enough for a group activity. Don't rush through this process. **One suggestion is to work through one question at each of your group meetings for the next few weeks.** If you are using this at the Calgary Church of Christ, consider collating this information and sending it to Jonathan. We can draw on this pool of resources over the coming months to minister and serve together.
- We are going to save the question of what the needs are for later.
- We're not going to focus on our material resources — at least not yet.
- It can be difficult to answer these questions out of context. So here are a few contexts to consider. They can apply to each of the questions.
- Sometimes it's hard to answer these questions for ourselves. If you're stuck, think about them like this: What would someone who knows me well say about me in response to each of these questions. If you're still stuck, ask someone in your group to make some suggestions on your behalf.
- Finally, these are brainstorming questions. With brainstorming, quantity matters over quality. Don't leave anything off the table no matter how seemingly small or crazy. You can sort through that later. So when you brainstorm, don't judge and don't limit. Turn your creative mind on and your critical mind off. Just get as many ideas on the table as possible.

Asset-Mapping Questions:

1. What's your story?

There are several ways to do this. Here is one possibility:

- Pick a community you belong to. It could be your family, your neighbourhood, your church, or a lifegroup.
- Part One: When did you become a member of this community? Write down the date. How did you become a member of this community? Briefly Write the story.
- Part Two: Think back on your time in this group. What is one meaningful memory that you have? Write it down.
- Now, share both of these moments with your group.
- Arrange both of these anecdotes from each member of your group into a timeline. You now have a new storyline that no one in your group has every seen before. They may have known pieces, but not the story in this form. You can add more moments to this story with more members as time goes on.
- Take some time to read through the story. What stands out to you about this activity? What did you learn about the group? What feelings does this draw out? Where do you see God's authorship in this story?

2. What's important to you?

Here are some prompts. You don't need to answer all of them, they are to help get the ball rolling.

- People, virtues / ideas / values, things / places, etc. What would I fight for or work hard to protect?
- What do you want your children to know, remember, or have when you're gone.
- What about this place, these people, your faith do you love?
- What gives you life?
- In the new life on the other side of COVID-19, what do you want to make sure is included?

3. What groups has God put you in?

This is a simple listing question. Try to think of all the groups you are (or maybe were) a part of.

- Churches
- Lifegroups
- Clubs
- Teams
- Associations
- Work places
- Neighbourhoods
- Other?

4. What can you do?

What skills and abilities has God given you? Hint, they can be specialized skills or very general — large or small. None of them are insignificant. List as many as possible. Remember, think back through the various contexts of your life:

- Childhood / Family of origin
- Education
- Work
- Recreation and hobbies
- Adulthood / Current family
- Challenges you have already overcome
- Faith

God has certainly given you some abilities through each of these experiences. Jot them down. If you're stuck, think about them like this: What would someone who knows me well say about me in response to each of these questions. If you're still stuck, ask someone in your group to make some suggestions on your behalf.

5. What can I teach?

Think of this one not only in terms of skills and knowledge, but also in terms of values and wisdom.