

My family loves the Olympics. We love the competition, we love the variety of talents and gifting that are on display, we love to see the athletes pouring themselves out as they strive for the prize, and for two weeks my house will be full of growing boys mimicking ski jumps off the fireplace, body-checking their brothers (and their dad) into walls and, maybe, attempting triple sow cows in their socks. But all of that will be preceded by one moment in particular that I always greatly anticipate. It's the parade of nations during the opening ceremonies. A group of athletes, chosen to be a member of the team, united around a common cause, representing their nation/kingdom in land likely not their own (except for the host nation), using their varied gifts and talents in events they were clearly born to compete in, all to further the interests of their kingdom and bring gold, silver, and bronze glory to it.

And isn't that a beautiful picture of the people of God, and what Peter has described throughout his letter. We are chosen, we are united around the cause of Christ, we are representatives of the kingdom of heaven, we live in a land no longer our own, we have been born for a purpose and, as we began to discuss last week, we too have gifts, spiritual gifts, given to us by God's grace, that we are to use to serve others and glorify God.

**[1 Peter 4:10] <sup>10</sup> As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.**

A steward is a household manager. He has no wealth of his own but manages the riches of his master. Now, when you normally hear stewardship in church, particularly in a sermon, you most likely think about finances, money. But, understand this, **what you do with your life is how you steward God's grace.** And just like the Olympic athlete who has been called to faithfully steward the gifts, talents, and abilities they've been given to advance the cause of their kingdom, we too are called to faithfully steward God's grace, and the gifts he gives us, to advance the cause of our kingdom.

We know from Scripture that all Christians are called to steward God's grace by glorifying God and making disciples of all nations. We also believe that God has called Fellowship Dallas to do that in a specific way. You have likely heard our vision that by the year 2026, we will become a training and launching ground for over 10,000 men and women who will discover and live out their unique, God-given, Kingdom purpose in Christ. So what I want to do this morning is flash forward to 2026 and consider what will we have experienced along the way if we make the commitment, to God and each other, to be "good stewards of God's grace." There are specifics we can't know. But I do believe there are some things we can be sure of, some things we will experience, and I want to talk about five of them that we can see from Peter and from the early church.

**Good stewards gain clarity in God's gifting.** For us to serve faithfully, we need to know and understand the gift or gifts we've been given. This understanding is revealed by God's grace and our efforts to learn.

**[1 Peter 4:10-11a] <sup>10</sup> As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: <sup>11</sup> whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies.**

Peter begins by making clear that everyone who is a follower of Jesus has received a gift. For some of you, that may be the only thing you need to hear this morning. If you have trusted in Christ, you have been indwelt by his Spirit, and you have been given at least one gift to use in service to him and others. You have something to offer. You are in the game.

These gifts are varied, manifold, many; there is a lot of variety, and we know this from the different passages that speak of spiritual gifts in the New Testament. Remember 12, 12, 4, 4. Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4, and 1 Peter 4. Peter's list is the shortest, dividing all the gifts into two categories: speaking gifts and serving gifts; serving with our words and serving with our deeds. He's not implying that there are only two gifts, but is helping his readers begin to understand the distinction. That distinction will help us discern where we should serve, where the use of our gifts will have the greatest impact. That understanding is so important. You put a skier on the ice and a skater on the snow, the results won't be optimal. If you put a person with a serving gift in a speaking role, or vice-versa, you'll get similar results. But when someone is in a position to put their gifting into motion, the outcome will be fruitful.

I was reminded of this distinction very recently when we held our Men's Breakfast a couple Saturdays ago. It was an incredible day with a ton of energy and Fellowship Hall busting at the seams with 200 guys in attendance. But, as you can imagine, that event took some serious planning and set up. At the beginning of the week, it didn't look like it was going to be a big deal. We have around 40 guys registered, and I was a little discouraged. But planning an event for 40 guys isn't all that challenging. However, as the week progressed, 40 went to 60, and 60 went to 100 and 100 went to over 160. Now, look, the things I love to do are lead out and gather people together and get up front and speak and be out front as we go from here to there. Planning those events are not, and as the number grew, so did my anxiety. Thankfully I have Deb and Kristin, who went above and beyond. And there was a great moment of clarity about where I'm gifted and not gifted when Deb looked at me and asked, "So what are you thinking for centerpieces?" I'm not sure I've ever stared at someone more blankly than I did in that moment. The only thing that came to my mind was, "I don't know. How about bacon towers?" That moment gave me clarity.

You know who else had clarity? Deb and Kristin. They likely would not have been thrilled had I asked them to speak at the breakfast. But when I encouraged them to end their set-up work on Friday evening and go home, they said, "We are ok being here late. We are using our gifting and fulfilling our God-given purpose. You have your ministry. We have ours. We're tired, but it's worth it!" Clarity.

Peter provides these two categories to help us begin to get clarity on what our gifting is. One of the best exercises any of us can go through is taking a spiritual gifts assessment. If you are in a Life Group, you went through one this past week. As an observer, I loved to see the insight people obtained for themselves, as well as the affirmation they received from the other members of the group. It is a great first step if you are interested in pursuing clarity around your gifting.

Another suggestion is, if you think you may be gifted in something, go try it out. See how it feels. See what fruit comes of it. And if you fall flat on your face, it's ok. You are closer to

clarity because you know what gifts you do NOT have. You may also be surprised. If we are committed to being good stewards of God's grace, we will gain clarity in how he has gifted us.

**Good stewards are empowered by God's provision.**

We are utterly dependent on the grace of God to accomplish anything in the name of God. Our ministry is an overflow of our personal relationship with Jesus. As we stay attached to him, he gives us everything we need to be good stewards and live out our calling.

Peter says those with speaking gifts should speak as one who speaks oracles of God. God has provided all we need in his Word. It was written down by biblical authors inspired by the Holy Spirit, and passed down from generation to generation. There is no need, nor should we give into any temptation, to make up something on our own. The Holy Gospel according to Kurt would be an abuse of my gift and an act of disservice to you. Our source material has been settled. And while those with speaking gifts may have different styles, approaches, illustrations, and contextualization, the preacher, teacher, evangelizer, encourager, exhorter or any others speaking in Jesus' name, have graciously been equipped with the full counsel of God, and must feel the weight of representing God's Word to those who listen.

Peter continues by saying those with serving gifts should serve by the strength given to them by God. Have you ever been given a job to do and felt totally inadequate for it? Martha told me something that struck fear in my heart. Our kitchen sink has a leak, and I'm not handy at all. Of course, once I saw what the plumber did, I very confidently proclaimed "Oh, I could have done that!" Thankfully, **when God gives you a job, he also provides whatever is necessary for you to accomplish it.** Now, we can practice with, exercise, and grow our gifts. That's our responsibility. But just like the source material for those with speaking gifts is God's Word, the source material for those with serving gifts is God's strength.

Now, some of you are hearing this talk on gifting and service and purpose, and you're thinking, "Kurt can't be talking about me." Remember, this isn't up to you alone. On our own, none of us have much to offer God. But God gives you a gift he never intended you to keep. Your job, as a good steward, is to give it away. And if we commit to doing that faithfully between now and 2026, we will witness the spreading of God's Word and the power of his strength.

The third thing comes as a result of the first two. **Good stewards serve with conviction of God's calling.** Clarity leads to confidence, and confidence leads to courage. And when we couple that with the promise of God's power, we will get moving with the conviction.

[Acts 6:1-5a] **6 Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution.<sup>2</sup> And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.<sup>4</sup> But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."<sup>5</sup> And what they said pleased the whole gathering.**

This passage captures the tension we can feel when the needs of the church and of the world present themselves. In this passage the Apostles, who have been uniquely gifted to preach the Gospel and pray for the church (speaking gifts), are instead spending their time handing out food to those in need (serving gifts). And even though they have clarity in their gifting, and have certainly seen God's power at work, they are spending their time doing something they can do at the expense of something they must do. In their conviction, they realize it must change.

They are not saying that serving is below them, or that one gift is more important than the other. The American church has a bit of an issue with this, as speaking gifts have been elevated to a place they shouldn't be, and speakers are elevated to a place they shouldn't be. While speaking/leading gifting is up front and out front, and the preaching and teaching of God's Word has been foundational since the creation of the church, it's just one function of the team God has assembled to do his work. In their conviction, the apostles are acknowledging their poor stewardship of God's grace because they are serving in a capacity that does not match with their gifting and does not match what God has called them to.

Now, a quick word of caution. We could take this too far and start thinking that any need that doesn't perfectly match with my gifting should be ignored. The church is a faith family, and just like your family, there are things we are all responsible for simply because we are part of the family. My middle son, Luke, just turned thirteen last weekend, and automatically became a member of the Pressler lawn and garden team. He's not allowed to come to me and say "Dad, I'm not particularly gifted at mowing the lawn, so have someone else do it." Thankfully, my boys are more than happy to do their part. In the same way, there are needs that come up in the family of God that are all-hands-on-deck, and we should join in willingly and joyfully. Generally, though, we want to serve where we are gifted.

Conviction says once you know your gifting, your purpose, you can't help but move in that direction and begin to live it out. Conviction gets you to a quicker "yes" and a more gracious "no" when opportunities to serve are presented. And, if you're a millennial, conviction reduces the anxiety of FOMO, because if you are doing what God made you to do, you're not missing out on anything. **Conviction is the drive that propels us forward and puts us in position to joyfully live out the purpose for which God created us.**

I want to show you a picture of conviction. Actually, I want to show you three pictures of conviction. This is Kristina, Fred, and Abbie. They are members of our church who have participated in one of our pilot *Repurposed* Training Experiences. And what they are holding in their hands is a culmination of all the work they did over many weeks. While the sign contains only two words, it expresses a declaration that answers the question "Why am I here?" Those two words capture the essence of each person's God-given purpose, and they inspire them to live it out. It is clarity that will forever impact their stewardship of God's grace, affecting their choices, relationships, priorities, and goals. It is what makes them uniquely them. That's the place we want all of us to get to. That's why we want you in a Training Experience. And as we move forward with clarity of our gifting, in the power of God, and in the conviction of his calling, we can expect something else...

**Good stewards contribute to the growth of God's Kingdom.** God doesn't need us, but he really wants to use us. And when we answer the call by faithfully stewarding his grace, we get to be a part of growing his kingdom.

**[Acts 6:6-7] <sup>6</sup> These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them. <sup>7</sup> And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.**

When the church is operating as God designed it, and each individual member is serving in his or her gifting and calling, God blesses their work and grows his Kingdom. The apostles' humble confession of poor stewardship not only returned them to the work they were called to, but made room for others to participate in the ministry of the church through their gifting.

What an incredible reminder for us to live with great expectations of what God will do when we are obedient to his call and faithfully steward his grace. The outcome is nothing short of the growth of his kingdom. This dynamic isn't the exclusive property of the first century church. It is an invitation to all God's people for all time to run hard after him, to fulfill the purpose for which he has called you, and then to marvel at what he does. One of the most encouraging passages in all of Scripture is found in 1 Corinthians 12. I've mentioned it on this platform before, I mentioned it in Launch last Sunday, and I promise that you will hear it again many more times. **If you are a follower of Jesus, he has made you indispensable to his mission.** And if you are indispensable to his mission, it means he has something vital for you to do that will lead to the growth of his kingdom. Get moving, and watch what he does between now and 2026.

**Good stewards become beacons of God's glory.** If you read the book of 1 Peter, you cannot escape the fact that we are to be all about the glory of God. 1:8 1:11, 1:21, 2:9, 2:12, 4:13, 4:14, 4:16, 5:1, 5:4, 5:10, and here in 4:11.

**[1 Peter 4:11b] -in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen**

Never forget: **we are mobilized so that He is magnified.** It could be very easy for us, in light of all this talk of gifting and calling and purpose to get real focused on ourselves. But know that you are not your gifts. You are not your calling. You are not your purpose. You are a son or daughter of your Heavenly Father. Your identity is in the one who saved you. And it is out of our relationship with Him that we are called, and equipped, to fulfill that calling.

When an Olympic athlete faithfully stewards his gifts, he receives a medal not only for himself, but for the glory of his kingdom. When a follower of Jesus faithfully stewards God's grace, we, according to 1 Corinthians 9, receive an imperishable wreath, and our king and his kingdom are glorified. The stewarding of God's grace is the outward expression of God's grace. God's grace is the source and the force of our love for one another. When our words and deeds are steeped in the love of Christ, the body is strengthened and a dark world is drawn to his marvelous light.

I believe we are in a season of God's favor. We are always in God's favor because we have been redeemed by the blood of Christ, but I believe there are seasons where God responds to our faithful stewardship by stirring his people and blessing the work of his church. I have had so many conversations recently about all the wonderful things that are happening at Fellowship, and all of them end with an awe-filled "I think we are in a season of God's favor."

2026 will be here before you know it. And as we march towards it, we have a vision for what that's going to look like: 10,000 people living out their God-given purpose. But we also put together an extended vision statement. I'm only going to read you a couple excerpts, but I'll attach the entire thing to the end of my manuscript, which you can get online.

If we commit to be good stewards of God's grace:

Our aim is to reimagine our church as a starting place and coaching ground for followers of Jesus to discover their unique calling and then lead others on a similar journey.

We see a future where new and long-time believers discover how their unique story combined with their unique gifts, talents, and experiences inspires them to gladly offer up their lives for the glory of God and the good of His Kingdom. We see men and women who are "ordained" plumbers and teachers and doctors and business leaders who view their job as a mission field.

When we all see ourselves as repurposed agents of the Kingdom, experiencing the fullness of life lived as God's missionaries where we are already doing life, we will be full of joy, contagiously attractive to others and influential for the Kingdom. We who have been awakened to the purpose of God and have re-imagined what life could be, will have the joy of awakening others to the call of God on their lives as we invite them to live on purpose with us.

## Our Vision

The Dallas Metroplex is a target-rich environment for the gospel. This increasingly complex and diverse city is made up of distracted, discontented and detached people looking for purpose, hope and happiness. Many are living "lives of quiet desperation" unaware of the joy and fulfillment available through Jesus Christ whose desire is to call them to an abundant life as He uses them uniquely to build His Kingdom and change the world. We have no shortage of churches in Dallas but we do have a shortage of churches that prioritize sending capacity over seating capacity. Jesus said, "Go, make disciples of all nations," not "Come, sit and enjoy the show."

At Fellowship Dallas, we believe our first calling is life transformation through a relationship with Jesus Christ. This transformation results in a growing understanding of our God-given purpose to be pursued daily where we live, work and play. We delight to encourage and call one another to purposeful living as we worship, live together in community, and serve alongside one another.

Our aim is to awaken people to the purpose of God, to reimagine our church as a starting place and coaching ground for followers of Jesus to discover their unique calling and then lead others on a similar journey. We believe that success is ultimately measured by successors. To that end, by 2026, we will depend on God for at least 10,000 people to be engaged in a repurposing process so they can experience the joy of identifying, connecting to and living out their God-given purpose in Christ every day in their homes, workplaces and communities.

We see a future where new and long-time believers discover how their unique story combined with their unique gifts, talents, and experiences inspires them to gladly offer up their lives for the glory of God and the good of His Kingdom. We see men and women who are "ordained" plumbers and teachers and doctors and business leaders who view their job as a mission field. When God's people are living life on purpose, confident of their calling, their joy becomes contagious and others are drawn to do the same. Compelled by the love of Christ, we will multiply this repurposing process through our personal relationships and our strategic partnerships around the world. We will celebrate what God is doing through thousands of shared stories.

Can you see it? It will be inescapable for anyone attending Fellowship Dallas to be invited to experience the daily adventure of discovering and living out their God-given purpose. Each person who walks through our doors will see that God loves them and has created them on purpose, for purpose. They will hear countless testimonies affirming the fact that He desires to enter into their current situation and lovingly draw them to something more. Students will begin to see their school as a mission field. Young moms and dads will realize that they are not just parents but disciple-makers. Those who are tired of their jobs will be energized as they begin to see their work as a Kingdom assignment. Even those who have retired from the work force will begin to realize the freedom they have to put their experience, wisdom and gifts to work leading others in a growing relationship with Jesus Christ.

When we all see ourselves as repurposed agents of the Kingdom, experiencing the fullness of life lived as God's missionaries where we are already doing life, we will be full of joy, contagiously attractive to others and influential for the Kingdom. We who have been awakened to the purpose of God and have re-imagined what life could be, will have the joy of awakening others to the call of God on their lives as we invite them to live on purpose with us.