

STEWARDS OF GOD'S GRACE, PART 3

1 Peter 4:10

If you're just joining us, we are in a short study on spiritual gifts. 1 Peter 4:10 is our theme verse and it says, "As each one has received a spiritual gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of God's manifold grace." This word **manifold** is where we've taken this rainbow or full color spectrum idea from. It's a word that means multifaceted or even sometimes, multicolored or technicolor. The big idea that I want to stick in our minds is that every believer has been graced with certain spiritual gift or combination of gifts to fulfill a variety of ministries that carry out God's will. We each have a different color, you could say, and when we're exercising our gifts, we're adding our color to the overall ministry rainbow.

Now, the majority of people like rainbows. Many people are fascinated by rainbows. The first person to see a rainbow always points it out to other people saying, "Look! A rainbow!" It never fails. There's something fascinating about their size and beauty of them and the promise of God in them. But can you imagine if a rainbow was only made up of one color? Or two colors? That would be weird and seem unnatural for us. And when it comes to spiritual gifts, it would be weird if we all had the same gifts – the same color. Thank God we don't all have the same color. Church would be pretty boring and ineffective. What we're going to talk about today is that God uses this diversity of gifts to bring unity to the body of Christ.

First, I want to do a little recap of where we've been so far:

1. **Spiritual gifts are the manifested power of the Holy Spirit working through a believer for the purpose of carrying out a divine assignment.** (1 Cor. 12:7)
When someone is exercising their gift, it's the power of God working through them to do a divinely appointed assignment that the believer cannot do on their own.
2. **Spiritual gifts are a special privilege of living in the present age.** (Eph. 4:7, 8, 11; 1 Cor. 13:8-13)
When you look to the past or even to the future, having spiritual gifts are an incredible privilege of being a believer now.
3. **Spiritual gifts are given at the moment of salvation.** (Eph. 1:13-14; 1 Cor. 12:12-13)
We could sum that up by saying they're given at Spirit baptism or the moment we believe. Since they are the gifts of the Spirit, you only receive your gifts once you have the Spirit of God.
4. **Spiritual gifts are for equipping each other for the work of ministry.** (Eph. 4:11-12; 1 Cor. 14:26)
They are not primarily for our own benefit but the benefit of others. For building up others in the Lord, equipping and maturity. We should think, "Through the exercising of my gifts someone else is being equipped for ministry and through the exercising of their gifts, I am equipped."

The fifth and new observation for today I want to make is that...

5. **God is sovereign over the distribution of spiritual gifts.** (1 Cor. 12:11; 18, 24; Heb. 2:4)
Basically, He decides who gets this gift and that gift. We don't decide. We read about it in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, "Now there are **varieties of gifts**, but the same Spirit. And there are **varieties**

of ministries, and the same Lord. There are **varieties of effects**, but the same **God who works all things in all persons**. For to one is the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, **distributing to each one individually just as He wills.**” If you look at verse 18 you’ll notice it says, “**But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired.**” Verse 24 says, “**God has composed the body.**”

So it’s clear from this that God is the One who is working out the distribution of all these varieties of gifts and combinations of gifts in His people to create variety of ministries with a variety of effects of those ministries. God does not want all of us to be the same color. That would be pretty boring and not very effective. I had a friend telling me the other at the Berean Conference how he has a friend who has a huge heart for a particular ministry and apparently thinks everybody should. He thinks everybody should be the same color. But can you imagine the ministries that would be overlooked if we all just had that one color? Well, God is wiser than that and paints with many colors at the same time. He’s got a big paintbrush that can handle many colors at once. There’s a reason for that. God knows us thoroughly and knows exactly what gifts to give us that will bring Him the most glory and accomplish His will of building up the body of Christ.

Many of you who know what your spiritual gifting is will really enjoy this point that God is sovereign because you know that God’s gifts for you has been given in such a way that He clearly gets all the glory for it. You know that you did not choose your gifting and you never would have. He has revealed His power in your weakness (2 Cor. 12:9). I say that based on Scripture and personal experience and the experience of many others. From experience, I have heard many who are gifted as a pastor-teachers who have similar stories. Their least favorite subject in school was speech class and dreaded getting up in front of people to speak. But as a young believer, I kept getting opportunities to speak and share my testimony. And I was willing to do that because even though I was a nervous wreck, I loved the Lord and wanted to share God’s Word with people. And over the course of several years, I began to sense that this is what the Lord had for me to do. I share this so you don’t write off things you’re naturally afraid to do or hesitant to do and so that you’re patient. It can take a long time.

But there’s two main applications from this observation that I think we need to point out:

❖ **Sovereignty kills pride.**

The fact that God is sovereign over our gifts kills any **pride** we might have in thinking that we are doing ministry in our own power or maybe that because our gifts are more noticeable and visible than the next guy’s, that somehow we’re more spiritual. It doesn’t work that way. We can’t take credit for our gifts. It’s Him who decides and gives us the ability to do ministry. Apart from Him, we can do nothing (Jn. 15:5). Besides that, just the fact that they’re called gifts, tells us something. Gifts can’t be earned and they aren’t deserved. We didn’t earn or deserve our gifts. The moment a gift is earned it becomes a paycheck. But gifts are considered part of God’s grace to us and grace is always a free. There’s nothing we did to deserve them.

It’s just like eternal life. Several times the Bible says eternal life is a free gift, like Romans 6:23, “**For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**” Because of our sins, we deserve death, but through faith in God’s free gift – the gift of His Son

Jesus Christ, as an offering for our sin on the cross – we can have eternal life with Him. We can't do anything to ever make up or pay for our sins, but He did it all and offers eternal life freely to all who will simply believe. That gospel message kills our pride and keeps us from thinking we would ever deserve heaven by being good enough. And grace in spiritual gifts kills our pride from thinking that we could ever do ministry for God apart from Him.

❖ **Sovereignty produces contentment.**

Paul said we should desire the greater gifts, the gifts that edify the most like teaching today (12:27-31; 14:1). But since we don't decide what our gifts are, we should be content with the gifts that God has given us. Many young men have wanted to be a great preacher like Charles Spurgeon or great evangelist like Billy Graham, but many have had to realize that this isn't necessarily how God has wired them. And you know what? That's ok. There's no need to lament over it or get depressed over the fact that we don't have the gifts we want. Why? Because God knows us intimately and knows exactly what gifts we need that will benefit the body of Christ the most and carry out His perfect will. We can rest in that. God never messes up or gets it wrong. His distribution of gifts is perfect. You can know that you have the exact gifts God wants you to have for His good and pleasing and perfect will. And part of His will in distributing gifts is to promote two things:

6. Spiritual gifts are given to promote diversity and unity at the same time. (1 Cor. 12:12-26)

❖ **Gifts promote diversity. (12:14-20)**

Paul gives the analogy of the body to explain this in verses 12-20 – “For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot says, ‘Because I am not a hand, I am not part of the body,’ it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. And if the ear says, ‘Because I am an eye, I am not part of the body,’ it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. **If they were all one member, where would the body be?** But now there are many members, but one body.” Paul's point here is that just like our human bodies require different parts to function and to actually be a body, so it is with the church body. **If we all had the same gifts and were all eyes, where would the body be?** The body wouldn't exist if we were all eyes. If there are few members missing, we are severely handicapped to say the least. Thinking along the lines of our rainbow analogy, if we were all one color, where would the rainbow be? This is why Paul says in verses 29-30, “All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they? All do not have gifts of healing, do they? All do not speak in tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they?” The answer to these that is expected is obviously no. We're not the same and it's that way for a reason: to promote unity and interdependence.

Diversity is important because it teaches us **unity**.

❖ **Gifts promote unity. (12:20-26)**

Chapter 12:21-27, “And the eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you’; or again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’ On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are **necessary**; and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, so that there may be **no division** in the body, but that the members may have the **same care for one another**. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the

members rejoice with it. Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it." In the body of Christ, unity doesn't come from all being the same. **Unity is the result of diversity.** If only our culture would understand this! The cry of our culture is weird. It wants *independence* but at the same time crying for *similarity*. The cry of this passage is *interdependence through diversity*. The body actually can't function or have unity unless there is diversity. It doesn't mean one member is superior to the other. It means we need the diversity to bring us together and care for each other.

➤ **Every member is necessary and important.**

Even the most unrecognized or unpresentable member (i.e. the inner organs you don't see) have abundant honor. And if that member suffers, we all suffer with them. It's like when you stub your toe – your whole body is affected by that! Do you have a less desirable gift? Don't feel inferior. You're necessary and important. Do you have a very desirable gift? Don't feel superior. You're necessary too but you didn't choose your gift and you can't do it alone.

I like what Andy Woods said: this teaches us that there's no such thing as a "Lone Ranger" Christian. If anyone ever says they don't need to go to church because well, they already have Jesus and their Bible, that statement is proof that they need to go to church. If anyone says, I don't need a Bible teacher because I've got the Holy Spirit and He teaches me everything, that's proof you need a Bible teacher that the Spirit has gifted others to teach you. Even teachers need other Spirit-gifted teachers. The Holy Spirit won't let any believer be self-sufficient. He doesn't give any one person every gift so that they don't need others. He spreads them out so that they need others. For each member to thrive, it must be connected to the body – **otherwise you're just like that creepy character on the Addam's Family they called "Thing" – the severed hand that crawled around and lived in a box. A Christian who isn't connected to the body is a severed member living in an isolation box. They're isolated and limited, not carrying out the purpose God designed them for.**

For a not-so-creepy illustration, just think of any sports team. **No quarterback, not even the GOAT (greatest of all time) Tom Brady or Patrick Mahomes, would be any good without their offensive line** giving them the time to sit in the pocket and throw the ball with accuracy. The quarterback isn't a lineman and the lineman isn't a quarterback, but you can't win without each other which means you must care for one another. A believer who is not connected to the body is like a quarterback trying to win on his own without the rest of the team. It doesn't make any sense. But we want to be connected a growing and equipped because that one of the ways we show love for each other.

That's our last observation today: Love.

7. Spiritual gifts are to be exercised in love. (1 Cor. 12:25; 13:1-3)

In the Corinthian church, they were zealous for spiritual gifts and had a great emphasis on gifts. The only trouble was, some of the believers were using their gifts for self-admiration instead of using them to serve and edify others out of love. So in 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, Paul wrote these infamous lines about the more excellent way of love: **"If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing."** Basically, you can be the most spiritual person with every answer to every question, the greatest theologian ever – but without love, it's worthless. The gifts of the Spirit must be coupled with the fruit of the Spirit like love.

And Paul mentions speaking or preaching. There's a lot of preachers out there who have a lot of knowledge and faith and are preaching truth but you know what they sound like when they don't do it in love? They sound like someone just obnoxiously hammering away on the top-hat of the drum set. It's obnoxious. They know a lot of truth but they don't live it. They're not speaking the truth in love. Love-filled preaching and teaching or even love-filled writing (because not only do we need to learn how to control our tongue these days – we need to learn how to control our thumbs!) – love-filled communication with the tongue or thumb **has a certain tone to it**. It's not arrogant or jealous or argumentative. A lot of preachers think that by spitting more and pounding on the pulpit, they'll be more effective. They're actually less-effective. **Love has a tone** and is effective. Like Proverbs 16:21 says, “Sweetness of speech increases understanding.” Whatever your gift is, exercise it in love.

One of the ways Paul demonstrates the importance of love over gifts and the need for love in the exercising of our gifts is by revealing the future of gifts in 13:8 – “**Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. For we know in part and prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known. But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.**” Now we're not going to take the time today to do some full explanation of this passage. I just want to pull out the main point being made in relation to gifts – **Gifts are a temporary thing and love is not**. Prized revelatory gifts like prophecy, tongues and knowledge... they've either been done away and will be done away. When? When we're face to face with God.

Whenever this idea of being “face to face” is used biblically, it reminds us of being in the presence of God. On Mt. Sinai, Moses was face to face with God. In some of the final words of Revelation, looking forward to a fully restored and perfect state of things on the New Heaven and New Earth, **the highlight is that we will see His face** (22:4). We will be face to face with God in fully redeemed glory. There won't be a need prophecy or all these different tongues (languages) or even for teaching each other. Jeremiah prophesied “**they will not teach again, each his neighbor saying know the Lord, for they all will know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them**” (Jer. 31:34). When we are with Him face to face, we will all know Him fully. It is then that we won't need faith or hope. Faith will be sight. Hope will be reality. But love will always remain. So if you're going to do anything, do it in everlasting love. **Let all that you do be done in love (1 Cor. 16:14).**

If I could sum up what chapter 13 teaches us about love it is that **love is sacrificial action, but not without affection**. Love sometimes has to sacrificially act, despite our feelings. Those who are loving will be patient when they don't want to be. They will be kind to those who aren't kind back, etc. Sometimes you have to ignore the feelings and do it anyway – but that's not all it is. Love is more than sacrificial action. He said you can act sacrificially by giving all you have to the poor and even dying as a martyr (that's sacrificial action right?) but if it's for self-recognition and there's no genuine affection in it for people, it's worthless. **Love will act in affection.**

So let's meditate this week on how our gifts are sovereignly distributed by God to promote diversity and unity, and **a good steward will honor God's sovereign distribution by exercising their gifts in love**. I

think that's a pretty good application. One of the ways that we discover our gifts is by getting involved. At Chadron Berean we desire to see every believer equipped and using their gifts and talents to serve in ministry so I've put that list of available areas to serve in in your bulletins again for you to consider.

- Worship team (more background singers/instruments)
- Tech team/sound
- Multimedia (Right now all we do is Facebook. Instagram?)
- 1st Impressions (interior and exterior design)
- Hospitality team (greeters/ushers)
- Operation Christmas Child
- Child-care/nursery
- AWANA
- Fellowship Coordinators (meal and event planning)
- Lawn care/landscaping
- Maintenance (plumbing and electrical)
- Bible study/small group leader (I'd love to see more of these in home studies)
- Youth group
- Visitation
- Other:_____

(we're open to any new ministries that God places on the hearts of His people. If you've got an idea, let me know or the board know. You can present the idea to us.)