

STEWARDS OF GOD'S GRACE, PART 4

1 Peter 4:10

If you are just joining us this morning, you are joining us as we finish up a short series on spiritual gifts, this being the last message in that series. Next week I want to spend studying another one of the psalms and then the week after that hopefully begin working our way through the Gospel of Mark. But our theme verse for our current study is 1 Peter 4:10, which says, "As each one has received a spiritual gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." So we all have spiritual gifts that come from God's manifold grace. A spiritual gift being the manifestation of the Holy Spirit working through a believer to accomplish a divine assignment. And the word **manifold** there is a word that means **multifaceted** or sometimes even **multicolored**. So we've been looking at the ministry of the Church as multicolored, using the rainbow as an analogy. God has given us a variety of spiritual gifts and combinations of gifts to create different ministries and effects of those ministries. It's been a fun way to look at it I think, in that we all have a different color, and when we exercise our gifts, we're adding our color to add to the rainbow and we want every color represented in it, we want everyone involved, using their gifts the best they know how.

Today, what we're going to do first is to define the specific gifts mentioned in Scripture and after that we'll look at one more observation on what to do with them. There are four main passages in the Bible that mention specific spiritual gifts and not all the passages are the same which means none of the lists are completely exhaustive. Those four chapters though are Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 (12-14), Ephesians 4:7-12 and 1 Peter 4:9-11.

I. WHAT ARE THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS?

1. Apostle (Eph. 4:11; 1 Cor. 12:28)

An apostle might have many gifts, but being an apostle is described as a gift in itself. It's a gift of a combination of gifts. The gift of apostle is considered by 1 Corinthians 12:28 to be the greatest gift because it edified the most. 1 Cor. 12:28 says, "God has appointed in the church, **first apostles**, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues." Being an apostle came with a lot of powerful gifts and authority and really is the greatest gift. Only someone who was meek and humbled by God could handle this incredible gift. A requirement for being an apostle too, was seeing the resurrected Christ, which means these guys who are calling themselves apostles today are either ignorant, arrogant or deceitful – or all three – using the title of apostle to generate a following and probably just take people's money. It's amazing how many self-proclaimed apostles today talk a lot about health and wealth – "*give to my ministry and God will bless you financially or heal you.*" Basically, don't listen to them.

Both apostle and prophet are what we would consider **foundational gifts**. Ephesians 2:19 says the church has, "been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets." Through them, the Church got its start – the foundation was laid. And you only need to lay a foundation once, right? They laid the foundation. They planted churches, wrote the Word of God, and handed down the ministry to us like Jude 1:3 says, the ministry has been once for all handed down to the saints.

2. Prophet/prophecy (Eph. 4:11; 1 Cor. 12:28)

This is a **revelatory gift**. To prophesy is to speak forth the word of God. Prophecy would have been the ability to receive and give **direct revelation from God**. It was very different from what we call teaching and preaching today because it was **fresh revelation**. When we preach and teach today, we are working from a revelation that has already been revealed and written. We work from the completed revelation of the Bible but in the early apostolic days of the church, they didn't have the NT so you can see how this gift was needed to edify believers. And that was the purpose of prophecy – it wasn't just foretelling the future. 1 Corinthians 14:3 says, “one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation.” It is was to correct, teach and comfort. And since preachers and teachers are speaking from God's written revelation, we should expect the preaching and teaching of the Word to have the same effect.

3. **Evangelist/evangelism (Eph. 4:11)**

The word evangelism comes from two words that mean “good messenger”. So an evangelist would be someone who shares the good message of Christ. They bring the good news that Jesus died for our sins, to people who haven't heard it yet. And we're all called to be evangelists seeking to share Christ with those who need Him (ministers of reconciliation), but like Ephesians says, “He gave some as evangelists.” I think some folks are gifted in such a way that they excel in this area. I think you see this gift in some men like Billy Graham or Bill Bright (4 Spiritual Law and Jesus film) in recent years. They were gifted evangelists God used to bring many to faith in Christ. Again, though, you can't use this as an excuse for not sharing your faith. We're all to be evangelists.

4. **Teaching/word of knowledge/word of wisdom (1 Cor. 12:8, 28)**

Teaching is third on Paul's list behind apostle and prophet and ranked highly because it edifies so much. Remember, **the greater the edification of the body, the greater the gift is considered**. What I did was I combined the teaching, word of wisdom and word of knowledge (even though word of wisdom or word of knowledge may have been more prophetic). The reason I did this is because if you read 1 Cor. 12:8-10, that's a pretty comprehensive list of spiritual gifts. And in that list, you don't see the words teaching or prophecy, but I don't think it's because he left these important gifts out. Instead, what I think he has done in that passage is he has actually further defined teaching into two categories – word of knowledge and word of wisdom. They are both speaking gifts, as noted by the “**word of**” part, but apparently have subtle differences, otherwise they wouldn't be mentioned separately.

So if someone has the gift of knowledge, you think of someone who is more scholarly and systematic in their teaching approach – like theologians or these guys who write giant commentaries – and in a battle between truth and lies, we need knowledge (2 Pet. 1:5). But we also need wisdom to apply it. Maybe that's where someone with the word of wisdom comes in – they're skillful giving application of knowledge. I'm giving a little of my own thoughts here but I think a good pastor-teacher (Eph 4:11) would have both a balance between knowledge and wisdom. Kind of like our vision of having deep roots in God's Word, but we don't just want a bunch of knowledge. I want us to apply it and bear fruit.

5. **Tongues (Languages) (1 Cor. 12:10)**

I don't want to spend too much time on tongues since we talked about it a couple weeks ago. Tongues was the ability to speak a language(s) without having previously learned it. So they might speak it, but they didn't understand it. They needed an interpreter or they just needed to be speaking to the right people who knew the language, like in Acts 2 at Pentecost. People were there from all

over the world and heard the apostles speaking their language. It is what we could call a **sign gift** – a temporary gift given during the foundational stages of the Church and was a sign for everyone that God was with the gospel message and messengers. Think of it this way: it was a sign in Acts 2 to everyone that God was taking the message of salvation to every tongue and nation; it was a sign in Acts 8 to the Jews in Judea that those half-breed Jews, the Samaritans, had been accepted by God and received the Holy Spirit; it was a sign in Acts 10 that the Gentiles, who had no Jewish lineage, had been accepted by God as well and had received the Holy Spirit.

6. **Healing & Miracles (1 Cor. 12:10-11)**

Like tongues, healing and effecting of miracles were **sign gifts** given during the foundational, apostolic period of the Church. Healing obviously bringing restored physical health and miracles, a number of things, maybe like Paul raising a man from the dead. When there is a big transition in God's program like going from Old Covenant of the Law to New Covenant of Grace, one of the things you'll notice is He authenticates it with supernatural and miraculous signs. He makes sure people know it's Him – like at the Exodus. This is exactly what Hebrews 2:3-4 says, "For if the word spoken through angels [the Law] proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation [the gospel of grace]? After it was at first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will." So sign gifts authenticated the message during this transitory period from the Old Covenant to the New and once they served their purpose during that apostolic age, they began to fade and ceased to be gifts that are operated consistently.

And we don't say that or conclude that lightly. We can say that based on three evidences: **Scriptural evidence, the evidence of historical church writings and just the genuine evidence today.** In Scripture, Paul mentioned certain gifts like prophecy and tongues would cease in 1 Cor. 13:8. I don't think it's an accident he referenced those two when he mentioned gifts being temporal in nature. Later Scriptural books: Paul left a guy named Trophimus sick at Miletus (2 Tim. 4:20), be unable to heal him. He told Timothy to take some medicinal wine for his stomach and frequent illnesses, not call on someone with the gift of healing (1 Tim. 5:23). John prayed for the church in III John to be in good health physically (v.2). James 5 talks about praying for healing. And I think and know that that's the way **healing and miraculous things come today through prayer.** I think God answers prayers for healing all the time but He's also clearly not healing everyone. We pray for healing according to His will, and when it's not His will, we need to be okay with that also and trust Him.

7. **Faith (1 Cor. 12:9)**

All believers have faith for salvation but **the gift of faith is for service.** Some believers just have an extraordinary ability to trust God in difficult circumstances. I think of missionaries who trust God to guide and protect them and provide for them in their dangerous travels or some folks just have extraordinary faith in their trials. But if you don't feel like you have the gift of faith, and you want to increase your faith, my recommendation is that you read the Word of God. That'll do it.

8. **Service (Rom. 12: 7)**

Someone with the gift for service will enjoy doing the things that are practical. They like anything they can get their hands and do physically. This word reminds us of a waiter or waitress, meaning to wait on others – doing practical things that need done for them. It might be the same as helps.

9. Helps (1 Cor. 12:28)

Someone with the gift of helps likes to help people. They want to give aid to people. When you think of someone with this gift, just think of someone who likes to assist others or work behind the scenes for someone else. These folks seem like they'd be pretty flexible and open to various tasks, ready to jump in and help anyone who needs it at the moment or for a time being.

10. Giving (Rom. 12:8)

Everyone is called to give, but there are some who have an extraordinary ability to give and are keenly aware financial or resourceful needs (not just money). Some folks don't have a lot of money but they give other things. They're always looking for certain ministries to give towards that need it. But they are good with money in particular. They see their money as the Lord's money, they steward His money wisely, and they have a lot of faith in God's ability to provide. Those who have this gift are told to give with liberality.

11. Hospitality (1 Peter 4:9-11)

People who are hospitable are those who enjoy making others feel welcome, safe, and comfortable. This is where we get the word for hospital, which means 'love of strangers'. They make strangers feel welcome and loved. It's why we call our greeter team the hospitality team. We want people to feel welcome, safe and comfortable in our church. Hospitality is an important elder quality.

12. Mercy (Rom. 12:8)

When you see the word mercy, just think of **compassion**. People with this gift love to show compassion to people who are hurting or suffering or distressed, be it emotionally, physically or spiritually. They want to comfort others in their affliction. It's almost like they have radars for it – they can sense when people are hurting. One of the guys who mentored me says his wife has this gift and it's like she has antennas that sense when people need compassion, and he doesn't have those antennas so it goes right over his head. In Romans, Paul says those who show mercy should do it cheerfully or happily.

13. Administration/Leadership (1 Cor. 12:28; Rom. 12:8)

Many have separated administration and leadership, but after studying the words and the way they're used, I couldn't make that distinction. Both words I think mean to guide, to lead, to manage. It's analogous to piloting or steering a ship. You're the navigator of the ship. They have the map in their head on where the ship's going and set goals to get there. They would be the visionaries who have the big picture in mind. Those with this gift, in leadership or not, have strong organizational skills and make good managers. Paul says to use this gift with diligence.

14. Exhortation (Rom. 12:8)

To exhort is to **encourage**. Some people are incredibly encouraging and as God's people living in a fallen world, we need these people! We need encouragers. I was blessed by two people this week who went out of their way to encourage me and I appreciated it so much! I think of Barnabas, whose name means 'son of encouragement' and I think he lived up to his name. It was Barnabas who wasn't willing to give up on Mark when Paul was. Later Paul realized how useful Mark was because Barnabas gave him a second chance.

15. Distinguishing of spirits (1 Cor. 12:10)

This could be called the gift of discernment (the gift that everybody thinks they have!). The more we study God's Word and the longer we walk with God, the more discernment all of us should have between truth and error, but some have a unique ability to detect error. This has been described as a protective gift. It reminds me of Revelation 2:2 where Jesus said about them, "You put to test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you have found them to be false." People with this gift do that. They can tell when Satan or his henchmen are disguising themselves as angels of light (2 Cor. 11). They see right through the popular religious junk out there and expose it.

So that's a quick, basic overview of the gifts listed in the Bible. I hope going through them helps you consider and understand maybe what gifts God has given you. But I don't want to leave us with just a bunch of knowledge so I have reserved one final observation we need to make:

II. **WHAT SHOULD WE DO WITH OUR GIFTS?**

For that we need to turn back to Matthew 25:14-30, typically referred to as the Parable of the Talents: In this parable He is answering the question of what the kingdom of heaven will be like in reference to His 2nd Coming: **14:** "For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey." So one slave receives 5 talents, one, 2, and one, 1. And a talent was a convenient measure of weight around 75 pounds and could be in silver or gold or copper. It doesn't really matter which one it was. What does matter is that it was a substantial amount of money and here, represents more than money. The talent is not limited to money. Jesus isn't concerned about how much money you have to give Him when He comes back. **The talent signifies that we have been entrusted with a lot. We are stewards of many of His things: spiritual gifts, abilities, the gospel, different resources.** Like these slaves, who have differing amounts and combination of these things God wants us to use for spiritual service, building the kingdom and Church. Let see what these slaves did:

16: "Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents. In the same manner the one who had received the two talents gained two more. But he who received the one talent went away, and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money." So in between His master going on the journey and returning, two were productive and one hid his talent in the ground. It says, **19** the master comes back: "Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, 'Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'" "Also the one who had received the two talents came up and said, 'Master, you entrusted two talents to me. See, I have gained two more talents.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'" Let's pause again: So the first two slaves put to use what they were entrusted with and were productive, and thus, were commended by the master. They were told to enter into the joy of their master, which included greater responsibility. This is probably a reference to being able to serve Him in the Millennial Kingdom age when Christ returns and possibly even the New Heaven and New Earth age. This is eternal stuff we're dealing with. It's teaching us that how we live now effects our eternal rewards. While we wait on His return, this parable says we should be working for Him, and He will reward us. And we all should be serving Him out of love for Him. He rewarded these two.

24: “And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed. And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours.’ Basically, this servant made excuses. It says fear paralyzed him. He was afraid to fail, or maybe in the context of the Great Tribulation Jesus is speaking of, he was afraid of being persecuted for his faith so he never did anything. But fear is not a good excuse. The master didn’t accept that excuse. **26:** “But his master answered and said to him, ‘You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no seed. Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest. Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.’ “For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” This slave was cast away from the master and into a place that is described in words that only elsewhere is used to refer to hell. And we need to think about this. Parables like this are meant to stir us out of spiritual laziness. This is a serious warning. I don’t think it means a believer can lose his salvation. Scripture is clear we are saved by faith in what Christ has done and not by our own doing. But Scripture is also clear though that works should be there as evidence of salvation. If someone believes, it should be evident in their life eventually or somehow. Do we really believe if we don’t live it? That’s the challenge here.

I’ve been wrestling with the identity of this guy all week and what he believed and I just don’t think he was saved. I think he was what we would call a God-fearer or deist or maybe even a theist, but not a born again Christian. It’s like believes God exists, but never really did anything with it. He knows there is a God, but ignores God. Kind of reminds us of James 2 – the demons believe in God and shudder, but they don’t listen to God. I think this guy has a love problem. Jesus said if you love Me, you will obey Me. The point of the parable for our study is that...

❖ **Gifts should be discovered and exercised and developed – not neglected.**

Just like Paul told Timothy: Do not neglect the gift of God within you (1 Tim. 4:14). He also told timid Timothy to “Kindle it afresh” (2 Tim. 1:6). Stoke that fire again and get it going. You don’t need to compare your gifts with the next guy. Just be faithful with what God has given you, the best you know how. Be a good steward and build the Church and glorify God.