

May 29, 2016 by Steve Brandon



Serve One Another

1 Peter 4:10-11; Gal 5:13

1. Use Your Gift (1 Peter 4:10)

2. Glorify God (1 Peter 4:11; Galatians 5:13)

As most of you know, my schedule this summer is a bit crazy. I returned a week ago yesterday from a 3 1/2 week trip to India and Nepal. This summer is filled with a week at youth camp, two weeks at Southern Seminary in Louisville, and a few weeks of vacation in California. As a result, there won't be much continuity in the pulpit. So, I have decided to preach a topical series, entitled, "One Another," until we begin Romans in the fall.

Each week this summer, we will look at one of the many "One Another" commands in the New Testament, and press its application during my message. My first message in the series (April 17, 2016) was entitled, "Encourage One Another." This world is a discouraging place. We all need encouragement. We need encouragement to know that others are for us, and on our side. We need encouragement from God, to know that he has accepted us in Christ.

My admonition to you is what Paul told the Ephesians. Ephesians 4:29, "Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear." We have grace to give. And we can give it through the things we say when we build up one another.

My second message in the series (April 24, 2016) was entitled, "Pray for One Another." In the first half of my message we worked through James 5, which is where the command, "pray for one another," is located in the New Testament. We also looked at several other Scriptural admonitions to pray. In the second half of my message, we spent time actually applying this command by praying for one another.

We prayed for the Brown family, who are seeking to adopt a child, informing you that our adoption fund (currently about \$6,500) will go toward this effort. We prayed for the Geaschel family, as Karina had a successful surgery on her face. We prayed for a dozen of those of us dealing with chronic sicknesses, gathering around them and laying our hands on them. A dozen of you volunteered to pray for them one by one. Then, we broke up in groups, with the goal that everyone in the service would be prayed for by name.

Then, we prayed for Yvonne and me, as we left for our trip to India. I believe that it was one of the best church services that we have ever enjoyed at Rock Valley Bible Church as we brought our requests before the Lord.

This Sunday brings us to my third message in the series. It is entitled, "Serve One Another." This command occurs only twice in the New Testament. Once in 1 Peter and once in Galatians. However, the concept of serving one another is deeply ingrained into the heart of Christianity.

When Jesus came to earth, he said, "Even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). Jesus, as the King of kings and Lord of lords, had every right to be served. But, of course, he chose a different road. He chose the road of humility. He chose the road of sacrifice. He chose the road of service, serving the people through healing them, serving the people through leading them.

This mindset is opposite of the Hindus we experienced in India. Theirs is a self-serving culture. It is "every man for himself." There is a lack of "thank you" and "excuse me," where concern for others is not of importance.

Never under-estimate the impact that Christ has had on our culture. He is our model. He was the one to wash the disciples' feet. And when he finished, he said this, ...

John 13:12-15

"Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.

And this is the call on all of our lives this morning. We are called to serve one another. We are called to be servants.

There is no better place to see this than by looking at 1 Peter, chapter 4. And so, I invite you to open in your Bibles to 1 Peter, chapter 4. Let's begin by reading verses 10 and 11.

1 Peter 4:10-11

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: 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.

These verses come in the context of other exhortations. The exhortation to pray comes in verse 7. The exhortation to love is found in verse 8. The exhortation to hospitality is found in verse 9. We will look at love and hospitality in future weeks. But this morning, we are looking at serving. I trust that you can see it right there in verse 10.

1 Peter 4:10

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:

My message this morning has two points. The first is this:

1. Use Your Gift (1 Peter 4:10)

I trust that you can see how my point flows from verse 10, where Peter writes, "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another." The picture that Peter paints here is one of God giving gifts to people. And then, these people taking the gifts and turning around and giving these gifts to other people. That's what it means to be a servant. It means that you take what has been given to you and you turn around and give it to others.

We had the fine privilege of doing this in India and Nepal. Yvonne and I mostly lived out of our back packs. We packed up two suitcases full of gifts to give to those we visited. Many of you gave us the items that we gave away -- Legos and necklaces and washrags and hair ties.

These are all gifts that you gave to us that we were able to give to others. And it was such a blessing for us to give these things. In fact, at one point, I was asked to speak on giving. And before I spoke, we were able to give a bunch of gifts to everyone who came to hear what I had to say.

We were so blessed to be on the giving end. As Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). And it truly was. Yvonne and I were far more blessed to be in the position of giving gifts than those we served.

But it's not a one-way street. We received some gifts to give to you as well. Zho and Ching-Boy gave us some candy. It is authentic Nepali candy that we are giving to you this morning.

This is a picture of what God has done for us. He has given us "a gift," and he calls us to give that gift away. See, the gifts that God gives to His people are not to be used on those who received them. Rather, they are to be used to serve other people.

1 Peter 4:10

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:

As you reflect upon your life, I'm sure that you can think of the many gifts that God has given to you. First of all, he has given you the gift of life. To many, he has given you the gift of health. He has given you the gift of time. Perhaps God has given you a spouse. Perhaps God has given you children! All of these gifts flow from the kind hand of God. On top of that, God has given you the gift of an assortment of talents and abilities. Also, He has given you various resources at your disposal. All of these things are God's gift to you.

But, beyond all these gifts, God has also given us what are called spiritual gifts as well. These are specific talents and abilities that are empowered by the Holy Spirit to accomplish spiritual purposes in the process of building up the body of Christ. These gifts are what Peter mentions in verse 10 of our text.

The New American Standard translates this, "As each one has received a special gift." The sense is that each and every one of us has been given a gift. The idea here is that God's gift to you is a unique gift. He had gifted each of us in a unique way.

If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, know that He has empowered you for the work of service to the building up of the body of Christ. Without exception, each and every one of us has been given a gift by God.

Paul mentioned the same idea in 1 Corinthians 12:7, where he wrote, "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."

In other words, the Spirit of God gives gifts to each of us for the common good of us all. See, there is a reason why God has given you your gift. It is for the purpose of building up. It is for the "common good."

What God gives to you isn't to be used to tear down. What God gives to you isn't to be used only for yourself. No, it is for the "common good." It's for serving others. It's for building up the entire body of Christ.

The gift of knowledge isn't given to puff you up. Rather, it's given so that you can teach others of the ways of God. The gift of faith isn't given so that you can build your empire. Rather, it's given so that the work of God can be accomplished through you for the good of others. The gift of exhortation is given to encourage others in holy living. The gift of giving is for the advancement of the gospel. The gift of mercy is for the help of those in distress. This is why Paul concludes his discussion on the proper use of the gifts in 1 Corinthians 14 with the simple instruction: "Let all things be done for edification" (1 Cor. 14:26).

Often in the church, when the discussion of spiritual gifts arises. Much focus and attention is upon the gifts themselves. People spend so much time trying to figure out what gift they have been given, ... that they can easily fail to use them. But, the emphasis of the New

Testament is always this: Use them!

If that's the gift of encouragement, like Barnabas, whose very name was "Son of Encouragement," (Acts 4:36), then use your gift. If that's the gift of prayer, like Epaphras, who was "always laboring earnestly" for others in prayer, (Colossians 4:12-13), then use your gift. If that's the gift of hospitality, like Nympha, who hosted a church in her house (Col. 4:15), then use your gift. If that's the gift of writing, like Luke who carefully investigated and studied the life of Christ and the life of the early church, so that we might have the book of Luke and the book of Acts, then use your gift. If that's the gift of compassion, like Epaphroditus, who was distressed because of the feelings of concern that he had for those in Philippi who heard that he was sick (Phi. 2:25-26), then use your gift.

Whenever spiritual gifts are mentioned in the New Testament, there is always a corresponding exhortation to use them. The care and concern isn't upon which type of gift you have. The care and concern of Scripture is always that you use your gifts, whatever they are!

In Romans 12, Paul gives a similar thought. Consider what Paul said in Romans 12:6-8, ...

Romans 12:6-8

Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; 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.

The purpose of Paul's writing in Romans 12 is the same as 1 Corinthians 12 is the same as 1 Peter 4. Whatever gifts God gives to you, use them.

Peter didn't mention any of the specifics of the gifts. He simply said, ...

1 Peter 4:10

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another.

What is particularly helpful for us this morning is the context in which Peter was writing. Peter wrote to a persecuted people. He wrote to those who were suffering greatly. They had been going through various trials (1 Peter 1:7). Peter said ...

1 Peter 4:12-16

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.

And yet, through the suffering, Peter said, "get your eyes off of yourself." Focus your attention upon others. Serve one another! He says, "Get your eyes off of yourself and onto other people." And serve them. Or, as Peter says, Use Your Gift (1 Peter 4:10)

We have this folder in our home entitled, "Coupons and gift cards." It is filled with coupons that we have received in the mail or at some place of business that are just waiting to be used. This folder is filled with unused gift cards. They are like free cash. And they haven't been used. Some of these gift cards have been in here for years. And we just haven't gone through the effort to use them.

Yvonne has in her purse, a number of other gift cards that are ready to be used, but we just haven't used them yet. I have in my wallet some Office Max gift cards. But, seemingly, every time that I go to the store, I forget to use them.

But good stewardship requires that I use them. This is what Peter is saying. Using your gifts to serve others is a matter of stewardship. Consider again 1 Peter 4:10.

1 Peter 4:10

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:

When God gives gifts to His people, in some sense, He doesn't transfer ownership. In many ways, we don't own the gifts that God has given to us. The money that you have in the bank isn't yours. It's God's money, that He has given to you to manage. The house you own isn't yours. It's God's house, that he has given you to manage. The car you drive, the clothes you wear, they aren't yours, they are God's.

The same is true of your giftedness. Your time, your talents, and your treasure, are all God's gifts to you, that you are to use for His purpose. You are stewards of these things.

I trust that you know what a steward is. He is a household servant, who is responsible and accountable to his master for those things that are under his oversight. In the same way, we are responsible for the gifts that God has given to us. Several times throughout the Scriptures, Jesus illustrates this fact by telling a parable of a steward who ultimately gives account for his management of his master's possessions (Luke 12:41-48; 16:1-13; 19:11-27; Matt. 25:14-30).

This morning, I want for you to consider a parable that Jesus told about those who were stewards of a gift given to them. It comes from

Matthew 25:14-30 and is often called, "The Parable of the Talents." In the days of Jesus, a talent was a unit of money. But, the application of this word for us in terms of our "talents" is equally applicable.

Speaking about the kingdom of heaven, Jesus says, ...

Matthew 25:14-30

"For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me two talents; here I have made two talents more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

This parable isn't difficult to understand. God is the business man who goes on a journey. We are the servants. The talents that the master of the servants gave them are like the gifts that God has given to us. Just as the master gave his stewards various amount of money, so also has God given to each of us varying gifts. Just as the master called his slaves to give account for the talents that he had given them, so also will God hold us accountable for the gifts that He has given to us. Just as the usage of the gifts had consequences so also will your usage of the gifts that God gave you have eternal consequences.

Notice how the master gave his slaves various amounts of money to each of the slaves. To one slave he gave five talents. To another slave he gave two talents. To another slave he gave one talent. The parallel comes directly to us as well in our text this morning. Peter said that we are to use the gifts that God has given to us, "as good stewards of God's varied grace" (1 Peter 4:10). Or, as the New American Standard puts it, "the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:10).

God's grace is a varied grace. God's grace isn't cookie cutter. To some, God gives greater gifts. To others, God gives lesser gifts.

And our lives and opportunities are just as varied. Some have been born into privilege. Others have been born into poverty. Some are born into a Christian family. Others are born into a wicked home. Some experience salvation at a young age. Others are saved late in life. Some have many worldly resources at your disposal. Others have little to offer by way of the financial resources.

But, whatever it is that God has given to you, Peter exhorts you to use your gift to "serve one another" (1 Peter 4:10). I simply ask, how are you doing? Are you "serving one another"?

How about at home? This is where the rubber meets the road. Are you known around the house as one who serves others? Or, are you known around the house as one who is served? Moms, I know where you fall on this spectrum. You are definitely servants in the home. Hats off to you. I praise God for you. May the Lord richly reward you for all that you do.

So, I'm focusing my gaze now upon the fathers and upon the children. Are you servants in the home? Do you help with the cleaning? The rooms, beds, dishes, clothes, sheets, garages, ...? Do you help with the tasks? The cooking, mowing, picking up, scheduling, ...? Do you help with the projects? The building, painting, repairing, ...? The list is endless. But, "serving one another" comes with an attitude of "others first." Is that you?

What about at church? Now, there are opportunities at church for formal service to take place. You simply need to jump in. You are always welcome to help, as many hands make light work. Serving in the nursery. Serving in children's church. Serving as an outdoor monitor of our children after church. Mowing the lawn. Shoveling the snow. Preparing the coffee. Cleaning the church building. Helping at Vacation Bible School. Setting up tables and chairs as needed. Greeting visitors at the door. Working the sound. Playing instruments. Helping out at our church work day (this Saturday morning at 9am).

But most of your service to the church should be informal. In fact, I'll let you in on a little secret. One of the grand purposes for our Sunday morning gatherings is to give you an opportunity to connect with community. So that you can establish and build relationships with like-minded believers. So that you can go out and serve others.

This is the real life of the church. When a home is flooded and you help clean up the mess. When a family moves and you help to pack them up. When babies are born and you help ease the load of a mother by bringing over some meals. When marriages are having difficulty and you go talk with them, trying to see reconciliation happen. When your children are out of control, and you seek the counsel of other parents, who can help you in the discipline of your children. When sorrow strikes a home and you go over to their house and pray with them. When you have a household repair, and another brother comes by and helps you with the repair. When some ladies come over and clean your

windows. When you drop off a bag of groceries to those who are struggling financially. When you give your old car to a family in need. When you help somebody with their child's tuition. When you introduce yourself to a visitor. When you ask about a difficult family situation and show your concern for the situation. When you pray for another family going through difficulties. When you continue in the discipline of your children, for the ten thousandth time. When you care for your aging parents. When you make a phone call to someone you missed at church. When you write a note of encouragement to somebody else.

That's the real life of the church. I believe that this is what Peter has in mind when he says, ...

1 Peter 4:10

As each has received a special gift, use it to serve one another.

In Peter's day, there weren't a lot of programs going on at church. In his day, there weren't a lot of administrative work in the church to be done. But, in his day, there were many people suffering, who needed help from others who were willing to serve. Peter was talking about life on life service. And that's what we are all called to be.

Everything that we do formally as a church is a means to an end. When you are in difficulty and in need of help, who are you going to call? You will call those who know you well and have demonstrated their love to you over the years.

Let's move on. First, Use Your Gift (1 Peter 4:10). Second, ...

2. Glorify God (1 Peter 4:11; Galatians 5:13)

Look at what Peter says in verse 11, ...

1 Peter 4:11

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.

Peter here gives the broadest of categories of gifts. There are speaking gifts. There are serving gifts. And he gives some guidance as to how to use those gifts. If your gifts are in the realm of speaking, do so, as if you were speaking the utterances of God. If your gifts are more in the realm of serving, then do so, trusting the Lord to give you the strength to serve.

I don't think that in any way these gifts are mutually exclusive. It is not as if someone can say, "I serve by my words, but not with my deeds." It is not as if someone can say, "I serve by my deeds, but not with my words." To some extent, (unless we are deaf and dumb; or unless we are paralyzed from the neck down), we all serve in both of these spheres. We speak words to others. We serve others in actions.

And Peter gives us counsel. Let your words be the oracles of God. Let your deeds be done in the power of God.

And here we see the gospel. God isn't calling us to serve beyond our abilities. God isn't calling us to serve beyond our strength. Instead, he will give us the strength we need. God sympathizes with our exhaustion, and he isn't calling us to be super-human! But, he is calling us to serve in the strength that God supplies. And the good news is this: God will give us the strength we need.

Run, John, run, the law commands
But gives us neither feet nor hands,
Far better news the gospel brings:
It bids us fly and gives us wings

And when God energizes our service, God is glorified, which is ultimately Peter's purpose. Do you see it there at the end of verse 11?

1 Peter 4:11

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.

So, if you speak, don't speak your own words, which would merely bring glory to your name. Rather, speak the utterances of God, so as to give Him glory. If you serve, don't serve in your own strength, which would merely bring glory to your name for the great sacrifices that you have made. Rather, serve in the strength which God supplies, so as to give Him the glory.

That's all that verse 11 is saying. In all you do, give God glory. In some regard, I believe that this is what Paul is talking about in Galatians 5.

Galatians 5:13-15

For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

In many ways, that's merely nice religious talk. But, how do you do these things? Try keeping two words in mind: humility and joy.

a. Humility

For God to be glorified, you need to be humble. God gets no glory if your speaking if you have a arrogance in your demeanor. But, when you humbly share the truth of God with others, God is glorified.

The story is told of a young, arrogant preacher who climbed into the pulpit with his "peacock feathers flying in the breeze". The sermon was colossal failure, and the young man was devastated. As he walked down form the pulpit, tears of shame filled his eyes. An old saint standing at the foot of the stairs said, not unkindly, "Son, if you had entered the pulpit the way you had left it, you might have left the pulpit the way you entered it." ^[1]

What's true in preaching and teaching is also time in counseling and everyday conversation. You can talk with other people in such a way that sets you and your mighty wisdom up high, and God won't be glorified.

Your serving can be the same way. The problem with the Pharisees was that they weren't humble. They stood and prayed for all to hear. They fasted and let everybody know how spiritual they were. They tithed from everything they had and make sure that everyone knew about it. This doesn't give glory to God.

It's the humble servant that gives glory to God (Phil. 2:3-4). It's those who are focused upon others who most glorify God.

b. Joy

John Piper has made famous the phrase, "God's most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him." This is absolutely true. When you find your delight and your joy in serving God, God is seen as glorious. He is seen a God worthy of our trust and obedience and commitment.

But, if you serve with a sour disposition on your face, God is viewed as an ogre, who demands our submission. God received no glory from such an attitude.

So, serve the Lord with joy, whether it be in your speaking or in your serving. Speak to others of God with a joy on your face. Serve others with a joy in your heart.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on May 29, 2016 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] Steve Brown, "What Was I Thinking," p. 142.