

THE RESOURCES OF THE CHURCH 1 PETER 4:10-11

Today is the fourth part in a series called, “What’s the Big Deal about Church?” The first week we examined the *identity* of the church, the second week the *composition* of the church, and the third week the *purpose* of the church. Today we will explore the *resources* of the church, and our text will be taken from 1 Peter 4:10-11.

Verses 10-11. *¹⁰ As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: ¹¹ whoever 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 (ESV).*

Before we explore the details in these verses let me remind you of the context of which they are a part. Peter has been talking about who we have become, what we are capable of doing, and what God wants us to do as a result of being born again. God, in His great mercy, has saved us. He has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, forgiven our sins, changed our hearts, indwelt us by His Spirit, and given us supernatural capabilities. Namely, we have the ability to act on behalf of Jesus, to express the life of Jesus, communicate Jesus’ words and to do Jesus’ will. In fact, Peter says this is not only possible; it is expected. This is our calling. We are “little Christs” in this world. We are His hands and feet and mouth and heart.

As Peter gives some final instructions in chapter 4, he stresses that there is a sense of urgency about this because, **verse 7**, “*the end of all things is near.*” Jesus is coming back soon, so this is no time to be sitting on our hands, or to be distracted by inconsequential endeavors. We ought to be seriously serving Christ.

And that brings us to the premise Peter is making in verse 10. It is simply this: If God has given us gifts, then it is obvious that something needs to be done and that God expects *us* to do it. He did not save us to merely bide our time until Jesus comes. He did not leave us on this earth to merely sit in church pews and sing songs and listen to sermons. He saved us to continue the work that Christ started. And He has enabled us and equipped us to do it effectively. Verse 10 gives us some of the details. **Verse 10** *¹⁰ “As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace.”*

What is a gift? The most comprehensive instruction in the New Testament about spiritual gifts is written by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 12. The main thrust of that passage is that gifts are manifestations of the Holy Spirit given for the common good—the good of the people in the church and the community in which the church is located. Gifts are also sovereignly distributed by the Holy Spirit. Who gets what gift is solely *His* determination, given solely at *His* discretion.

Therefore, getting back to 1 Peter, a gift is an ability, talent or skill that has its origins in the Holy Spirit and is given by Him to followers of Jesus so they can do things that He wants done. Not that *I* want done, or you or someone else wants done. But that *He* wants done. It is an ability to function or serve in a capacity that is both necessary and beneficial to the church or the community where the church exists.

There are five things verse 10 tells us about spiritual gifts. First, they are **gifts**. They are not something you earn, something you choose, or something you generate. They originate from the Holy Spirit and are given freely by Him according to His good pleasure and will.

Secondly, they are *supernatural abilities*, as opposed to natural abilities. If these gifts

are imparted by the Holy Spirit who lives in us, it means that they surpass natural ability, personality traits, genetic characteristics, and IQ. They are *divine* abilities that enable us to do things we otherwise could not do.

Now the Holy Spirit may work in accordance *with* our natural abilities. After all, He created us and He gave us those abilities, and He may choose to enrich or fortify or empower the abilities and talents you already have. But the end result of what you are able to do with your *Spirit-given* gifts are *supernatural*.

Third, they are given to every believer. Look at the first part of **verse 10**, “*As each has received a gift...*” There is no such thing as a gift-less Christian. The church is comprised of people, each of whom He has given a skill or talent or ability that perfectly complements and balances the other people in the church, so that when they work together in the way He has designed they do so in a manner that is perfectly suited to accomplish His will and advance His kingdom.

Fourth, our spiritual gifts are for the benefit of others. Look at the middle of **verse 10**. *10 As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another...* I am not the beneficiary of my spiritual gift. God did not give it to me so I could feel good about myself or so that I could gain recognition or status in the church. We have been given spiritual gifts so that we can bless others—build them, encourage them, strengthen them, contribute to their spiritual growth, and meet their needs.

Fifth, spiritual gifts are a matter of stewardship. **Verse 10b**. “*...As good stewards of God’s varied grace...*” That word has reference to the work of a particular kind of servant in the ancient world called a steward. Today, we might call him a superintendent, like Joseph in Potiphar’s house. He was entrusted with the responsibility of managing the affairs of the home, especially the *distribution of the master’s wealth*. The master’s household prospered or faltered on the basis of the steward’s work.

Every believer in Christ is God’s steward. He has entrusted each of us with the distribution of His wealth, namely His grace, which is the world’s most precious commodity. And He has equipped us in such a way that through our words and service we are able to dispense that grace to others.

That is the sixth thing in verse 10 regarding spiritual gifts. They dispense God’s grace. When we, in the power of the Holy Spirit, use the gifts He has given us in the way He intends, God’s grace is dispensed through us to others. Which is exciting because the *one* thing people need most is the grace of God. It is the most valuable, most beneficial commodity on earth.

Now, you may be saying, “Okay. I get it. But I’m not sure what my gifts are. I’ve read the passages in 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12 that identify the various gifts, but I’ve never taken one of those spiritual gift inventories to be able to determine what it is.”

We can make this matter more complicated than it really is. I’ve seen two things happen: One, a person is indefinitely sidelined in His service because He is not sure in what capacity He is “supposed” to serve. And two, a person, after discovering His gift, ignores existing needs within the church because those needs do not correspond to His gift.

I’m convinced that God provides spiritual gifts in direct relation to the specific needs of a church. So, if you are not sure what your gift is, my advice is to, first of all, ask God to reveal it to you. He is not trying to hide it from you. If He has given it to you, you can be sure that He wants you to use it.

Second, be alert. When you see a need in the church consider whether God would have you respond to that need. In other words, instead of trying to identify the name of your gift, try serving in a particular capacity for a while. And after you have served for a while ask

yourself and others, “Am I blessing others? Is God working through me in this capacity? Are people experiencing God’s grace through my service?”

The answers to those questions are more obvious than you might think. And if you can answer those questions affirmatively, you may have identified your gift. The point is, it is not so important that you are able to name the gift, but that you are actually serving others in some way and that God is using you.

And it is most definitely *Him* working through us. Look at **verse 11a**. ¹¹ “...*Whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God...*”

I believe this is a reference to more than just preaching the Gospel or teaching the Word of God. It is a reference to any time we open our mouths to minister to others, whether it be to encourage, admonish, counsel, share the gospel with someone, or some other means or method of communicating truth. Whenever we minister with our mouths we need to speak as ones who speak the oracles of God.

Not our own words. Not our own opinions or our own insights or our own ideas, no matter how clever or intelligent they might be. Our words have no power to effect real and lasting change in a person’s life. But God’s words do. That’s why Paul, in Ephesians 6, when asking the church to pray for Him, said, “*Pray that whenever I open my mouth words may be given me so that I may fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel*” (6:19). Paul knew that if he opened his mouth to speak his own words nothing of eternal consequence would happen. He wanted to speak *God’s* words.

For someone who makes His living by verbally communicating I am so convinced of this that I ask the Holy Spirit every single day, before I start my work, “Would you fill me and take control of my mind so that I can have your thoughts be able to think your thoughts after you?” As I am studying the Bible and trying to learn what the text is saying and how best I can teach it, I don’t dare begin my study without an acknowledgment of my absolute dependence on Him for insight and wisdom. And that He would give me His words to be able to communicate to you.

When I prepare to counsel someone about something I pray, “Spirit, would you give me wisdom so that I can have your thoughts and discern your will and speak your words?” I’m so convinced that apart from Him I can do nothing that if I did not feel I had His words to say to you I would tell you to go home before the sermon started. What’s the point in staying?

But it is not just when we speak. Look at the middle part of **verse 11b**. “...*Whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies...*” Once again, Peter is emphasizing that spiritual gifts should be exercised in dependence upon the Holy Spirit and in the power of the Holy Spirit. So even when we are serving by changing diapers in the nursery or making coffee in the kitchen, God wants us to do those things under the influence of the Spirit so that there is divine energy expended and divine grace dispensed when we serve. We should do it with the strength He supplies.

Why? Because the things God wants to accomplish through us when we use our gifts are eternally consequential things. Any time God’s grace is dispensed it makes an eternal impact, whether it is apparent to us or not.

So, what does this mean for us? It means that we must stay connected to the Lord. We must rely on Him for strength and ask Him for wisdom. We must be under the influence of the Holy Spirit and let Him have His way. And if we are under His influence and He has His way, grace *will* be imparted through us to others. Something eternally consequential will occur. People will be blessed. And God will be honored.

And let’s not forget that. It’s all about Him, and all for Him. Look at the end of **verse 11**, “—*in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To Him belong*

glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

We are not a random, coincidental collection of Christians here at Emmanuel. We have been sovereignly and strategically put together by Jesus Himself for the purpose of impacting each other and this community with the Gospel and advancing the kingdom of Christ. And God has generously given Emmanuel Bible Church every gift we need to make an eternally consequential impact. Each one of us are stewards of God's grace, and we get to dispense His grace when we use our spiritual gifts.

Let's use those gifts so that people can encounter His grace and be able to glorify Him. Amen.

The Resources of the Church

I Peter 4:10-11

Main Idea: God has given each of us talents, skills, and abilities in order to dispense His grace, strengthen His church, and advance His kingdom.

Spiritual Gifts and Christ-likeness

Some Facts about Spiritual Gifts

They are gifts

They are supernatural

Every single believer has at least one

They are for the benefit of others

They are a matter of stewardship

Discovering Spiritual Gifts

Employing Spiritual Gifts

Confidence in the Lord

Reliance on the Lord

The Goal of Spiritual Gifts

Application Questions from 1 Peter 4:10-11

Read the Passage in 1 Peter 4:7-11, emphasizing verses 10 and 11. You may also want to read the passages on spiritual gifts in Romans 12:1-8, and 1 Corinthians 12:1-11.

Do you know what your spiritual gift is? If yes, how did you discover it, and how do you know for sure that it is God's gift for you? If no, how can you discover it?

What keeps God's people from using their spiritual gift? Are any of those things preventing you?

How can you tell when you are using your spiritual gift? How can you tell when you are functioning in an area which is *not* your spiritual gift?

How can you be sure that you are operating in God's strength and speaking God's words?

In what specific way can you serve someone else this week by using your spiritual gift?