

Serve In Ministry – 1 Pet 4:10-11

1 Pet 4:10-11. This is the 6th message in our **Core Values** series, and so far we've covered bold preaching, passionate worship, fervent prayer, courageous evangelism, and intentional discipleship. Which leaves strategic church planting.

But before we get there, I'd like to go back to intentional discipleship, and talk about one of the 4 *ways* to be intentional. (**Discipleship Practices**) Namely, serve in ministry. To be intentional about our own discipleship and the discipleship of others, we need to worship in church, grow in groups, abide in Christ, and *serve* in ministry. Serve in ministry to grow in grace and build up the church. No service, no growth. No service, no church. It's that important.

And just like last week, I hope to give you some time *after* the service to apply the message. By exploring the opportunities to serve in the lobby. (**Serve In Ministry**)

➤ In the meantime, it starts with 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: [11] whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God [truths 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.

It's the last of a list of reminders, v10-11, in light of the end of the world. True. V7. *The end of all things is at hand* [Peter says]; *therefore* be all about self-control, and love, and hospitality, and serving. Serving in ministry.

Ministry, because *speaking* on God's behalf, and serving for his glory, *is* ministry. Like *the ministry of the word*; Acts 6:4. Or *the ministry of reconciliation*; 2 Cor 5:8. Or the ministry of *helping* people; 1 Cor 12 (28). Ministry, is serving and speaking on God's behalf.

And Peter exhorts us to do it while there's still time. *As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another* (10). Serve in ministry. That's the *crux* of these two verses.

And embedded in them, are several *reasons* to serve. Starting with this. Serve in ministry:

1. To use your gifts (v10a)

V10 again. *As each has received a gift, use it*. Use it. It's a command. Do it.

And gifts here, refer to *spiritual* gifts. Every single follower of Jesus Christ has been given at least one heightened ability, one spiritual gift, to use in ministry. Or as the Apostle Paul says it in 1 Cor 12:7 – *To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit*. To each is given the expression of the Spirit in tangible ways. And then he goes on to list a number of heightened abilities *empowered* by the Holy Spirit. (1 Cor 12:11) So spiritual gifts are heightened abilities, given to each and every one of us, for use in ministry.

And the fact that they're *gifts* means we can't manufacture them. Can't create them. They're given. And what we have, we should use. That's the point.

Instead of hiding your gift under a shroud of false humility, use it. Instead of hesitating because it requires time and effort, apply it. Instead of withholding your gift because of

something in your past, employ it. Instead of living in disobedience, do it. *As each has received a gift, use it*. Put it into practice. No matter what the cost. What the sacrifice.

And if you're not sure what your spiritual gifts are, the best way to find out is *serving*. Not a spiritual gift test. Not an enneagram. Not wishful thinking. But actually rolling up your sleeves and doing something. Trying things. Seeing what fuels you and makes an impact. Serve in ministry to find your gifts and use your gifts.

And do so . . .

• **Even if you're afraid**

Two emphases here. Don't let *fear* keep you from using your gifts. Remember Moses when God tapped him to lead the Israelites? He was like, "No way. I can't talk, I can't lead, and I can't do it." He had a gift, but was scared to death to use it. Scared to death of the consequences. And the costs. And the people.

But use it he did, and God met him every step of the way. When he submitted himself to the will of God and gifts of God, God gave him just what he needed, at just the right time; to ensure just the right outcome, in just the right way. And he'll do the same for you when *you're* afraid. Use your gifts, even if you're afraid.

And . . .

• **Even if others don't**

Even if you're alone; all by yourself. Even if others wait. Even if others "pray" about it, hoping to be forgotten. Or procrastinate, hoping someone *else* will do it. Or hesitate, hoping their friends will join them.

There's one for students. Students, serving in ministry is for you too. Friends or no friends. You've been given spiritual gifts just like the rest of us. And it's never too early to start using them. Don't let groupthink and insecurity rob you of the opportunity.

Joshua didn't. Moses' protégé. (**Josh 24:15**) After leading the Israelites into the Promised Land, he said, "*Choose this day whom you will serve . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.*" "I don't know what *you're* going to do, but I know what *I'm* going to do. I'm going to serve. Even if you don't."

➤ How about you? Do you serve *despite* your fear? Use your gifts even if others don't? I hope so. Because God commands it, and God rewards it. *Your work shall be rewarded* the Bible says. 2 Chron 15:7. Obedience brings blessing.

But make no mistake, it also brings sacrifice. Serving in ministry will cost you more than you thought, last longer than you wanted, and stretch you more than you like. But that's exactly the point of greatest blessing. The point of greatest fruit. So whatever you, don't miss out. Use your gifts.

Second, serve in ministry . . .

2. To be a good steward (v10b)

Once again, v10 says – *As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace*. Stewards, as in servants with gifts and responsibilities. And *good* stewards are those who make the *most* of their gifts and opportunities.

And notice here, that our gifts are the result of God's *varied grace*. His divine apportionment according to his goodness and will. Giving some gifts to some people, and others to others. None of which matters to a *good* steward. He simply serves to make the most of *his* gift. The gift that God has given *him*; or her.

➤ Like the second servant in the Parable of the Minas that Jesus told. Luke 19. The second servant didn't make 10 minas out of one like the first servant. He only made 5. But when the nobleman returned, he commended and rewarded the guy, just like he did the servant who made 10.

Which clues us in to the fact that being a good steward of our gifts is not about keeping up with the spiritual Jones'. Rather, it's about making the most of what God has given *you*. It's being a good steward of *your* gifts and *your* opportunities.

But it doesn't come easy and it doesn't come naturally. Our flesh fights against it. So let me give you **5 Keys**. 5 keys to being a good steward.

1. A good attitude. Starting with this: ask not what your church can do for *you*, but what you can do for your *church*; your brothers and sisters in Christ. Cultivate an attitude of otherness. And be joyful. *Serve the Lord with gladness!* the Bible says (Ps 100:2a). Happiness. Supernatural delight. All wrapped in humility with an eagerness to learn and give of yourself. Otherness, joy, and humility. Markers of a good attitude. That's the first key to being a good steward.

2. Right priorities. Where *God's* purposes and *God's* desires come before yours. I can't tell you how much I admire some of the retirees in our church, who serve us week in and week out by washing windows and vacuuming. Or helping in children's ministry. Successful businessmen and teachers and doctors, who could be picking up seashells on the seashore. Thinking they've done their time. Right priorities are key to being a good steward.

3. Perseverance. Being faithful. If you sign up to serve, stick with it. If you say yes, be consistent. Not that you won't need a substitute every now and then, but that you make a long-term commitment and stay with it. A *year*-long commitment. Swear to your own hurt and do not change. Ps 15:4. Persevere.

4. Flexibility. Serving in ministry requires flexibility; making adjustments; going with the flow. *Fail* to do that, and you'll not only fail to be a *good* steward, you'll probably fail to be a steward at all.

5. Hard work. Holding nothing back. Spending and being spent every single day and week. Trusting that God will replenish you with times of rest, and that his mercies will be new every morning.

5 keys to good stewardship. And good ministry.

Third, serve in ministry . . .

3. To bless our church (v10a)

That's the *one another* Peter's talking about. V10 again. *As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another.* Referring to your fellow believers. Those with whom you belong

together in mutual partnership; in the context of a local church. Serve in ministry to bless the church of which you are a part. That's the idea.

Not that it rules out serving and blessing believers from *other* churches; or believers around the *world*. Or *unbelievers*. But that the *emphasis* of God's command is on service to *believers*. Those who are close enough to be thought of as *one another*.

It's like the Apostle Paul says in **Gal 6:10**. *As we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone* [be a blessing to everyone], *and especially to those who are of the household of faith*. The family of God. The church. That's our *first* priority in ministry. We've been given spiritual gifts to bless and benefit our church. *Our* church.

➤ And so many of you do. It's amazing. And I'd like to take a few minutes and recognize you for it. So as I announce each ministry in our church, would you stand for a few moments if you serve in that ministry? Weekly, or bi-weekly, or monthly. Even if it's more than one ministry. And as they do, let's thank them and praise God for them.

Starting with . . .

Coram Deo Kids – Weekends or Tuesday nights in Kids Club.

Coram Deo Students – Jr. and Sr. High youth group leaders.

Let's take the next two together.

Coram Deo Sports – Like Upward Basketball.

and

Coram Deo College – Our ministry to college students on Thursday nights.

How about . . .

Coram Deo Women – Our women's ministry

and

Coram Deo Men – Table leaders, apprentices, and coaches.

Small Groups – Leaders, apprentices, and coaches.

and

Outreach – Volunteers with one of our local partners, or Sent Partner support teams.

Congregational Care – Visitation teams, encouragers, and home maintenance.

and

Biblical Soul Care – Soul Care team and advocates.

Service Teams – Ushers, greeters, parking, café, welcome center, safety and security, medical, and communion.

Production – Audio-visual, lighting, cameras, computers, sound.

and

Worship – From kids and students to Sunday mornings.

Deacons – Lead by serving

and

Elders – Serve by leading

It *takes* a church to bless a church, doesn't it? Make sure you're on *both* ends of that. Receiving *and* serving. That's where the *greatest* blessing is. Serve in ministry to bless our church. One another.

And do so . . .

4. With the **strength** God supplies (v11a)

After telling us to be good stewards of God's varied grace in v10, Peter gives some examples in v11. *Whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God [truths of God]; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies.*

If you have a speaking gift, when you serve in ministry you should speak *God's* word instead of your own. *His* oracles. *His* thoughts. That's where the power is. The strength. Same for hands-on serving. Do so in *God's* strength; the strength *he* supplies.

➤ The question is how. And the answer first of all, is *ask* God for it. *Ask* for strength. *You* [don't] *have because you* [don't] *ask*. (James 4:2) Instead of mustering the strength yourself, or trying to go it alone, wise up and ask. Instead of running on fumes, ask for fuel. Instead of serving like a lone ranger or martyr, ask for help.

Second, get right. Cleanse your hands and purify your heart. James 4:8 There's nothing like sin in your life to sap your strength. Make sure your motives are godly, and your life full of integrity. Doublemindedness and ulterior motives lead to weakness every time.

And third, lean on his presence. His Spirit within you. His power. His support. His promises. His sovereignty. His goodness. It's not only the *best* way to serve with the strength God supplies, it's the *only* way.

You may be *physically* weak in the work of ministry; emotionally weak; but that's just an opportunity for God to show the sufficiency of his grace and the perfection of his power. *For my power is made perfect in weakness*, Jesus said. (2 Cor 12:9) Serve accordingly.

And then last, serve in ministry . . .

5. For the **glory** God deserves (v11b)

Serve by the strength that God supplies [11b]—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Because glory and dominion *belong* to God, and exaltation and authority are rightfully *his*, we ought to *serve* for that purpose. For the glory God deserves.

As noble as the *first* three purposes are, they're secondary. Using our gifts, being a good steward, and blessing our church are *secondary* reasons to serve in ministry. Primary, is glorifying God.

➤ And notice it's *through Jesus Christ*. God's not leaving *him* out of the picture. He's God's Son; the apple of his eye; the second member of the trinity. Apart from whom we can do nothing.

God won't be glorified unless we're serving in the *name* of Jesus, because of the *work* of Jesus, and according to the *example* of Jesus. That's the idea of glorifying God *through Jesus Christ*.

We serve by his authority and approval; his *name*. We serve because he paved the way on the cross; his *work*. And we serve because *he* served; his *example*. God is glorified when we serve through Jesus Christ. And *only* when we serve through him. No Jesus, no glory.

Serve in ministry. It's part of discipleship.

Pray – Lord, thank you for the gifts you've given us, the opportunity to use them, and the strength to apply them. Spur us on to be good stewards for your glory.

You Are Loved