

## GRACE DISPENSERS 1 PETER 4:10

**Verses 10-11.** <sup>10</sup> *“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms”* (NIV).

Before we explore the meaning of this verse let me remind you of the context of which it is a part. Peter has been talking about who we have become 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, and indwelt us by His Spirit, who is our new operating system.

Because of this we now have supernatural capabilities. We have the ability to express the character of Jesus, the love of Jesus, and the grace of Jesus. We have the ability to speak the words of Jesus and do the will and the work of Jesus. In a very real sense, we are His hands and feet and mouth and heart in this world.

In chapter 4 of his first letter, as Peter is giving some final instructions, he stresses that there is a sense of urgency about acting on behalf of Jesus because, **verse 7**, *“the end of all things is near.”* Jesus is coming back soon, and there are things to be done before He comes, so this is no time to be dawdling or to be distracted by inconsequential endeavors. We ought to be earnestly serving Christ in preparation for the end.

And that brings us to the premise Peter is making in verse 10. It is simply this: If God has given us gifts in order to serve Him, He expects us to use those gifts in order to make the most of our time here on earth. He didn’t save us to merely bide our time until Jesus comes, or to sit in church and sing songs and listen to sermons. He saved us to continue the work that Jesus started. And He has enabled us and equipped us to do it effectively. Look again at **verse 10**. <sup>10</sup> *“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.”*

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 that 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 a supernatural ability, talent or skill given to followers of Jesus so they can do things that He wants done. Not that *I* want done; not that 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.

Verse 10 reveals four principles about spiritual gifts. First, they are **gifts**. They are not something you earn, not something you choose, and not something you generate. They originate from the Holy Spirit and are given freely by Him in accordance with His pleasure and will. And if these gifts are imparted by the Spirit, it means they have a supernatural quality to them. They transcend personality and genetics and IQ. They are 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 we already have. But the end result of what we are able to do with our *Spirit-given* gifts is *supernatural*.

Second, every believer has at least one spiritual gift. Verse 10 begins, “***Each one should use whatever gift he has received...***” There is no such thing as a gift-less Christian, because there’s no such thing as a benchwarmer or inactive status on God’s team. When He drafts us to be part of a church He also equips and empowers us to function in a manner that will substantially contribute to the overall health and effectiveness of the church.

Third, our spiritual gifts are for the benefit of others. <sup>10</sup> ***Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others...*** I am not the beneficiary of my spiritual gift. God didn’t give it so I could feel good about myself, or so I could get fulfillment in my Christian service, or so that I could gain recognition or status in the church.

This was precisely the error that the church at Corinth made in the first century. They had discovered their gifts, to be sure, and they saw how wonderful and powerful those gifts were. But a lot of them were using their gifts to gain leverage in the church—to make themselves look good, to elevate their spiritual status, or gain personal power.

But Paul rebuked them for this because God gave gifts to bless others—to build them, encourage them, contribute to their spiritual growth, and meet their needs. Gifts are intended to help the church become mature and complete, reaching the full stature of Christ (Eph. 4:11-15).

And then fourth, spiritual gifts are for the purpose of dispensing God’s grace. <sup>10</sup> ***Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.***

The word translated “administering” has reference to the work of a particular kind of servant in the ancient world called a *steward*. Today, we might call him an administrator or a superintendent, like Joseph in Potiphar’s house. He was entrusted with the responsibility of managing the affairs of the home, distributing the master’s wealth—paying the bills, buying the food, investing his assets, collecting the debts—and the master’s household prospered or faltered on the basis of the steward’s work.

Each of us who belongs to God by faith in Jesus is a steward. He has entrusted each of us with the administration 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 attitudes and words and talents and resources we are able to dispense that grace to others.

Incidentally, the *one* thing people need most is the grace of God. The grace of God is the doorway to his presence. The grace of God unlocks the treasure chest of God’s goodness and kindness and love. It is the impetus for the forgiveness of our sins. It is the fuel of our sanctification. It is the salve that heals our wounds.

And Peter tells us in verse 10 that one of God’s methods of dispensing His grace is through the use of spiritual gifts. In other words, when we use our gifts in the way God designed people get to encounter God’s grace through us. And that ought to be an incentive to using those gifts. Because God’s grace is absolutely essential for every single person’s spiritual health and well-being, and if I don’t use my gifts then people might *not* get to encounter God’s grace, and they will miss out in some way.

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

I believe 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, ironically, he’s not sure in what capacity he’s “supposed” to serve. And two, a person, after discovering his

gift, ignores existing needs within the church because she doesn't think those needs correspond to her gift.

I'm convinced that God provides spiritual gifts in relation to the specific needs of a church. So if you're not sure what your gift is I would suggest you ask God to reveal it to you. He's 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, as we contemplate the needs of the church, we should prayerfully consider whether God would have us respond to any of those needs. 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's not as important that you are able to name your gift as it is that you are actually serving others in some way.

Peter continues in **verse 11**. *<sup>11</sup> If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.*

Whenever I meet with newcomers to Emmanuel Bible Church I tell them that if God has led them to be part of our church then it is His intention that they be actively engaged in the life and ministry of the church. God never intended anyone with the Holy Spirit living in them to be spectators or by-standers or benchwarmers. The Holy Spirit lives in us in order to express the life and work of Jesus, and He intends to do that through every single member of the Body. Because we are all body parts, and we can only effectively function if each body part is doing what it's supposed to do.

Many of you already know how you fit into this expression of Christ's body called Emmanuel Bible Church and are functioning in the manner that God intended you to function. Praise the Lord! But some of you have yet to discover where you fit, and how the Lord wants you to function. We want to help you discover that. Part of our purpose in having a ministry fair today is to give you an opportunity to see how you might be able to be used by God to express the life and ministry of Jesus within the context of this body.

Some of our ministry leaders are going to give you a brief overview of several areas of ministry here at EBC, and some of the needs and opportunities in each. Then we are going to dismiss you to visit one or more of the tables that are set up on the platform and in the foyer, where you can learn how you might be able to serve the Lord.

## GRACE DISPENSERS

1 Peter 4:10-11

**Main Idea:** By using our spiritual gifts we are able to dispense God's grace to others, which is what they need to grow and thrive.

**The context:** "The end of all things is near" (7)

**The imperative: "Use your gift"**

What is a gift?

Who has gifts?

What are gifts for?

What do gifts do?

**The ultimate purpose:** God's glory (11)