

Life Together...



CALLED INTO
THE COMMUNITY
OF FAITH

Spiritual Gifts and Their Exercise 1 Peter 4:10-11 (NKJV)

Christians and non-Christians alike are familiar with the word “trust.” One of the definitions of the verb *trust* is to commit or place into one’s care or keeping. Whenever our next-door neighbor is going out of town, she brings a small box of silver over to our house. Those knives, forks, and spoons are apparently very precious to her and Mrs. Miles *trusts* us with them. We become temporary stewards of that which belongs to her. As a noun *trust* can refer to something committed or entrusted to one to be used or cared for in the interest of another. Money, intended for the support of one’s minor child, may be placed in “trust” with a bank until such time as the child reaches a certain age. Today, as we study spiritual gifts the idea I want to keep before you is this: spiritual gifts are a sacred trust *to* the believer *for* the body.

The four central passages in the New Testament dealing with spiritual gifts are found in **Romans 12 (3-8)**, **I Corinthians 12 (1-11, 27-31)**, **Ephesians 4 (11-12)**, and **I Peter 4 (9-11)**. In this sermon we want to work our way, phrase by phrase, through **I Peter 4:10** and **11**.

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.

*As each one has received **a gift**.* The Greek word for “gift” is CHARISMA. Because the root of this word is CHARIS, the Greek word for “grace”, these gifts are properly understood as gifts of grace. God is the Donor who, out of His kindness, gives them freely. God’s design is that, through these gifts, His tender mercies flow to the community of His people (see **Rom. 12:6; I Cor. 1:7; 12:4, 9, 28, 30, 31; I Tim. 4:14; II Tim. 1:6**). We normally refer to these gifts of grace as “spiritual gifts.”

So what is a spiritual gift? A spiritual gift is a special ability or capacity, given by the Holy Spirit, to every believer at his or her conversion, to be used to minister to others, for the building up of the body of Christ. One commentator uses the word “endowment” in his discussion of the subject. A spiritual gift, then, is God’s endowment (capacity, a power, ability, or fitness) upon the believer by the operation of the Holy Spirit. An endowment may be natural. Michael Jordan, for example, was endowed with amazing natural athletic ability – size, speed, quickness, vision, coordination, strength, endurance, and so on. Michelangelo was endowed with rare artistic talent. The same man who painted the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel is the same man who carved the statue of David out of a block of marble. Beethoven was endowed with almost unbelievable musical skill. He gave his first public performance as a pianist when he was eight years old and completed his Ninth Symphony in 1823 by which time he was totally deaf. For

sure, each developed his skills but that does not change the fact that he had some extraordinary raw material to work with. We recognize that natural endowments are gifts of God and that one may fulfill his gift through his talent (Ex. 31:2-11). For example, a man may be a skilled carpenter and may exercise his gift of service or helps through that particular skill.

But the endowment spoken of in this verse is a **spiritual** capacity or power - being provided gratuitously *by* God and being designed for the benefit of souls and the glory *of* God. Now, that we might not grope aimlessly in an attempt to figure out what Peter and Paul have in mind, the Bible tells us what these gifts are. Bible scholars do not agree on whether or not the New Testament supplies an exhaustive list of gifts. These, however, are the ones God has seen fit to cite in His Word so we content ourselves with them without speculation.

Look down at **I Peter 4:11**, *Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God; whoever serves, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies.* Here the Scripture seems to distinguish, not two specific gifts, but two major categories of gifts – speaking and serving. Taking **Ephesians 4** into account the gifts of which the Bible speaks may be conveniently divided up into three major categories. First, there are the **support gifts** - those that under gird the entire ministry of the Church. This group includes **apostles** and **prophets (Eph. 4:11)**. Of these James Boice says, “*apostles* and *prophets* must be taken in their most technical sense. Therefore, *apostles* refers to those witnesses who were specifically commissioned by Christ to establish the church on a proper base, and *prophets* refers to those who received God’s message (like prophets of old) and recorded it in the pages of what we call the New Testament. Neither of these gifts exists today. We no longer have apostles and prophets in that sense” (*Foundations of the Christian*

Faith, p. 611). [Note: Based upon verses like **I Corinthians 12:28**, **I Corinthians 14:1-3**, and **Romans 16:7** some suggest that the gift of *apostle* (“sent ones”) is still present in ministries such as pioneer missionaries and church planters and that the gift of *prophet* is still present in the ministry of the preaching of the Word of God] God has given the church the gift of **evangelist (Eph. 4:11)**. Evangelism is the ability to sense opportunities to share Christ, to effectively communicate the Good News of Jesus to unbelievers, and to lead them to receive Him as He is offered in the Gospel. **Pastors**, or shepherds, are gifts of God to His Church (**Eph. 4:11**). Pastoring is the ability to care for, protect, and lead the flock of God. **Teaching (Eph. 4:11)** is also a support gift. The teacher possesses the ability to take the Bible and, from it, to instruct and train in the things pertaining to God.

The second group is composed of **speaking gifts**. Here we find **encouragement** or exhortation (**Rom. 12:8**). The man or woman with this gift has the extraordinary ability to move God's people to apply and act on Biblical principles, especially when they are discouraged or wavering in their faith. The gift of **wisdom (I Cor. 12:8)** is “the ability to make skillful and practical application of [God’s] truth to life situations” (MacArthur, *I Corinthians*, p.298) and to share those insights in a simple, understandable way. Related to wisdom is the gift of **knowledge (I Cor. 12:8)**. Knowledge is the gift to correctly understand the Scriptures and to effectively explain them to others. **Discernment**, sometimes called *distinguishing of spirits (I Cor. 12:10; I John 4:1)*, is the ability to distinguish right from wrong, truth from error, and to give an immediate evaluation based on God's Word.

Serving gifts make up the third group. This group includes the gift of **service** or *helps (Rom. 12:7)* - the ability to recognize unmet needs in the church family, and

take the initiative to provide practical assistance quickly, cheerfully, and without a need for recognition. **Mercy (Rom. 12:8)** is the ability to detect hurt and empathize with those who are suffering in the church family. People so gifted, as agents of healing and restoration, provide compassionate and cheerful support to those experiencing distress, crisis, or pain. **Hospitality (I Pet. 4:9)** is the ability to make others, especially strangers, feel warmly welcomed, accepted, and comfortable in the church family. **Giving (Rom. 12:8)** is the capacity to be sensitive to and to provide for the needs of the saints with great joy and generosity. **Leadership (Rom. 12:8)** is the ability to clarify and communicate the purpose and direction ("vision") of a ministry in a way that attracts others to get involved and to work together in accomplishing a ministry goal. **Administration** or organization (**I Cor. 12:28**) is the ability to recognize the gifts of others; to recruit, organize, and manage them for effective ministry. **Faith (I Cor. 12:9)** is the ability to trust God for what cannot be seen and to act on God's promise, regardless of what the circumstances indicate. So when we think of gifts we must think in terms of those capacities specified by God in His Word.

Notice the context of **I Peter 4:10** – **verse 8**, *your love for one another*; **verse 9**, *be hospitable to one another*; and **verse 10**, *serving one another*. Clearly, we are talking about the state of things among those who have believed the gospel; about life within the community of faith. Every member of this community, the body of Christ, has at least one gift. *As each one has received a gift* (KATHOS, *as*; HEKASTOS, *each one*). The emphasis is placed on the **diversity** that exists within the body of Christ. God has so ordered things such that no one receives all the gifts and that no single gift is given to everyone. **I Corinthians 12:29-30**, *All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they?* Why do you think this is the case? If someone possessed all the gifts he would

surely take on an attitude of prideful superiority. **I Corinthians 12:21**, *and the eye cannot say to the head, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."* If everyone possessed the same gift we wouldn't need each other. God wants us to depend upon one another.

As each one has received a gift. You can't earn or work for a spiritual gift. **Ephesians 4:7**, *But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.* These capacities are a pure gratuity from God. Furthermore, the distribution of gifts is a function of God's sovereignty. The Holy Spirit decides what gift you get. **I Corinthians 12:11**, *But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.*

As each one has received a gift, minister it. The word for "minister" here is DIAKONEO. Of course, we get our word "deacon" from this Greek word. It means to serve, to wait upon, to minister (Vine, pp. 72-73). **Luke 10:40**, *But Martha was distracted about much serving.* Jesus used this word two times in **Luke 22:27**, *"For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table, or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? But I am among you as one who serves."* We find this word twice in **Acts 6:1-2** - *the daily serving of food and in order to serve tables.* It is entirely appropriate to use this illustration. Have you ever been to a fine restaurant with waiters in black tuxes, white towels over their arms, bringing out food on silver platters? We are called to *wait upon* one another. What you serve up to others is your gift. Let me ask you something. What do you think happened in this room during the Sunday School hour? Pastor Browning has the gift of teaching. He was serving up that gift, he was ministering that gift.

As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another. More literally, *to yourselves* (EIS HEAUTOUS). The purpose of spiritual gifts is not for your benefit but for others. **I Peter 4:10** (Today's English Version), *Each one, as a good manager of God's different gifts, must use for the good of others the special gift he has received from God* (**I Cor. 12:7**). The gifts conferred by Christ are congregational in character. The purpose for a gift is fulfilled; the reality of a gift is validated only in and by ministry. In other words, one cannot claim the gift of teaching, for example, with no approbation from the body, no ministry in the body, and with no benefit to the body.

As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards. The word for steward here is the Greek OIKONOMOS. It is the word for the manager of a household or an estate. We can see this literal use in verses such as **Luke 12:42**, *And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and sensible steward, whom the master will put in charge of his servants"* (also **Luke 16:1**).

Metaphorically, the word "steward" is used of preachers of the gospel and teachers of the Word of God (**I Cor. 4:1**), of elders of the church (**Titus 1:7**), and of believers generally as here in **I Peter 4:10**. As a steward you must view yourself as the agent of God. As such, your highest priority is fidelity to his charge. **I Corinthians 4:2**, *it is required of stewards that one be found faithful*. Herein lies the faithfulness – that you use the gift God has given in ministry to one another. **Luke 15:11-13**, *And He said, "A certain man had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.' And he divided his wealth between them. And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate*

with loose living." Here's the issue before you: in terms of God's gift to me, will I serve it up or squander it?

As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Now, "manifold" is not a word we use very much (if at all) except to refer to part of an engine. The word is the Greek POIKILOS. POIKILOS is most often translated "various" – *various diseases and pains* (**Matt. 4:24; Mark 1:34; Lu. 4:40**), *various trials* (**I Pet. 1:6; James 1:2**), *various miracles* (**Heb. 2:4**), and so on. In the King James Version it is usually translated "divers". Basically it means of differing kinds; diversified; many-colored (Robertson, *Word Pictures*, VI, p. 125). In view here are not differing kinds of grace but the same grace mediated through the different gifts. "The grace of God comes to us in small increments through the varied ministries of those who speak and those who serve in every congregation" (J. Ramsey Michaels, *I Peter*, p. 249). We are **instruments** of God's grace as we faithfully exercise our gifts in service to the saints.

Seminars are often held and books frequently written to educate the saints in regard to spiritual gifts. The need of the hour is not more knowledge. I think education ought to be balanced with Biblical admonition in regard to these grace gifts. I pray that God may use this to the end that we will be shaken out of complacency toward our gifts and our slothfulness in the exercise of them. You say, Pastor, it sounds to me like you are overplaying this. Maybe so. Let me summarize for you what I believe is at stake here and then you decide whether or not I am overemphasizing anything.

1. The final clause in **I Peter 4:11** indicates why Peter stresses *the words of God* and *the strength God provides*. “The ultimate purpose of service in the church is that, in everything, God will be glorified. God should be seen at work in the speaking and in the serving so that people will praise him and not praise the speakers and the servers. Although we will express our appreciation to them, support them financially where this is appropriate (Gal. 6:6), and give them due esteem and obedience, we will see through the speakers and servers to the God whose servants they are” (Howard Marshall, *I Peter*, IVP, p. 148). Do you get the grand implication of verse 11? God’s design is that **He** be **honored** through the exercise of our respective gifts. To the degree that we neglect to minister these gifts, we, like clouds blocking the sun, obscure the glory of God among us.
2. These gifts are gratuitous expressions of the kindness of God. To neglect the exercise of your grace gift is to take this divine kindness for granted. Each of us knows the hurt of having a special gift go unacknowledged. We have also known the joy of a special gift received, acknowledged, and gladly used the one to whom we gave it. Is God not grieved that we treat His mercies so lightly?
3. If faithfulness is our highest priority then it stands to reason that neglect in the exercise of your gift constitutes a breach of trust. God has entrusted you with a gift to be passed on to others for their profit and His glory. Some try to excuse their unfaithfulness with, “I don’t know what my gift is,” but this subtle attempt to dodge responsibility will not fly. Beloved, you will have to account for your stewardship of God’s grace just as I will answer for my own. Imagine standing before God and saying, “I know you gave me a gift but, quite frankly, I never paid much attention to it.”

4. Withholding that which is intended by God for the benefit of the church family is to act selfishly toward your brothers and sisters in Christ. **I John 3:17**, *But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?* If withholding material stuff reflects our lack of love how much more does withholding God's grace gift from those who need it reflect a lack of love? When you look at things from the standpoint of gifts the depth of our self-centeredness is glaring.

5. To the degree that you minister your gift, your church is stronger or weaker. As gifts are conscientiously exercised the body of Christ is built up, strengthened in faith. As members of the body are slack in exercising their gifts, the body atrophies. What happens to a physical body when its various parts fail to function? Of course, it weakens and eventually will die.

6. Your gift determines your primary ministry commitment. God's design is that your ministry be *shaped* by your gift. Your major investment of time and energy ought to be given to this ministry. Your *secondary* ministry includes serving in any other area of the body when you are needed. **Titus 3:14**, *and let our people also learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs, that they may not be unfruitful*. Beloved, heed this counsel offered out of affection for you. I believe that much of the aimlessness - flopping around like a landed fish, not knowing where you fit - experienced by Christians; much of the fruitlessness; much of their lack of joy in ministry; much of their frustration with other believers can be attributed to their own failure to discover God's grace gift to them and then to faithfully employ that gift in ministry to the saints.

7. To fail to exercise your gift is to break covenant with the other members of the congregation. By calling and by vow we share a mutual obligation to one another. Often, unwittingly I hope, we are guilty of taking advantage of our brothers and sisters in Christ. By not exercising your gift you force other members of the family of God into double and triple duty to make up for your slothfulness. This is not only a difficult arrangement but, ultimately, an impossible one. A local congregation simply cannot long sustain such inequity without suffering damage. After all, how would your body fair if the heart decided not to fulfill its function? The liver is down there huffing and puffing saying, "Man, I not only have to clean the blood but now I've got to pump it around as well."

8. The exercise of a grace gift should (ideally) become a lifestyle. In other words, your gift is to be exercised in a continual, consistent ministry to the saints. If you are waiting to be asked to do something that attitude, that delay is proof positive that your understanding of both spiritual gifts and life together as a community of faith are way off the mark.

As we approach the Lord's Table keep in mind that spiritual gifts are a sacred trust to the believer for the body.

Note : I am not inclined to speak today to the matters of (1) how to discover your gift and (2) where you can exercise it at APC. At the same time, I'm not going to leave you hanging. There is a list in the lobby. If you think you would profit from a seminar-type class dealing with these matters just sign up and we will schedule a class to assist you.

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Spiritual Gifts and Their Exercise

1 Peter 4:10-11 (NKJV)

Spiritual gifts are a sacred trust to the _____ for the _____.

The four central passages:

Romans 12:3-8; I Corinthians 12:1-11, 27-31; Ephesians 4:1-12; I Peter 4:9-11

I Peter 4:10 and 11, *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.*

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So what is a spiritual gift?

A spiritual gift is a special _____ or capacity, given by the Holy Spirit, to every _____ at his or her conversion, to be used to _____ to others, for the building up of the body of Christ ... a spiritual gift is God's _____ (capacity, a power, ability, or fitness) upon the believer by the operation of the Holy Spirit.

Support gifts: *apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers*

[Note: Based upon verses like **I Corinthians 12:28**, **I Corinthians 14:1-3**, and **Romans 16:7** some suggest that the gift of *apostle* ("sent ones") is still present in ministries such as pioneer missionaries and church planters and that the gift of *prophet* is still present in the ministry of the preaching of the Word of God]

Speaking gifts: *encouragement, wisdom, knowledge, discernment*

Serving gifts: *service, mercy, hospitality, giving, leadership, administration, faith*

As each one has received a gift

*As each one **has** received a gift*

*As each one has received a gift, **minister it***

*As each one has received a gift, minister it **to one another***

*As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, **as good stewards***

*As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards **of the manifold grace of God***

The ultimate purpose of service in the church is that, in everything, God will be _____.

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To withhold that which is intended by God for the benefit of the church family is to act _____ toward your brothers and sisters in Christ (**I John 3:17**).

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