

# Entrusted with Your Church

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**1 Peter 4:10**

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Show of hands, how many of you think Jesus could return at any moment? That's good. Well, how about you... What about all of you who aren't raising your hands? What's up with that? Look at verse seven. Look at verse seven. Peter thought Jesus could return at any moment, saying, "The end of all things is," you see that phrase, "at hand." That phrase at hand means the end could happen at any moment.

Since like an earthquake in California, the end could happen at any moment, what should we all be like? Well, verse 7 says we should be self-controlled, sober-minded, and prayerful, instead of freaking out at the end of the world. All right? Above everything else we could do, verse 8, we should be loving other Christians and forgiving the sins committed against us. We should all, verse 9, show hospitality to each other without complaining. Finally, verse 10, we should be "good stewards of our church."

We conclude our series on stewardship today, and we'll be right back in John. We've seen that stewardship is an identity, that Christians are stewards. First, of our relationship with God, second of our families, third of our finances, and fourth of two major functions that we perform in our lives, that of being an employee or an employer, and that of being a church member.

Now, what I mean by church member today is just that you'd consider yourself as part of a local church. Whether it's as a covenant member or just an attender, you have a church that you are a part of, a church that you think it's God's will for you to call your home church. Putting it all together, when it seems like the end is near, like Jesus could return at any moment, God's answer to that, that craziness that we could experience, God's answer to suffering is a solid local church.

Listen, each one of us together is what makes a church a solid local church or the way I've been saying it throughout the series is you have been entrusted with your church. Your church, the church you'd consider your home church, that is part of your stewardship as a Christian that we just saw in verse 10. If you have a home church, if you would say, "I go to," and then you would insert the name of a church right there, that's where you attend, if you go there, maybe you tune in regularly because you can't go there for whatever reason, then listen, that means you have a local church, but it's not like a store or a mechanic or a doctor.

All those places we go to get served, but the church should be different. At a church, at church, we're noticed, verse 10, good stewards, when we're here to give and our text today makes that obvious, showing us, showing us all what we should all be doing at our church. Let's look at the opening words of verse 10. Notice the verse starts out like this, "As each one received a gift." Notice it doesn't say if each one received a gift, but as, or since each one received a gift. Each

Christian has at least one gift from the Lord. Do you see that word each there in the verse? That word looks at every person in a group individually. Each Christian, each and every Christian is gifted.

Now, like all the messages in these series, each one could be a series all by itself, and the same is true today, a lot could be said about spiritual gifts that I'm just not going to talk about today. Sorry about that. I'm going to speak about spiritual gifts in a very general way. Notice, starting in verse 10, spiritual gifts are not something that each Christian claims. We don't claim a spiritual gift, or we don't chase after spiritual gifts because of what? Notice spiritual gifts are something each Christian has what? "Received." You see that there? 1 Corinthians 12:11 puts it this way, "God, the Holy Spirit, distributes these gifts to each Christian 'as he wills,'" not as we will.

Each Christian has a God-given spiritual gift. It's a gift, not a paycheck. It's an expression of God's grace to give Christians as he has. That gift was given to each Christian by God when the person was saved, but notice the text also says why those gifts were given. We'll focus on this in a little bit, but for now, the answer is in the rest of verse 10, gifts are given to each Christian "to use it to serve one another." You see that there?

The gifts each Christian has are not for them at all. They're not given for self-promotion, or even self-fulfillment. Each gift is God's way of using Christians to minister to other people. To put it as simply as I can, your gift, which every Christian has, your gift is your ministry, or you'll begin to be a good steward of your church when you *point #1), Realize You Have a Local Church Ministry*, not those other people out there, not those people on the stage, you have a local church ministry. Every single Christian is saved to serve, every single one. The issue is never do I have a ministry. The issue is always am I doing my ministry. It's not, if you have a ministry, but what is the ministry that God saved me to do. This means there's not one Christian that can accurately say, "I have nothing to offer, not even one." Every Christian has a ministry that God has saved them to do in their church. You have been uniquely empowered, uniquely enabled to minister in a church.

The only issue is finding out what it is, if you don't know what it is, and finding where you can use it to be a blessing to other people in your church. The issue for the Christian should never be, I didn't get anything out of that church. No. The real issue is what ministry did you put into that church so that someone else got something out of that church.

Now, I get stage of life issues, like overwhelmed moms and disabilities, and a person who thinks maybe their best years are behind them. I get extreme circumstances. I'm not talking about any of those things that you might be going through. I'm talking in general, for most Christians, if we have a home church, what should dominate us should be, what can I do here, not, what can I get here. I know this flips the paradigm of the American church upside down, right? Jesus said, Acts 20:35 that it is more blessed to give than it is to receive, and we believe that, but we don't seem to believe that when it comes to church, because so many come to church to receive, not to give. The result of that in our lives, and in our church, experience is that we are not as blessed as we could be.

We come to church to receive from the ministry, not to do ministry, but Spurgeon put it this way, he said, "God gives us what we have to run it through us to others like a pipe." Is that how you see yourself when you walk onto the campus, when you go to your small group, go to one of the breakfasts, your weekday ministries, scouring the campus, scouring the patio, saying to yourself, "I'm a pipe. I'm a pipe. That's what I'm here to do. God, show me who it is you brought me here today to bless." It's coming to church each week like Jesus came to the earth, Mark 10:45, "Not to be served but to... Serve.

Question, is that us? Is that us? Listen, I hope you're enjoying the ministry of Redeemer Bible Church. I really hope that. I hope it's helped you and blessed you and served you well, but a question you should be asking is, who is enjoying your ministry at Redeemer Bible Church? Who is being blessed by your ministry here?

Listen, on that connect card that I told you about earlier, you can fill it out and check the box that says, "I'm interested in serving here." If you do that, a whole new world will open up to you here. You will have a sense of purpose and fulfillment and joy that you might not have right now. You'll begin to have real, tangible proof that the God of the universe is actually using you, your knowledge, your experience, your trials, your wisdom. He's actually using you to take what he's given you and use it to bless somebody else and you will stand there and go, "He's using me. I can't believe it."

If you're thinking, "I'll get around to that when my job isn't as crazy," listen, like brushing your teeth or taking a shower, or putting gas in your car, it's not, "Oh, I'll do that when I get around to it. I'll do that when my job is a little less crazy." No, we make time for all of those things because they're so important.

Listen, the stewardship of your church should be in that category. If you're saying, "I don't know what my gift is, I don't know what my ministry is," if that's you, just know you don't have to take a bunch of gift tests and then go sit under a tree and wait for God to tell you what it is. All right? We're not going to put a bunch of gift tests in front of you, "Oh, you got to figure it out, and take 27 of them and just figure it out that way." That's not what it is because here, you already have it. It's already yours. You want to know the best way to find out what your God-given ministry is? Here it is, very simple, find a need and fill it. Find a need in someone's life and fill that need. If that doesn't fit, if that doesn't fit, then find another need until you find one that does fit you and excites you and makes you think God is actually using me to be a blessing in somebody else's life.

This isn't "I'll do something when I figure out what my gift is. No, just meet a need. Meet a need. I can tell you, we need people in ministry all over the place here, like kids' ministry. To all my kids' ministers out there, you are my ministry heroes, especially you who do junior high, especially you. You are the Avengers. You are the ministry superstars.

I'm not just saying that but what you do to help our kids, know, love, and serve Jesus, the hours of preparation you put in, your patience, your prayers, your love. I know you feel appreciated

because we try to do a great job appreciating you in our ministries, but listen, I just want you to know, I appreciate you. You've been pouring into my kids' lives, some of you for years now. I just cannot thank you enough for doing that, but there's more than that.

There's student ministry, and there's greeters, and ushers, and counselors, and security, and parking attendance, and prayer team, and camera operators, and people with experience in audio and video, and people who can serve there on the weekends, people who can do that during the week. We need discipleship group leaders and growth group leaders.

One of our biggest issues has been too many people coming here and not enough groups to get them connected. It's such a... "Oh, I couldn't get connected. The church is just so unfriendly. I tried and I tried, but I couldn't do it." It's like, "Oh God, we need more leaders so that we don't hear that." You might look around and think, "They don't need me here. They got everything figured out," but that's not the paradigm in this verse.

Nobody here, not a single person is useless. Nobody. The ministry Redeemer has completely depends on the ministries that God has given each one of you. We need your God-given ministry to be the church that God is molding and shaping and designing Redeemer to be. When you realize that you have a ministry that God saved you to do, you are well on your way to being a good steward of the church that he's entrusted to you. Now, if you have a ministry, notice verse 10, it is "To serve one another." This is what your gift is. This is what your gift is for. This is what your ministry is for. Notice, to use it, to serve, not just in general, but the context is serving one another and the context of that is your church.

1 Corinthians 12:7 says, "Spiritual gifts are given to each Christian, 'for the common good.'" Your ministry was given to you but not for you. Your ministry was given to you for the people around you, to bless them, to benefit them, to help them know, love, and serve Christ. It's one thing to realize that you have a ministry, but it's another thing to *point #2), Admit You are a Local Church Minister. You are a Local Church Minister.* Does it feel uncomfortable to say that? If you have a ministry, which you do, because God gifted you with one, since you have a ministry, that makes you a minister. How many of you are ministers in this room? Raise your hand. Everybody should be raising their hands. Everybody, right? Well, I thought the pastors were the ministers? Well, no. Well, yes and no, right? Pastors are ministers because pastors have received ministries from God too, just like everybody else, but our ministry, according to Ephesians 4:12, is "Equipping the saints for the work of ministry."

A pastor's ministry is making sure every Christian knows they have a ministry, and then equipping them to do that ministry because every Christian is a minister. Now, is that ministry at home? Yeah, absolutely. Is it to your neighbors and friends and your coworkers? Yes. In addition to those things, it's also your church. Think about it. The idea of serving one another, in verse 10, assumes that one person has a need and another person has the ability to meet that need. In other words, we all need help from one another, and we all have the help that the other people need here. That's the cool thing about this. God's already equipped us with everything we need to meet

all the needs of the people that we interact with. To believe I'm not needed here, that is just plain false.

God created church in a way that demands that none of us is fully adequate on our own. Not a single person is adequate by ourselves without anybody else. No. No one has all the gifts. No one can do every ministry that people need. However, together we do have all that we need. In other words, God made every person in a local church dependent on all the other people in a local church. We're not independent individuals here to sit and watch a few people do their ministry. No, we're interdependent individuals who need all the other people around us to minister God's grace to us and then God use us to minister his grace to them. Really that's all ministry is, God blessing me with something so that I can be a blessing to somebody else who needs what God has blessed me with.

1 Corinthians 12, Paul uses the metaphor of a body to illustrate this idea. As each body part has a function, so every Christian in a local church has a function and just like your foot needs your eyes, and your hands need your ears, and your knees need your nose, and all of that, we need each other to accomplish all the ministry that God has designed this church, all of us together to accomplish with each other.

If your foot said to you, I mean, it'd be weird if it talked to you, but if it talked to you and it said to you, "I'm not getting involved today. I'm not getting involved," you would suffer, right? But so would everybody connected to you, they would suffer too. If your eye said, "I'm not needed here." I mean, that'd be a bad day, right? That wouldn't be good. It'd be a problem for other people too though, right? If your ear said, "Someone else can do this job for me. Someone else can take care of this, the foot, it can do my job, I'm good. I'm sitting this one out." Again, that would be a problem. If we don't do our ministry here, someone here won't get the help that they could only get from you. If we're acting more like spectators in the stands instead of what we really are, which is the players on the field, that would mean someone's not getting the help that God saved us to give and if people aren't getting the help that God saved us to give, the result is that the church begins to suffer.

Yet, that's how so many are in a local church, but we don't feel bad or we don't think that that's bad because like so many who have a physical disability, we just get used to it. We just get used to, well, it's not what it should be and I'm not doing what it should be, but we just get used to that, but listen, no one can replace what God saved you to do in a local church. That cannot be replaced. You have a unique ministry that God gave you.

When we're not involved, when we're here to get, not to give, when we think we're not needed, when we think we're act like other people can do the ministry here, I'm sitting this one out, what happens is our church gets damaged. We handicap it. We disable it. We hinder it. We restrict it. We impede the progress of the gospel against the forces of hell here. We slow down the work that God is doing here when we act more like dead weight on a body slowing down or nullifying the ministry of the body that is supposed to advance.

What does that mean practically? It means that child who is struggling, that couple whose marriage is crashing, that person who's sick or whose heart is breaking, they won't be prayed for or encouraged or blessed or loved because you are not here to do it, to do your ministry. Not doing that, not being like that starts with seeing yourself as a minister in your church. Is that how you see yourself, a minister with a ministry, not a spectator with a seat or a consumer with a product, but a contributor to the church that God has entrusted to you as a steward?

In fact, being a good steward is where verse 10 goes next. Notice verse 10, "As each has received a gift," so you've all got a ministry, "use it to serve one another," your minister, "that ministries to serve other people," notice, "as good stewards of God's varied grace." When you understand that you are a minister with a God-given ministry in your church and your verse 10, using that ministry to serve other people in your church, the result of that in the words of verse 10 is you are a good steward of God's varied grace.

What is God's varied grace? What is that? The varied grace that Peter's talking about here are the hundreds, even thousands of expressions of God's grace that can be seen as people are all ministering to each other and receiving ministry from each other. That is God's multifaceted, multicolored grace flowing out of and flowing into, all of our lives when this is happening. Doesn't that sound good? Doesn't it sound amazing?

Well, notice it says the result of that is that you would be a good steward. That word good means doing what you are designed to do, doing what God saved you and what God made you to do. God gives you grace by giving you what you need for the ministry he saved you to do. Grace once again, carries with it a responsibility. God's grace and salvation brings the responsibility to live a godly life and gratitude for saving you and God's grace and spiritual gifts, brings with it the responsibility to do your ministry where you go to church.

This brings us all the way back to the concept of stewardship. You are a good steward of your family, a steward of your finances, a steward of your job, and finally *point #3*), remember, ***You Are a Steward of Your Local Church. You Are a Steward of Your Local Church.*** More specifically, you are a steward of the ministry taking place in your local church. It's a ministry that belongs to each and every one of us, a ministry that belongs to us because God gave us that ministry. It's a ministry we will give an account for not just me, not just the pastors, but all of us are the stewards of this church.

Remember that in the first century, steward was an administrator, a trustee of their master's property. That property became the steward's property, but never as an owner, always as a manager. The master then gave the steward what he was to manage and how he was to manage it and then held him accountable for his management.

Well, 2 Corinthians 5:19 says that "As Christians, we have been entrusted with the gospel and we have been entrusted with the spread of the gospel." Paul calls it the ministry of reconciliation that we've all been entrusted with that as Christians. That means our stewardship as Christians is

the gospel. As we've been seeing today, our stewardship is also our church, which includes our ministries, which are God's ministries that he has entrusted to each one of us.

We're all responsible for managing the ministry that God has given us to do in our church, which I said a couple of weeks ago includes giving financially to our church and now we see today includes the gospel and includes ministering to the spiritual needs of the people in our church. That's very general and all of that. What does that look like practically?

It's Matthew 28:18 to 20, King Jesus with all authority tells all of us to help people who don't know him come to know him in salvation, help people who are saved grow in their love for him, help people who are saved serve him in the ways that he saved them to serve him and to serve others, or actually serve him by serving others. Well, what if I'm doing a parachurch ministry? I might make some of you mad at me right now because I love you though, I promise. I hope I have enough trust chips with you to say what I'm about to say, because I know far too many people who give their very best volunteer energy to a parachurch and give their leftovers to their church, if they give anything to their church at all. Notice, I said volunteer energy. I'm not talking about working at a parachurch. That's your job, and because of that, it's a totally different category.

However, the local church is the only paradigm in the Bible when it comes to stewardship because the parachurch didn't exist yet, didn't exist in the Bible. That means our volunteer energy should be church first and church gets our best and parachurch after that, but too many treat the parachurch like a parasite of the local church. At its best, the parachurch is para, which is a Greek word, which means to come alongside, to be a blessing too.

That's why the Holy Spirit is called the paraclete who comes alongside and helps the parachurch to come alongside and be a blessing to the local church, not we fix what the local church breaks. We do what the local church forgets. We clean up their mess. We do what they don't want to do. No, no, that heart is not the heart of a steward who thinks God has gifted me with ministry to do at my church. I love this thing over here and I want to be involved in it. I can't let it compete with what God is doing at my church because that's the stewardship he's given me.

Now, as stewards, that means we're not owners of our church, right? That's why you'll almost never hear me talk about redeemer as my church or all of you as my people. If you heard me say that it was an accident that I try to correct immediately. Why? Because redeemer is Jesus' church or it's the church Jesus has entrusted to me as a steward and all of you are God's people entrusted to our care as pastors.

This is biblical Titus 1:7 uses the word steward to describe pastors. Automatically, that not only means that we are stewards here and not owners, even though yes, we oversee the ministries that go on here as people bring their ministry ideas to us, that's obviously part of our stewardship, but as stewards, God has told us exactly what he wants us to do in the Bible. Our job is to be faithful to that knowing that we will be held accountable to God for whether or not we were faithful to everything it tells pastors to do in the Bible.

Like Christians, we've been entrusted with the gospel and with our ministries. James 3:1 says that we will give an account for everything we teach. Hebrews 13:17 adds to that that we will give an account for every soul that God has entrusted to our care. Question, anyone want to be a pastor now? The point being that this is not my church. This is Jesus' church that he's entrusted not just to me, not just to the pastors, but to who? All of us. All of us and about his church at 950 North Greenfield, he will hold us all accountable in regard to the ministry he's entrusted to each of us to do in our church.

Let me ask you very gently and very kindly, but clearly, would the Lord call your ministry in your church faithful based on 1 Peter 4:10, would you be called a good steward? If you can say humbly and gratefully, "Yes, I think he would," then keep going, keep going, keep doing whatever it is that you're doing. Praise God for the ministry that he's given you that he's doing through you.

I talked to a lady last night at the back door for service. She is here every weekend. She's very frail. She's got oxygen attached to her and she is leaving and she's saying something I couldn't hear. I put my ear right up to her mouth. She said, "Thank you, pastor, for reminding me that I'm a steward of our church, even though I can't do much of anything anymore, I can still pray and that's what I do." I'm like, "Yes, that's exactly right. That's exactly right." Make your tribe increase. I was so grateful to hear that, but if you're going, you know what, that might not be me. Remember, that God forgives us when we confess our sin to him. 1 John 1:9, "And then after that, find a need that you can fill here and then just go fill it." Remember, also that no one is 100% faithful, but that's not even possible.

The goal is the overall direction of your life and ministry being one of faithfulness, even though every second of every single day is not going to be 100% faithful. Also remember that Jesus is the faithful steward and we are faithful in him and it is his faithfulness that births and drives and fuels our faithfulness. In other words, after remembering your need for the Savior and remembering the forgiveness of the Savior, remember that you're a steward of your church and a steward of the ministry, the Savior gave you to do in your church.

All of us doing this ministry that God saved us to do, everybody serving each other and being served by each other, that's part of what church is supposed to be like as we live in the shadow of the end of the world. I've tried hard each week to be crystal clear that stewardship is not about earning salvation, right? Are we all clear on that?

Stewardship is not about earning salvation. Stewardship is part of your new identity after you believe, after we trust in Jesus and Him alone to save us from the punishment, we deserve for all of our sins, after that we become stewards. Stewardship, then, is a domain of oversight. As we've been seeing those domains of oversight, God, family, work, church, finances, these we have been entrusted with, to manage them in ways that please God, ways that are clearly stated in his word.

That's why this whole series is what does God's word say about stewardship and then about that management according to his word, the Lord will evaluate all of us on one day. That means, that



like the expectation of obedience after salvation, so there is an expectation that we are productive, that we have fruit, that there are results in our lives that God accomplishes through us as we are faithful stewards of our lives.

Look at verse 11, look at verse 11. It says, "Whoever serves as one who serves," how? What does it say? By the strength that God supplies. What's the goal of that? In order that in everything, in all of our service, God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. See, God supplies the strength for ministry and when he does, two things, we are faithful to the stewardship that he's given us and he gets the glory for our stewardship. That is a win-win. That's the kind of win-win that I want to have.

I thank God for all the testimonies I've received about how God's used this series to change lives and families and finances and people at their jobs. I look forward to hearing how God's going to use today's message to change people's involvement at church. I know this has been a challenging series. I mean, you only get it for half an hour a week. I'm getting it all week, all week challenged and convicted and corrected and encouraged to live my life, reminded that my Savior is also my Lord and that I am his steward.

As I bring this message to a close and really the series to a close, I think the best way to do that is to hear from our master, the Lord Jesus one more time. He's the one that taught His people to think of ourselves as stewards by saying, Matthew 24:14, "The kingdom of God, the rule of God in a person's life after they're saved, 'will be like a man going on a journey who called his servants and entrusted to them his property to when he gave five talents to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability.

Then, he went away. He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them and he made five talents more. So also, he who had the two talents made two talents more, but he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money.'" Talents, remember, were money. A one talent is 15 to 20 years' worth of wages. We're talking about a lot of money here. "Now, after a long time, the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them, and he who had received the five talents came forward bringing five talents more saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents. Here, I have made five talents more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little. I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' And he also who had the two talents, came forward saying, 'Master, you delivered to me two talents. Here, I have made five talents more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little. I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'"

Now, don't you wish Jesus just stopped right there. He didn't. He goes on, verse 24, "He also who had received the one talent came forward saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed. I was afraid and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here, you have what is yours.' But his master answered Him, 'You wicked and slothful servant. You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed. Then, you ought to have invested my money with the bankers and at

my coming, I should have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the 10 talents, for to everyone who has, will more be given and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has, will be taken away and cast,' and then you're like, okay, I wish it would stop there. He adds this, 'And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'"

Listen, there's a lot to try to figure out from this story, a ton, but from my very simple mind, there is one guy I don't want to be like and there are two guys I do want to be like. If those two guys heard, well done, good and faithful servant, that's what I want to hear too. As stewards, as stewards of an incredible amount of blessing that all of us have been shown, let's all live our lives to hear, well done. Let's pray.

Jesus, we will never hear well done without you. We could never hear well done without you. Because of our sin, all we could ever be is a wicked and slothful servant, but because you were faithful and you faithfully obeyed your father and went to the cross and died for our sins, that allows us to even begin to be faithful stewards of all that's been entrusted to us. Thank you for your death, for our sins. Thank you for your Holy Spirit who drives us and motivates us and causes us to walk in your ways and be the stewards that you've entrusted these things to us to be. Thank you that there are thousands and thousands of ways to apply messages like these, and I couldn't possibly touch on them all, but thank you that you've already been working in my heart as I trust you're doing in all of our hearts, to mold us and shape us and realign us to be the stewards that you want us to be, with the stewardships that you've given each of us. Encourage us, help us, and use us as we seek to minister to the people that you have placed in our lives. Do it for their good. Do it for our good and do it for the glory of your name, please. Amen.