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Giving Away Your Gifts

Servival Kit, Part 3

1 Peter 4:10

Discussion Guide

Main Idea:

Being a Christian means being a good steward of what you have been given, and God has given us so much! Our gifts, blessings, and even our very lives are given to us by God for the purpose of honoring and glorifying Him. As we are thinking about how to live in the Last Days, we need to have this perspective of serving Christ so that we can effectively serve other people and not our own interests. Unless we are reminded to take the focus off of ourselves, we will fail to care for others the way we should. We need to be prodded and encouraged to serve and meet the needs of others so that God is glorified in our actions.

Discussion Points:

Meeting together weekly as believers to worship Christ and encourage one another brings some great benefits to Christians. The community and fellowship can help us to press on and continue to battle sin and honor God daily. Unfortunately, however, too much of the time, Christians can become complacent when seeing other Christians serving. They might think they have nothing they can offer or that they are unneeded, but that is not the truth. Peter, in 1 Peter 4:10, says very clearly that each one of us has received a gift to use.

- What kind of gift is Peter talking about here?
- What is your responsibility for the gifts you have received?
- Do other people know about the grace God has given to you?
- Do other people see how you are using your gifts?

No Christian is exempt from service.

- How would you encourage a new Christian to get involved in serving?
- How would you encourage an older in the faith, stagnant Christian to serve?
- How would you communicate the importance of serving others or serving the church?

Discussion Guide cont.

Finding a place to serve can be difficult because none of us chose what we would be good at.

- How can you find where God is calling you serve?
- Are you willing to humble yourself and submit to whatever God has called you to?
- What does the focus of your heart need to be to serve in whatever capacity you serve in?

Because we aren't always gifted in the ways we wish we were, we can have the tendency to look at others and envy what they are doing. Instead, we need to look at ourselves and be good stewards of what God has given us specifically.

- How can you keep from envying the gifts of others?
- How can you encourage other people to walk by the Spirit and use their gifts properly?
- How do you know if you are serving in the right area to use your gifts most effectively?

Serving can sometimes seem monotonous. It can be exhausting because it means putting forth your efforts to benefit someone else.

- Why is your relationship with Christ essential to your ability to serve?
- How does the Holy Spirit spur you on to serve?
- How can you help encourage others to live lives of service because of what Christ has done?

Gospel Connection:

The Christian life is marked with love. It is filled with service. We are called to follow the example of our Savior who gave up everything he had in order to serve us. Jesus, though he was God and needed nothing, chose to make himself nothing so that he could give us everything. We were hostile toward him, but he showed us his love and drew us to himself. Displaying this kind of love is what Christians are supposed to do. It is radical and otherworldly. It points straight to the One, True God who loved us so much that even death was not a deterrent for Him. When we follow the example of Jesus, we should lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters and serve them before we think of ourselves and of our own comfort. We need to look to Jesus for our example and rely on the help of the Holy Spirit to give us strength.

Discussion Guide cont.

Practical Implications:

- Think:** What burdens has God put on your heart for other people? Are you currently doing something about the passions that God has given you? In what ways can you seek to honor and glorify God by serving?
- Pray:** Thank God for His marvelous grace and mercy for you. Ask Him to continue to change your heart to follow fully after Him. Ask Him to bring to your mind ways that you can love others. Ask Him to show you where you fit into the picture and where you are needed.
- Do:** Find a place in the church to serve. Pray that God would help you honor Him with your life. Look for opportunities to serve and encourage others. If you don't know where to start, ask someone where they might need help.

Giving Away Your Gifts

Servival Kit, Part 3

1 Peter 4:10

Stuart Briscoe tells the story of an astronaut bound for the moon who was interviewed by a reporter about all the details – especially regarding the potential hazards of traveling to the moon and back.

The reporter asked, “How will you eventually leave the moon, once your mission is over – how does the module take off to return to earth?” The astronaut answered, “We will fire off several rockets that power the engine of our small module.” The reporter asked, “Well, what if the engine won’t fire up and it doesn’t work?” The astronaut said matter-of-factly, “Well, we’re stuck on the moon.”

The reporter pressed, “How long will your life support and oxygen systems last?” The astronaut answered, “Six hours.”

The reporter said, “May I ask you what you would do for the last six hours of your life?” And the astronaut laughed and said, “That’s easy – I’ll work on the engine!”

That’s great advice. What would you do if you knew life on planet earth was going to end as we know it? What would you do if you only had 6 hours left before Jesus comes?

Hopefully, you’ll keep working on the engine – doing the things you ought to be doing.

The Apostle Peter has reminded the church of the imminent return of Christ for His church.

And in our last session, we pointed out four pieces of advice that Peter provides the believer that included, don’t panic; remain calm. Stay focused, keep praying, continue demonstrating forgiving love for one another, and, while you’re at it, don’t abandon the human race; stay available and hospitable.

Here’s how he puts it. ⁷ *The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment* – that is, remain calm; *and sober spirit* – that is, stay focused, *for the purpose of prayer.* ⁸ *Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another,*

because love covers a multitude of sins – in other words, don’t abandon each other, but demonstrate forgiving love toward each other. And while you’re at it, stay open and available – ⁹ *Be hospitable to one another without complaint. (1 Peter 4:7-9)*

Now the rest of the world would advise you to prep for the end of your life as you know it by thinking less about other people around you and more about your own life and needs.

But Peter is going to tell us instead that this is the perfect time to become more visible and involved than ever in the lives of other people – especially in the life of the church.

Now notice *verse 10: As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*

In other words, as the end draws near, keep working on the engine. In fact, start exercising the gifts and abilities God has given you.

To stick with the analogy, now is the time to work with the other astronauts on your team. Stay at it; you have a God-given role to play; as the end draws near, stay the course. Let’s unpack Peter’s inspired advice here in verse 10 . . . and let me put it into three principled statements.

1. First, none of us have been left out of the picture.

Notice how the text opens – *As each one has received a gift.* In fact, in the original language, *each one* stands at the beginning of the text for emphasis.

Nobody has been left out. There is absolutely no Christian who cannot contribute to the body of Christ – or to put it another way – every one of us is needed in the body of Christ.¹

No matter what role you play, whether it's up front or out back, onstage or backstage, visible or, for the most part, invisible, God has gifted you for service in the body of Christ.

There is no such thing as a useless member of the Body of Christ. If the church were to take a family portrait, no believer, in the mind of Christ, would be left out of the picture.

Secondly,

2. None of us decided what we'd be good at.

Notice the wording in the text – *As each one has received a special gift . . .*

Paul uses the aorist tense here to give the sense of an historical bestowal of the gift upon the believer. We are not given the precise time or circumstances.ⁱⁱ

It could have been a part of God's wiring as He put you together in the womb with temperament and creativity and natural abilities and disabilities that He would now use to advance his church through your skill-set.

Or it could have been bestowed at the moment of your conversion when the Spirit of God indwelt you as a new creature in Christ – at that moment deposited into your heart and mind and life certain abilities and skills you would later discover.

The truth is, we are not specifically told when the bestowal takes place. As I've studied this subject more over the years, I have found it interesting that we are never given in scripture a clear distinction between a natural ability or skill and a spiritual gift.ⁱⁱⁱ

In fact, if you go back into the Old Testament, you discover that skill sets – or what we would call career decisions and abilities – are also considered a part of God's design.

In the Old Testament, there is a direct relationship between skill and the bestowal of God.

[A man by the name of Hiram] *was filled with wisdom and understanding and skill for doing any work in bronze. (1 Kings 7:14)*

[God] *has filled them (Bezalel and Oholiab) with skill to perform every work of an engraver and of a designer and of an embroiderer. (Exodus 35:35)*

A chapter later, Moses addresses *Every skillful person in whom the Lord has put skill and understanding to know how to perform all the work in the construction of the sanctuary. (Exodus 36:1)*

From the engraver, to the metal worker, to the landscaper, to the construction crew – all of them are viewed as skilled by means of the endowment of God.

Paul puts it to the New Testament believer in the same broad terminology when he asks, rather matter-of-factly, *What do you have that you did not receive? (1 Corinthians 4:7)*

He sort of challenges us, and any sense of false pride – with this question: “What do any of us have that God didn't give us?!”

And the answer to this rhetorical question is obvious – nothing! We owe everything – including our skills and creative abilities and spiritual propensities – to God.

Now the Bible doesn't tell us how training and preparation play a role in the exercising of the gifts – and they have one; we're told to train ourselves and memorize scripture and work hard at whatever our hand finds to do.

The Lord Jesus trained His disciples, by example, how to endure suffering, how to handle a crowd, or how to teach biblical truths.^{iv}

God crafted the life and early years of the Apostle Paul to suit his future ministry. Paul would be taken through rabbinical training in the law; he would be endowed with a tremendous intellectual capacity for debate and defense; and he would even have a Roman passport as a citizen – none of that was a coincidence.^v

And nothing about you is a coincidence either. In fact, according to scripture, God was developing you and preparing you and even crafting you before the day you were even born.

In one of his stunning Psalms, David takes us on a pre-delivery room tour of the womb, via Divine inspiration. *For You formed my inward*

parts, You wove me in my mother's womb. (Psalm 139:13)

David pictures God at a weaver's shuttle – choosing the thread and the colors and weaving away at us.

He goes on to proclaim, *I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. (Psalm 139:14)* **Fearfully** – that is: amazingly. And **wonderfully** – that is: uniquely made. You are amazingly and uniquely *made!*

How unique are you? Just look at your fingerprint; you're the only one on the planet with it. Or your DNA, which is uniquely yours.

From your fingerprint, to the color of your eyes and size of your nose and ears – all are designer-made. I understand our ears and noses continue growing into old age – which is really exciting news – but from your ears and nose to the color of your hair – or the lack of hair – it's all God's fault . . . I mean, it's all God's design.

David writes further in **verse 15: My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth.**

The Hebrew term here referring to our **frame** is literally referring to bony substance – or skeleton. In other words, God was involved in the development of your skeletal structure. Every ability and every disability woven into your life by the hand of God.

Notice further in **verse 15b – and skillfully wrought** (intricately woven/embroidered) **in the depths of the earth. The depths of the earth** is a metaphor for the secret recesses of the womb. The words, **skillfully wrought** can be translated, intricately embroidered.

David delivers the stunning truth that, in the womb, you are a living creature under the hand of a designer God

- Thousands of years before sonograms would prove it by showing us the beating heart of a baby at 9 weeks,
- Thousands of years before we would see a 3-D image of an unborn baby sucking his thumb or responding to sounds or even painful stimuli,

- And thousands of years before medical technology would catch up to inspired scripture and reveal that a pre-born baby is emitting brain waves nearly identical to adult brain waves before the baby is even 3 months old in the womb.

David effectively says, “You, O God, were busy at crafting us from the very moment when sperm and egg met and that cell first divided.”

Obviously, this Psalm has huge implications on the debate in our culture relative to abortion, but scripture isn't allowed in the courtrooms to bear testimony. Still, this Psalm is an inspiration to the church to view and speak of and speak for the preborn as living human beings.

David writes it this way – before your birth, God was at work in your life.

And now fast-forward the tape – 10 years, 30 years, 60 years – now as a Christian, you discover something else of which you might not be aware.

Peter informs us that God has actually bestowed upon us individually our abilities and gifts and talents, and we have the unique privilege and responsibility to develop and exercise and expand and advance them for His glory.

And Peter refers to that bestowal in the terminology of God's grace.

Again, here in **1 Peter 4:10 – As each one has received a special gift . . .**

If you're a Christian by faith in Jesus Christ, Peter takes it for granted that you have at least one gift – and probably more.^{vi} And God is the giver of those gifts.

The word Peter uses for **gift** is the Greek word, *charisma*. It's derived from the same root word as “grace” – *charis*.

The *charisma* can properly be understood as grace gifts from God to us. One New Testament scholar defined this word as “a favor from God bestowed upon us.”^{vii}

It is God's design in your life and mind and body and heart in equipping you with skills and abilities whereby you can bless His church and impact the world and bring Him glory.

You've been given a charisma. The word charisma gives us the word charismatic. And since every Christian is the recipient of a charisma, according to Peter, every Christian – get this – happens to be a charismatic.

That sounds strange, doesn't it? But you happen to be a charismatic – in the true biblical sense of the word. In this auditorium today, a charismatic pastor is going to preach to several thousand charismatics.

This happens to be a charismatic gathering. Won't that start the rumors flying – Colonial has gone charismatic! Well, in a biblical way, I hope so.

In other words, I hope and pray that each of us will demonstrate and exercise and use and develop and expand the use of our charisma – our God-bestowed, grace-gifting for the benefit of the body.

I mean, wouldn't it be great if we had a waiting list for 2nd grade Sunday school teachers? Wouldn't it be great if altos in the choir had a waiting list because the choir loft wasn't big enough? Wouldn't it be great if guys were standing in line to usher or park cars, or serve as deacons or set up chairs or counsel the hurting or mop the floors or help in the kitchen or Café or sound booth or fix the meals or join the prayer team and evangelism team and missions team and on and on? Wouldn't that be something really unusual?

Listen, in the mind of God that would be normal! And that's another one of Peter's points here.

Let's review:

1. **None of us have been left out of the picture.**
2. **None of us decided what we'd be good at.**

Now, thirdly,

3. **None of us get to keep our gifts to ourselves.**

As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

We're not owners of our gifts; we are stewards. A steward, in Peter's day, was a household servant who had been given the responsibility of managing stuff that didn't belong to him.

You don't own your talent or ability to sing or speak or lead or teach or write or serve in that unique capacity; God owns all of that and He designed you and endowed you to put it into practice.

Peter is essentially saying, "Don't let your gift go to waste!"^{viii}

If you can believe it, there was a first century pastor who was considering doing just that – burying his talents and his gifts. On two occasions, in fact – in both letters to Timothy – the Apostle Paul exhorted him to exercise his gifts.

Paul wrote to him in *1 Timothy 4:14*, saying, *Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you.* The word *neglect* here refers to not caring for something. A spiritual gift is to be cared for and exercised, like a muscle.^{ix}

And what is really telling to me is that Paul uses a verb tense that informs us that Timothy is already neglecting his gift. He is already shying away from using the gift God had given him – no doubt related to pastoring and teaching.

We're not told why, or what that looked like. It might have been discouragement over ministering to people, it might have been the rigors of preaching, it might have been depression over Paul's imprisonment or discouragement with a lack of fruit in his ministry in Ephesus or fearfulness in some regard – we're not specifically told.

That is encouraging because we can all now identify with him in facing the challenges and burdens and difficulties of exercising our own ministry gifts for the glory of Christ.

We're not told why Timothy was sliding, but what we are told is that Paul has to come along and begin prodding Timothy to stop sliding in

the wrong direction and take action in the right direction.

Then again, in Paul's next letter to Timothy he writes, *For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you. (2 Timothy 1:6)*

This pictures someone placing dry tinder on a glowing coal and then blowing on it to create a flame.^x

You could translate this phrase here, "stir into flame the gift of God which is in you." Keep in mind here that Timothy is not being told to create the flame or design the flame of that gift – God does that – but it was his responsibility to fan the flame into a living, glowing fire – to kindle it afresh through self-denying, self-sacrificing service to the body of Christ for the glory of God.^{xi}

Peter prods us into action too by reminding us that we have been given the incredible privilege of stewarding the many-faceted grace of God on His behalf for the good of the Body of Christ.

Think about this: since God is the giver of the skills and abilities and gifts that you have – since you've received them from God – they are never simply yours.^{xii} They're not yours. They belong to Him, who has loaned them to us to manage on His behalf.

They're not yours, they're His. In fact, you are not yours either – you belong to your Designer, Creator God who has loaned you your life to manage on His behalf.

So where do you start in this process of dispensing the grace of God through a variety of gifts and abilities for the benefit of the Body of Christ and for the glory of God?

Well, ask yourself some key questions like

- Where can I do the most good?

- Where do I already have experience or talent?
- Where am I willing to develop and learn?
- What area of serving immediately interests me?
- What burden am I willing to accept in self-denying service?

There is no opportunity for service without opposition in serving; there is no such thing as blessings without burdens. After all, you will be serving people, right? If it weren't for people, serving Christ would be terrific, wouldn't it?

Listen, beloved, using your gifts is not a walk in the park!

Are you willing to accept the burden and the chore and the difficulty that comes attached to the blessing of serving Christ and stirring up the flame of your gifts?

Two more questions:

- What changes am I willing to make to my schedule in order to serve?
- How can I bless the church and serve the Body in a way that glorifies God?

Begin by praying along with a martyred missionary who wrote in his journal before eventually dying while attempting to plant a church among the Auca Indians a generation ago. Jim Elliott wrote:

Consume my life, my God, for it is Thine;
I seek not a long life, but a full one, like you,
Lord Jesus;
God I pray that You would light these idle sticks
of my life,
And may I burn for Thee.^{xiii}

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 01/21/2018 by Stephen Davey.

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- i Adapted from Juan Sanchez, 1 Peter (The Good Book Company, 2016), p. 152
- ii D. Edmond Hiebert, 1 Peter (BMH Books, 1992), p. 275
- iii Daniel M. Doriani, 1 Peter (P & R Publishing, 2014), p. 183
- iv Adapted from Doriani, p. 183
- v Ibid
- vi Adapted from Charles R. Swindoll, Insights on James, 1 & 2 Peter (Zondervan, 2010), p. 222
- vii Hiebert, p. 275
- viii Charles R. Swindoll, Insights on 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus (Zondervan, 2010), p. 90
- ix John Phillips, Exploring The Pastoral Epistles (Kregel, 2004), p. 132
- x Swindoll, Insights on Timothy, Titus, p. 155
- xi Adapted from C.A. Trentham, Studies in Timothy (Convention Press, 1959), p. 92
- xii Doriani, p. 173
- xiii Adapted from Tony Merida, Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus (B&H Academic, 2013), p. 143