

27. Learning to Use Our Spiritual Gifts to Serve One Another

In our last topic, we saw that one of the ways that we show the love of Christ is by learning to serve one another as a slave. Today, we will again focus on service, but we will focus on the fact that the Holy Spirit is the One who has given us the spiritual gifts so we can serve one another effectively. Every Christian has been given one or more spiritual gifts. The purpose of those gifts is to serve one another and not to serve ourselves. We want to show and teach our physical and spiritual children how to use their spiritual gifts to serve one another in love.

1 Peter 4:10-11 says, “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” In these verses, we see several key things that we want to help our children understand. We see that every single Christian has received at least one spiritual gift. That gift or gifts were received at the moment of salvation but they are only developed and used effectively as we learn to serve the Lord in His strength and not through our own efforts.

First, we see that each Christian has received a gift. 1 Corinthians 12:7 says, “But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all.” This verse points out that each Christian has received at least one spiritual gift. This free gift was given to each Christian at the moment of salvation. No Christian is left out as every Christian has been given one or more spiritual gifts to serve other Christians. However, the purpose of that gift is not just for the benefit or profit of the person that has received the gift. Instead, we read that we are given a spiritual gift or gifts for the profit of all Christians and not just for ourselves.

Second, we see that we are to use our spiritual gift or gifts to minister to others. Galatians 5:13 says, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” Here, we see that every Christian has been given liberty and that liberty makes it possible for every Christian to serve one another in love. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that at the moment of salvation they were set free from their slavery to sin. They are now free to serve one another. They have become a part of a body and they are to serve the other parts of the body (other Christians) in love.

Third, we see that we are to remember that we are to be good stewards of the manifold grace of God. A steward is a person that is responsible for taking care of something that belongs to someone else. Here, we see that we are to be good stewards of the spiritual gifts that the Lord has placed in our lives. We are to use those gifts to carry out the various ministries that the Lord has given us to serve Him and His body the church. Each Christian has been given a unique ability to serve the body of Christ in a way that no other person in that body can minister in exactly the same way. We recognize that we each have a unique spiritual SHAPE:

S – We have all been given one or more spiritual gifts at the moment of salvation.

H – We have all been given a heart or passion for a particular kind of ministry.

A – We have all been give different abilities to serve the Lord.

P – We all have a different personality through which the Lord works.

E – We have all had different experiences in our lives that make our ministry unique.

Since we are stewards of these resources and they all belong to God, we are to manage these resources in such a way that we serve the church and bring glory to God.

Fourth, we see that some gifts are speaking gifts. 1 Peter 4:11 says, “If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God...” The word “oracles” is used four times in the New Testament. In the New Testament, this word is used in each passage to speak about the very words of God. Acts 7:38 says, “This is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers, the one who received the living oracles to give to us.” In this verse, we see that it speaks about Moses receiving the Ten Commandments. Romans 3:2 says, “Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God.” In this verse, we see that one of the benefits of the Jews was the fact that they received the Old Testament. Hebrews 5:12 says, “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.” In this passage, the writer of Hebrews makes it clear that the Hebrews (Jews) needed the first principles of the Word of God taught to them again.

Here, in 1 Peter, we see that if we have speaking gifts in order to use those gifts properly we are to share the Word of God with others and not our own opinions or convictions. It is important to help our children understand that the thoughts and words of God are much more powerful than their thoughts or words. Isaiah 55:8-9 says, “‘For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,’ says the Lord. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.’” If we answer questions with the Word of God, instead of our own thoughts or opinions, we will give Biblical answers to questions. God says later in Isaiah 55:11 that His Word will not return to Him void but it will accomplish what He pleases. Those who have speaking gifts will accomplish what the Lord pleases if they will share the Word of God in love rather than their own opinions or convictions.

Fifth, we see that some gifts are serving gifts. The second phrase of 1 Peter 4:11 says, “If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies.” The word “minister” or “serve” is used thirty-seven times in the New Testament and speaks of serving others. In Matthew 20:25-28, Christ said, “But Jesus called them to Himself and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave--just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.’” As we serve, we are to follow the example of Christ and serve rather than desire to be served by others.

Christ shared this same thought the night before He was crucified. Christ said to His disciples in John 13:13-15 after He had washed their feet, “You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.” Christ taught the disciples by washing their feet. In the same way, we teach others most effectively by

the example that we provide even more than by the words that we speak.

However, we also see another key lesson about our service in 1 Peter 4:11. We are to serve with the ability that God supplies. This means that we choose to serve in the power of the Holy Spirit instead of trying to serve the Lord in our own strength. John 15:5 tells us what we will accomplish spiritually if we try to serve in our own strength. That verse says, “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” We accomplish nothing in our own human strength.

In contrast, Paul said in Philippians 4:13, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Paul described a ministry that happened in the strength that the Lord supplies when he wrote in 2 Timothy 1:16-18, “The Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain; but when he arrived in Rome, he sought me out very zealously and found me. The Lord grant to him that he may find mercy from the Lord in that Day--and you know very well how many ways he ministered to me at Ephesus.” Here, we see that Onesiphorus was continually looking for ways to serve other Christians in the strength that the Lord supplies.

1 Peter 4:11 concludes by saying, “That in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” In this verse, we see that if we use our spiritual gifts in a proper way, we will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ. If we have speaking gifts and exercise them by sharing the Word of God in love instead of sharing our own opinions or convictions, the Word will produce what God desires in the lives of those who hear it. If we have serving gifts and exercise them by serving in the strength that the Lord supplies instead of our own strength, the Lord will use our service to accomplish His purposes.

Even more important we see that we will bring glory to God. 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” Here, we see that our desire should be to do everything that we do to bring glory to God. That will happen both in our lives and in the lives of our physical and spiritual children if our concern is to share His Word in love and serve in the strength that He supplies. The Lord has called us to be good stewards of the gifts that He has given us. The Lord will work through your life as you seek to bring glory to Him. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your physical and spiritual children learn to use their spiritual gifts to serve one another so that the things that they say and do will all bring glory to God and minister to others.