**Stewarding Spiritual Gifts**: What are Spiritual Gifts, and how do we use them to Serve Others in the Church? Parenting, Stewardship SS, 10/15/2023

**1st Key Passage: 1Pe 4:1-3, 7-11** *Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,****2****so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God.****3****For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry.****4****…*

***7****The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.****8****Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.****9****Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.****10As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: 11whoever speaks****, as one who speaks oracles of God;* ***whoever serves****, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

1. **Note that *“to live for the will of God” (v2)* involves “each” Christian “using” his or her “gift” *“to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace”.***

A significant aspect of doing God’s will is the use of our gift within the church for serving one another. We refuse to live “for human passions” as we once did. Now and henceforth, we purpose to live for the will of God. A key aspect of his will is that we serve the saints in our local communion by employing our gift.

1. **Note that EACH member of the household of faith is to use his or her gift.**

*As* ***each*** *has received a gift, use it to serve one another.* Each individual member has a contribution to make. The church needs every member. Each member has a stewardship of service. Just as no follower of Christ should live as “a lone Ranger”, so no believer should live as a spectator. One of the basic ways of discerning God’s will for your life is asking and answering the question, ***“How can I help?”***

1. **Note also that our service, outside of our work and family, should focus primarily (not exclusively) on the brothers and sisters of our local church.**  *As each has received a gift, use it to serve* ***one another****.* Peter was referring to the brethren of the local assembly. *So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone,* ***and especially to those who are of the household of faith*** *(Gal. 6:10).*
2. **Note that the “gift” each church member is to employ has been “RECEIVED”.** *As each* ***has received a gift****, use it to serve one another.*
3. The term “gift” indicates that we are the recipients of something good, without payment, a present, from someone that loves us. God, the Fount of every blessing, willingly and cheerfully has given each of his children a present, a gift of love.
4. We should thank him. We should recognize the love behind the gift.
5. We should be humble before God and others. *“What do you have that you did not receive” (1Co 4:7)?*
6. **Note that our having “received” a gift makes each of us a STEWARD of that gift.** *“As each has received a gift, so employ it as a GOOD STEWARD…”*
7. One definition of the noun “steward” is, *“one who manages or looks after the property of another”.* This idea underlies the **Parable of the Talents** (Matt 25:14-30).
8. A man going on a journey entrusted differing sums of his money to three servants. He gave a given amount to one; he gave another twice as much; he gave another five times as much.
9. Each servant was responsible to take the master’s money and increase it by employing it in business or investment.
10. The master returned after a long time away and required his servants to give an account of what they had done with his money.
11. We are not our own. We are stewards of Christ. He owns us. He has given us a gift. He expects us to use the stewardship he has given for the advance of his cause.
12. **Note that we are to be *“good stewards of God’s varied grace”.*** *As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of* ***God's varied grace****.*
13. God’s multi-faceted grace expresses itself both in giving us a gift and in our using our gift for the benefit of others. We receive the kindness of our Savior. Others receive his kindness as well. It is all undeserved. It is all rich and free.
14. There is no place for self-pity, jealousy, or jockeying for a larger profile. We should not wish that we had someone else’s gift. We are the recipients of grace! One of our chief motivations is to display that grace, however “hidden” our service may be.
15. **Note that Peter speaks of only two gifts, speaking and serving. (He does not use the phrase, “spiritual gift” but simply “gift”.)** *As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:****11whoever speaks****, as one who speaks oracles of God;* ***whoever serves****, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies.*
16. This is a helpful way of providing broad categories for all spiritual gifts. **Speaking** encompasses gifts identified more specifically elsewhere: 1) prophecy, teaching, and exhorting (Rom. 12:6-8); 2) Apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherd-teachers (listed not as gifts but as offices, Eph. 4:11); and 3) the utterance of wisdom, the utterance of knowledge, speaking in tongues, the interpretation of tongues, prophecy (1Co 12, 14).
17. **Serving** likewise encompasses gifts identified more specifically elsewhere: 1) contributing (money), leading, acting in mercy (Rom. 12); 2) the gifts of faith, healing, and miracles (1Co 12). In the immediate context of 1Pe 4, hospitality (v9).
18. **Q: What is a practical benefit of this passage simply identifying two kinds of gifts?** A: It can be useful in identifying our gift. Some of us are more apt in “doing”, some, speaking. If it is difficult to ascertain our specific gifting, we can identify with a broader category.
19. **Note that those who SPEAK are to do so as *“one who speaks oracles of God”.***

***Acts 7:38*** *This is the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him at Mount Sinai, and with our fathers. He received* ***living oracles*** *to give to us.*

***Romans 3:1****Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? 2 Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with* ***the oracles of God****.*

***Hebrews 5:12*** *For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of* ***the oracles of God****. You need milk, not solid food…*

1. Those who are stewards of a speaking “gift” are stewards of the word of God. They are the recipients of the divine message. Whether their platform is public or private, they are heralds of the King. That is true for women as well as men. When Priscilla spoke privately to the gifted Apollos, she was speaking the word of God.
2. Those given a gift for speaking need to be deliberate and careful to give to others, not the word of man but the word of God. The gift is not in human insight nor in human eloquence but in God’s wisdom, grace, and power.
3. **Note that those who “SERVE” are to do so *“by the strength that God supplies”.***
4. Gifts of service (hospitality, showing mercy to the elderly, changing light bulbs) may seem more natural than supernatural. Stewards of such gifts, however, are urged to seek and employ *“the strength that God supplies”.*
5. Sometimes, a given act of service may be very complex (for example, how to show mercy to the chronically irresponsible) or involve interpersonal tensions (Acts 6, distribution to various widows), or differences of opinion (Acts 15, Paul & Barnabas re John Mark, who perhaps would have had an administrative role). God’s servants need *“the strength that God supplies”.*
6. **The stated goal of our stewardship, whether speaking or serving, is the glory of God.** *…in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*
7. The objective is not recognition for self or getting to do what we want.
8. Many acts, in fact the vast majority of acts, both serving and speaking, happen in private. No one sees but God and maybe one or two others. Our primary motivation is to honor God THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.
9. Christ is the one who turned us from serving self to serving God. Christ is the one whose grace is sufficient. He equips. He empowers. He comes alongside by his Spirit.

**2nd Key Passage: Romans 12:3-13** *For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.****4For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, 5so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. 6Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them****: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith;****7****if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching;****8****the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.*

***9****Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.****10****Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.****11****Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.****12****Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.****13****Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.*

1. **Note that this passage begins with a summons to engage in sober self-assessment.** *For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.*
2. Because of the influence of remaining pride, we are susceptible to “thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought to think”. We can have an inflated view of ourselves. We can think we ought to have a more important role. We can think we deserve such.
3. By inference, we should recognize that it is also possible to think less of oneself than one should think. Examples: Moses, Exodus 3-4; Gideon; Timothy
4. We are to think of ourselves soberly (in touch with reality), according to sound judgment.
5. Our assessment of our function in the local body, and the gift(s) related to that function, have a relationship with *“the measure of faith that God has assigned” (v3).* The immediate context refers to the grace God gave to Paul (v3) and the saints (v6). This varied grace (1Pe 4:10) bestows gifts according to God’s sovereign will. They are a manifestation of “the measure of faith that God has assigned”. Some have more faith; some have less. The measure of faith influences the exercise of the gift. Both our faith and gift are from the Lord. Thus, there is no room for pride.
6. **Before identifying various gifts, the apostle makes an important statement about the body and the relationship of individual members.** *For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function,****5****so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.*
7. Like 1Co 12, this passage stresses that the church is one, unified organism, one body made up of many members.
8. *“The members do not all have the same function.”* Every member has a function. Not every member has the same function. We have differing roles in the body. One bible teacher said that our first concern should not be with our gift(s) per se but with taking on some function. “How can I help?” is one of life’s most basic questions to answer. The particular function(s) we have reflect upon the body we are in, the needs and opportunities of that body, our abilities, our degree of development and availability, etc. For example, a man serving as a deacon in one congregation may be an elder in another congregation.
9. Paul reiterates that we are ONE BODY, and “individually members one of another”. We belong to each other. We are organically united. We must identify ourselves corporately, not just individually.
10. **The directive here given is that each is use their gift in serving others.** *Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us,* ***let us use them****.* Each member must do his or her “job”. Each member has received a divine present. The gift must be unwrapped and employed. Again, the idea of stewardship is present.
11. **The list of gifts given here is larger than in 1Pe 4.** The passage identifies seven gifts. Three are speaking gifts; four are serving gifts. *If prophecy, in proportion to our faith;****7****if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching;****8****the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.*
12. **Note that the last three gifts mentioned also have a modifying phrase.** *…the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.* Those gifted to contribute should do IN GENEROSITY. Those gifted to lead should do so WITH ZEAL. Those gifted in doing acts of mercy should do so WITH CHEERFULNESS. The Lord is always interested in what is going on in our HEARTS. It’s not simply what we do but also the attitude in which we do it (and the degree to which we do it [in generosity]).
13. **Note that this passage, like 1Pe 4 and 1Co 12-**14 closely connects the use of gifts with the call to LOVE. *Let love be genuine (v9). Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins (1Pe 4:8).* [Compare 1Co 13]

**3rd Key Passage: Ephesians 4:1-16** *I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called,****2****with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,****3****eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.****4****There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—****5****one Lord, one faith, one baptism,****6****one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.****7****But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.****8****Therefore it says,*

*“When he ascended on high he led a host of captives,****and he gave gifts to men.”***

***9****(In saying, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth?****10****He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.)****11And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,******13****until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,****14****so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.****15****Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,****16****from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.*

**1Co 12:1-31** *Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed.****2****You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led.****3****Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says “Jesus is accursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit.*

***4****Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit;****5****and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord;****6****and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.****7****To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.****8****For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit,****9****to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit,****10****to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.****11****All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.*

***12****For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.****13****For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.*

***14****For the body does not consist of one member but of many.****15****If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body.****16****And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body.****17****If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell?****18****But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose.****19****If all were a single member, where would the body be?****20****As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.*

***21****The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.”****22****On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable,****23****and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty,****24****which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it,****25****that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.****26****If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.*

***27****Now you are the body of Christ a+nd individually members of it.****28****And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues.****29****Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles?****30****Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?****31****But earnestly desire the higher gifts.*

*And I will show you a still more excellent way* (Chapter 13, the love chapter)*.*

**1Co 14:1-5** *Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy.****2****For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit.****3****On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.****4****The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies builds up the church.****5****Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be built up.*