

Introduction:

As we continue in our Culture of Grace series today, we are diving deep into part of what we saw last week in Romans 12:1-16, to see how being functioning members of the church, just like our hands are members of our physical bodies, is one aspect of being transformed by the renewal of our minds and presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice. Our passage today, in 1 Peter 4:10-11, links to Paul's comments on the use of spiritual gifts in Romans 12 and lays an important foundation that shows us the purpose of spiritual gifts and the mindset we should have as we use them. We won't unpack verses 7-9 of 1 Peter 4, but I want to point out how they connect directly with the call to build a contagious community of love from Romans 12. In fact, every time spiritual gifts are mentioned, they are connected to a life of faith-filled love within the body of Christ. Spiritual Gifts could be defined as uniquely spiritual giftings given by God for building up the church. They are the Spirit of God moving through the people of God to build up the church of God. Lists of spiritual gifts are found in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4, though we should understand these do not provide an exhaustive list of spiritual gifts, as though there are a defined amount, but rather serve as examples of ways in which the Spirit of God empowers the people of God to serve the church of God. This morning we will observe 3 things 1 Peter 4:10-11 teaches us about spiritual gifts. First, to understand that,

You have been Given Spiritual Gifts to Serve One Another

It is crucial to understand the nature of spiritual gifts and how we are called to use them. If we fail to understand these things, we inevitably run the risk of abusing and misusing these gifts. Look at the first half of verse 10, "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another." The first thing we see is that each person has received a spiritual gift. We know Peter is referring to spiritual gifts because he uses the same term Paul uses throughout 1 Corinthians 12, and this term is directly connected to the word for "spiritual" in Romans 1:11 where Paul speaks of longing to share a spiritual gift with the church in Rome. Note how Peter ensures we understand that each person in the church has received a spiritual gift, "as each has received." This is consistent what Paul said in Romans 12:6, saying, "Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them." A similar truth is presented in 1 Corinthians 12:7, where Paul, "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." Notice the consistency with what Peter says, with some additional truths. In Romans 12:6, they differ within the body and come through the grace of God given to us. In 1 Corinthians 12:7, they are manifestations of the Spirit for the common good. The gifts Peter is talking about are ways in which the Spirit of God moves through us for the good of others. This is why Peter says, "use it to serve one another." As Tom Schreiner says, "spiritual gifts... are bestowed for ministry" (Thomas R. Schreiner, 1, 2 Peter, Jude, vol. 37, The New American Commentary, 214). They have been given for us to use. To help others and strengthen their faith. Church, see the truth God's Word is pointing our hearts to. The gifts you have been given are ultimately not for you, they are for those around you. That is what we should understand. Now, look at what we should do. You should,

Seek to Dispense God's Grace by Using Your Spiritual Gifts

We are still in verse 10 and want to read it again slowly to see Peter's flow of thought. Look back at verse 10 and pay close attention to the end, "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace." There are two key components to this final phrase to consider. What is a steward and what does Peter mean by God's grace being varied.

The term for steward could be translated manager and the idea is someone whom the master of a house has entrusted with the management of the affairs of his family. After telling the parable of the master coming home from the wedding feast to find the wise servants awake and waiting, Jesus says this in Luke 12:42, “Who then is the faithful and wise manager (or steward), whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time?” Stewards would not only keep up with the receipts and expenditures of the house but were also responsible for giving out proper portions of food to the rest of the servants and even the children not of age yet. That is the picture Peter is invoking. We are stewards in God’s household but notice what we distribute in the house. We are “stewards of God’s varied grace.” God provides varied grace for His household, the body of Christ, in two ways. First, the gifts He gives to us are varied grace distributed to His people as He sees fit. This is why Paul reminds us that we have gifts that differ in Romans 12:6 and tells the church in Corinth that the Spirit apportions gifts to each individual as He wills in 1 Corinthians 12:11. But God also dispenses varied grace to His people through our use of those gifts. Church, God has chosen, in His wisdom, to use the gifts He gives to us as a channel in which He spreads His grace to others. Being a good steward of God’s varied grace means we make good use of the grace He has given in the gifts by dispensing His grace through those gifts to the church around us. This leads an important question that I hope each of you are asking. How can we be good stewards of God’s varied grace? This is what Peter answers in verse 11,

Always Use Your Spiritual Gifts with a Focus on God’s Glory in Christ

Verse 11 has three parts to it. First, Peter separates the gifts into two major categories and shows us how to use them. Second, Peter shares the ultimate purpose in using our gifts. And third, he breaks out into a doxology, which is a formula of praise. Look at the first part in the first half of verse 11, “whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies.” Notice how Peter places the gifts into two categories, he says, “whoever speaks” and “whoever serves.” I have heard these defined well as gifts of word and gifts of deed. In Paul’s lists of gifts in 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, and Ephesians 4, we get an idea of what spiritual gifts are gifts of word and which ones are gifts of deed. Some examples of gifts of word are prophecy, teaching, and exhortation. Some examples of gifts of deed are giving, mercy, helps or service, administration and leading. We see many of these gifts exercised on a regular basis at GracePoint. We see gifts of teaching and exhortation in our classes and studies, as well as our student and kids’ ministries. We see exhortation through our member care team and those who provide counseling. Gifts of giving are shown through those who very generously provide for others, support of the church, and give to mission efforts. Our member care team, and others constantly display gifts of mercy. Gifts of helps or service shine through our helping hand ministry and volunteers who serve faithfully in many areas of the church behind the scenes. Administration and leading pours out God’s grace through our elders, staff, ministry leaders, and those who quietly help them organize many things. Church, these are only some examples of the gifts, think about what it would be like to see more on display. Now, pay attention to how Paul encourages these categories of gifts to be used. For the gifts of word, Paul says, “whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God.” Tom Schreiner explains this better than I could, saying, “The ‘oracles of God’ refer to the words God has given his people (cf. Acts 7:38; Rom 3:2; Heb 5:12). The phrase is rooted in the Old Testament, where we have both ‘oracles of God’ (LXX Num 24:4, 16; Ps 106:11 and “oracles of the LORD,” *logia kyriou*, LXX Pss 11:7; 17:31) and “your oracles” (LXX Pss 118:11, 103, 148, 158, 162; cf. Wis 16:11). Using speaking gifts to minister to others means that the one speaking endeavors to speak God’s words.” (Thomas R. Schreiner, 1, 2 Peter, Jude, vol. 37, *The New American Commentary*, 215). Peter is not saying that every gift of word is a direct revelation from God, notice he says, “as one who speaks.” He is saying the one exercising the gift should do so with respect and reverence towards God’s word, seeking to have His Word be the main content in what is delivered.

This would mean, when you are preparing to teach, you have the word of God hemmed in around you, seeking to stay as close to the text as possible. And when you teach, you seek to teach it as clearly as possible. Or if you are sharing an exhortation, you are thoughtful to think of what scriptures would aid that exhortation. Always use gifts of word humbly and faithfully, seeking to relay the truth of God's word as best as you can. Church, strive not to share only your opinions, stories, or experience. Seek to give people life from the true source of life, the word of God. Look next at how gifts of deed are to be used in verse 11, "whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies." All gifts of deed should be used in way that shows you are relying on God's power and strength. How often have you walked forward in giving, helping, or showing mercy without any thought of God's strength? Sadly, I don't think I can even count the amount of times I have relied on my own strength to serve. Church, God is wanting us to remember that all of our gifts are gifts of grace that we merely steward to others. God's desire is not to give you a gift in order to step back and see how you do with it. He gives you a gift to serve others and then calls you to rely on Him to exercise that gift. This brings us to the second and third parts of this verse. Pay attention to the second half of verse 11, "in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ." God is zealous for His glory. His primary motivation in everything He does is for His glory to be shown and His creation to glorify Him. This doesn't make Him selfish though, because His glory is our greatest good. When we glorify God, we will find the greatest joy and happiness this life has to offer. So, God calls us to use our gifts properly in order that people see God's glory in everything we do and glorify God the Father through Jesus Christ. God is glorified through Jesus Christ because Christ's substitutionary atonement on the cross made the way for us fulfill our original purpose in bringing glory to God. His death secured forgiveness for all who place their trust in Him. His resurrection secured the hope of eternal life, which is knowing God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son. These things secured the gift of the Spirit being given to us, as we trust in Jesus, who moves our hearts to worship God, keeps us secure until glory, and provides us with spiritual gifts to dispense God's grace. This is part of why the gospel is so glorious and why the use of our gifts should always focus on the glory of God in Christ. This makes the doxology Peter ends with so fitting, "To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." Church, that is the goal of everything. Now, before we end, I want to talk about how we discover our spiritual gifts. I am not saying they are entirely unhelpful, but I don't believe we discover our gifts through a spiritual gifts assessment test. I took several of those growing up, and I can tell you I wouldn't be here today if I had trusted in their results. Let me suggest 6 ways to discover your spiritual gift or gifts. First,

1) Learn About Spiritual Gifts

Study Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4 to learn as much as you can about spiritual gifts. It will be hard to discover what your spiritual gift or gifts are without a deep understanding of what the Word of God says about them. Now, it is important to know that there are a variety of perspectives on spiritual gifts, including which ones are still being given today. This sermon is not to unpack those but let me encourage you to ensure that you consult faithful resources that use the scriptures as the foundation of their teaching. If it speaks about opinion or experience more than the Bible, it is not a good resource. Also, make sure you weigh everything you learn against scripture. If you would like some suggestions, I would be happy to point you towards some resources I would recommend. Second,

2) Start Serving Wherever You Can & Ask God to Use You

As we have seen, spiritual gifts are design to be used to serve one another, meaning our desire should never be to simply know what our gifts are but be used by God through them. Edmund Clowney rightly says, "Gifts are discovered in service. We may rightly ask about the gift we have received, but we will not gain the answer by introspection" (Edmund P. Clowney, *The Message of 1 Peter: The Way of the Cross*, 182).

The most helpful thing I has heard about discovering spiritual gifts was from pastor John Piper who said in a sermon, “don’t worry about whether you can point to prophecy, or teaching, or wisdom, or knowledge, or healing, or miracles, or mercy, or administration, etc., and say, ‘That’s mine.’ The way to think is this: the reason we have spiritual gifts is so that we can strengthen other people’s faith; here is someone whose faith is in jeopardy; how can I help him? Then do or say what seems most helpful, and if the person is helped, then you may have discovered one of your gifts” (<https://t.ly/6HZjT>). Church, don’t sit around and wait to discover your gifts, or for the right opportunity to use the gifts you think you have. Walk forward in love, seeking to build up the faith of others and trust God to reveal the gifts you have or give you the gifts you need. Third,

3) See What Brings You Joy in Service

Because spiritual gifts are gifts of God’s varied grace to us and ways in which we dispense His grace to others, we will find joy in seeing God use us to share His grace. I have seen this time and time again in my life. If the Spirit of God is moving through a gift He has given to you, there will be joy as you walk forward in that gift, assuming you are using the gift in the right way we learned about earlier. So, as you are serving, see what brings you joy as God is using you to share His grace. Fourth,

4) Listen for What is Giving Grace to Others

Let’s say you see someone hurting and share a word of encouragement, which is part of exhortation. Then that person responds at some point and shares how God really used what you shared to strengthen their faith and help them keep going. That may mean you have the gift of exhortation. Maybe you start serving in one of the ministries at GracePoint and think of some things that might help the ministry leader organize things effectively. You share them and help strengthen that ministry. You may have the gift of administration. Do you see how that works? As you serve, listen for what is giving grace to others. Fifth,

5) Let Others Affirm Your Gift

I discovered a spiritual gift of teaching in my life through the affirmation of others. First, I had a friend ask if I would consider teaching for his youth group. Up to that point, I had only led worship for churches. I was terrified but agreed to teach. God used that to build a desire in my heart to teach God’s word, but I didn’t just start seeking to teach all the time, I kept serving the church in worship ministry. Over time, the elders I served with began to identify a teaching gift and encouraged me to preach and teach more. It was through their affirmation that I discovered God wanted me to use that spiritual gift. Church, this also means you may be called to help others discover their gifts. Let others affirm your gift and affirm others’ gifts. Sixth,

6) Keep Learning About Spiritual Gifts & Asking for Them

1 Corinthians 14:1 calls us to “earnestly desire spiritual gifts,” meaning God may choose to grant additional gifts of grace throughout our lives in order to dispense His grace to the church. Continue to grow in your understanding of spiritual gifts and continue asking God to give you everything you need to serve others around them. Then trust that He will supply whatever is needed for however He desires to use you.

Conclusion:

As we close, I want to leave you with a truth that captures why the use of our spiritual gifts is a habit and practice we want to prioritize at GracePoint. Ephesians 4:15-16 says, “we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.” This is the same analogy of a body we saw Paul use in Romans 12. The Holy Spirit reveals through Paul that this church will build itself up in love when each part of the body is working properly. This means we will be built up in love when every member of GracePoint is being good stewards of God’s varied grace.

Church, the use of your spiritual gifts isn't an option, it is fundamental to the growth of this local expression of God's church. As the worship team is coming up to lead us in an extending time of reflection and response, take time to reflect on how you are being stewards of God's varied grace to serve one another. If you are a guest with us, and you don't know Christ, reflect on the cross of Jesus and all that He secured for those who trust in Him. As always, you are welcome to come and kneel before the Lord in a posture of humility or remain where you are at. Stand and sing as the Spirit leads you. If you have a need for prayer, we have a team of people ready to pray with you and for you, who you will find worshipping in the front row or at the bottom of the stairs in the back. Let's press into God's grace in this time and see how He moves.

Pray with me as we respond to God's word.