

life group study guide

Series: The Pursuit of God
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Title: Finding Purpose

Service is giving of yourself for the equipping and blessing of others.

Since each of us has one life to live, we want to live it for the glory of God. God has placed in every believer a gift to be used for the building up of other believers and reaching the lost. Until we find our place in God's kingdom as servants, we will feel constantly frustrated. Life will constantly elude us and we will find our vain attempts to feel "significant" coming up short. Employing our spiritual gifts leads to our fulfillment.

"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so 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."
1 Peter 4: 10-11

Love will show itself as we give to the church family what God has given us as gifts. As we do so, we are good stewards of the many-faceted (manifold) grace of God given to us. In 1 Corinthians 15:10, Paul makes it clear that he was what he was only by God's grace. But at the same time, **His grace toward me was not in vain** because Paul put his own God-inspired efforts to work with God's grace. The idea is that if we are **bad stewards of the manifold grace of God**, it is as if that grace was given to us in vain. That grace is wasted, because it only comes to us, and doesn't move through us.

Manifold grace is many-colored grace. As when a ray of light breaks into a spray of many hues, so each of us receives God's grace at a different angle, and flashes it back broken up into some fresh color.

If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies. Every part is important; each has its job to do. A man was rebuilding the engine to his lawn mower, and when he finished he had one small part left over. He couldn't remember where it went. He started the engine and it ran great. He figured that the part was useless – until he tried to stop the lawn mower and it wouldn't stop! Even the smallest, seemingly least important part of the body of Christ is important. As we **serve one another**, we do it with the strength God provides, **the ability which God supplies** – so that to Him belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever.

- 1.) What does Peter teach about the gifts in these two verses? What is the purpose of the gifts? Verse 10 in the NIV reads, "God's grace in its various forms". What does this mean to you?

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- 2.) A few verses earlier in this chapter, we read that “the end of all things is near”. If you kept that in your mind on a daily basis, how would this change your thoughts, actions, choices, priorities, etc.?
- 3.) These two verses (10-11) talk about putting your spiritual gifts into practice so that you can serve others. In what ways do you think God has gifted you for service? How can you serve in such a way that God receives the glory (!) and not you?
- 4.) Explain how stewardship relates to God’s gifts to us.

“An argument started among the disciples as to which of them would be the greatest. Jesus, knowing their thoughts, took a little child and made him stand beside him. Then he said to them, ‘Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. For it is the one who is least among you all who is the greatest.’”

Luke 9: 46-48

True greatness shows itself in being like a child, and in being the least, not in the popular conceptions of greatness. It seems that the favorite debating topic among the disciples was **which of them would be greatest**. They all counted on Jesus to take over the world as King Messiah, and the debate was about who was most worthy to be Jesus’ chief associate. **And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a little child and set him by him.** We think that Jesus should have answered the question of who-is-the-greatest by saying, “Hey, dummies. I’m the greatest”. Instead, Jesus draws their attention to His nature by having them look at a child as an example. Children were regarded more as property than individuals in Jesus’ day. It was understood that they were to be seen and not heard. Jesus says that the way we receive people like this shows how we would receive Him. Children are not threatening; we aren’t afraid of meeting a five-year-old in a dark alley. When we have a tough, intimidating presence, we aren’t like Jesus. Children are not good at deceiving; they are pretty miserable failures at fooling their parents. When we are good at hiding ourselves and deceiving others, we aren’t like Jesus. **For he who is least among you all will be great.** Jesus then challenges us to be the **least**. The desire to be praised and to gain recognition should be foreign to a follower of Jesus. Jesus wants us to embrace **LEAST** as a choice, allowing others to be preferred before us – and not because we are forced to be **least**.

- 1.) Look back in the chapter at verses 44 and 45. What did Jesus predict about himself? How did it affect the disciples? Why do you think something was hidden from them? And why were they afraid to ask him about it?
- 2.) As a result of this conversation, a dispute arose among them. What do you think that was really all about and where else in Scripture do we see a similar problem?
- 3.) How did Jesus’ illustration with a little child depict the proper attitude a disciple should have? How can a person be truly great? How does this connect with giving of yourself for the equipping and blessing of others?

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