Use Your Gift for God’s Glory

Sunday, March 14th, 2021

As with any mission trip, there are more stories we could tell than what we have time for this morning. On behalf of our whole team, we want to thank you for your financial support and for your prayers. Thanks for giving the six of us an opportunity to use our gifts to serve others and to bring God glory.

None of us knew what to expect when we got on that plane a week ago. And yet, I’ve been on enough trips in the past to know that God was going to do something powerful through our team. While I love the opportunity to be hands-on, one of the things that excites me most about a trip like this is the joy seeing my teammates use their gifts.

In the time remaining, I want to point you to two verses in the book of 1 Peter as we consider this topic of spiritual gifts. As you are turning to 1 Peter 4, let me begin by acknowledging that the topic of spiritual gifts can carry with it a bit of mystery and sometimes even a bit of controversy. But I don’t think this is a topic that we as Christians ought to shy away from.

There are a number of places in Scripture that speak about spiritual gifts, but one of my favorites is here in 1 Peter 4:10-11. In this part of his letter, the Apostle Peter—the same Peter we have been reading about in Acts—is writing to a group of Christians who were increasingly experiencing cultural pressure against their faith. In this section, Peter is reminding these believers that they are living in the era marking the final stages of God’s redemptive plan, the time in between the resurrection of Jesus and his promised return.

In 1 Peter 4:10-11 the Apostle writes,

“Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen” (1 Peter 4:10–11, NIV).

As you have had the chance to hear about how our group was able to use our gifts to serve others, I want us to consider together what this Scripture has to say about how all of us who are in Christ are to use our gifts. Traveling to another location and repairing storm-damaged homes is of course not a requirement for using our spiritual gifts. Wherever you are and wherever God calls you to go, if you are a follower of Jesus, you have been gifted by God to serve and to bring him glory.

I want to make four quick observations from this text, and with each observation I want to issue a challenge to all of us who desire to become fully devoted followers of Jesus together.

First, notice that **God has graciously given every Christian at least one spiritual gift**. Whether you have been walking with the Lord for 60 years or for 6 days, if you are in Christ, know that God has given you at least one spiritual gift through the Holy Spirit who lives in you. Other passages in Scripture teach this same truth, and in some cases we’re given a list of examples of the kinds of gifts the Spirit gives. Yet, when we compare these lists, we see that no two catalogs are the same.

How do you think God has gifted you? You may have a variety of skills, talents, or abilities under your belt, but I’m asking a different question. If you’re a Christian, and since the Holy Spirit lives in you, how has God gifted you for the sake of others? My first challenge is that we take the time to identify the gifts that God has given us. One of the best ways to do this is by asking someone who knows you to help you identify your gift. This would be a great thing to discuss in Life Group or with a friend that knows you well.

This leads us to a second observation from this text. Peter tells us that **God’s grace-gifts are various in kind but are uniform in purpose**. Here Peter does not give us a list of examples, rather he provides us with two broad categories. In verse 11 he identifies those who have been given speaking gifts. Likely this would cover those who regularly teach from Scripture as part of their serving. If you’re someone who teaches the Bible, leads a Life Group or other bible discussion, or likes to write about biblical truth, you likely have gifts in this area.

But it would be easy for us to assume that those with gifts of speech have gifts that are more spiritual or are more important than those who do not. That would be a major misunderstanding of Scripture.

When Peter points us to the other category, gifts of service, there’s no indication that either flavor of gifting is more or less significant. Instead, it’s clear that no matter what gift we have, all of our gifts share the exact purpose: to serve others.

So my second challenge to you this morning is this: as you identify the gifts that God has given you, don’t ever compare yourself to someone else and either think too highly of yourself or think yourself to be an inferior member of the body. I was reminded a number of times this past week that even as a pastor with years of ministry experience, my teammates have gifts that God has given them that I have never had. If any of us tried to serve beyond our God-given capacity, we would surely fail. But serving together, God pools our gifts so that together we might serve others.

But knowing that we are each given a gift and that our gifts are various is not enough. Third, **every Christian is expected to faithfully steward the gifts they have been given**. Let me emphasize that word *expected*. As fully devoted followers of Jesus we are *expected* to faithfully steward whatever our Lord and Master has entrusted to us. What this means is that once we’ve identified how God has gifted us, it is our responsibility to put that grace-gift into action.

Let me say this another way. There will be times when we will ask for folks to sign up to serve in some capacity. And when those opportunities come, please respond according to your gifting. And yet, if you are waiting to be asked, you’re doing it wrong. Our staff, pastors, and elders will work to help plug you in where you can use your gifts, but each one of us needs to take an active role in advocating for the use of our gifts.

And please, don’t buy into the lie that is sometimes expressed as “I can’t do much.” On the one hand, this is true of all of us. Apart from Christ we can do nothing. But notice in verse 11 that whether we are speaking or serving, whether we are old or young, new in the faith or seasoned, we’re told to use our gifts “with the strength God provides.” This means that yes, there are some areas of ministry that aren’t right for us for a variety of reasons. But until the Lord takes you home, you still have at least one spiritual gift, and the Holy Spirit has promised to empower you to use that gift for the sake of others and for God’s glory.

And that leads us to our final observation. **When we use our gifts to serve others, God gets all the glory**. Notice in verse 11, if you’re reading from the NIV, that there’s a *so that* halfway through the verse. Peter says that in whatever way God has gifted you, you’re to use your gift “*so that* in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.”

Why does God receive the glory when we use our gifts? Notice at the end of that phrase in verse 11 that Peter says that “in all things God may be praised *through Jesus Christ*.” Here’s why this is significant. Before we came to faith, we were self-centered, self-glorifying, rebellious sinners. Before Christ, we were hell-bent on serving ourselves and ruling our own kingdoms. But God in his mercy chose to rescue us from our sins and from hell itself by sending his Son Jesus to die in our place. As our substitute, Christ redeemed us and reconciled us to God.

And so, what can bring God more glory than rescued sinners and former rebels now committed to using their grace-gifts out of love for God and love for others. Folks, my encouragement to you today is to take the very gifts God has given you and place them on the altar as an act of worship. Don’t use your gifts in order to gain God’s favor or to earn praise from others. Use them in praise of God, knowing that the only reason you have been shown such grace is not because of anything you have done, but because of everything Christ has done on your behalf.

Our week serving others in Lake Charles and putting our gifts into practice went by too fast. But the good news is that none of us needs to travel or to wait for the next natural disaster to utilize the spiritual gifts that God has given us. I do hope that some of you will prayerfully consider joining the next team to serve with Crisis Response if and when God gives us the opportunity. But I hope that *all* of us who are in Christ will make the commitment to use our gifts to serve others and to glorify God through Jesus Christ.

“To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen” (1 Peter 4:11, NIV).