

II. Lifestyle Stewardship in Biblical Perspective  
Discovering, Developing and Deploying our Spiritual Gifts  
“Framing the Stewardship of Spiritual Gifts”

I Peter 4:7–11

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This is God’s Word and it’s true, inerrant and infallible. I Peter 4:10-11 says [10] *As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied (multifaceted) 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.* The grass withers, the flower fades, the Word of our God abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

When we talk about stewardship it is not just financial but it how we are to be good stewards in life for Christ – servant stewards for Christ. Now we are bringing this matter down to how we steward our spiritual gifts. There are four key texts on spiritual gifts and that is I Peter 4, I Corinthians 12, Romans 12 and Ephesians 4. Stewards want to hear before the Lord, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant.’ Spiritual gifts are relevant because as Christians we have a spiritual gift and we are accountable to God for it. We will find out in the next study from Paul and the passage in I Corinthians 12 that the church of Corinth was ignorant of what God says about the gifts He gives, therefore that church had become prey for false teaching, cultic ways and they didn’t know how to use them so they become unused or misused or abused. We don’t want that.

So, where do we start? We don’t start with ‘I feel...’ or ‘I think...’ but we start with what God says about spiritual gifts that He gives to His people. I believe that Peter gives us the foundational understanding of this with five framing principles that will guide us through I Corinthians 12, Romans 12 and Ephesians 4, but this I Peter 4 text applies to us now. Peter tells us in this epistle that this world is not our home. The book Pilgrim’s Progress flows from I Peter. We are pilgrims on mission, on message and in ministry and we’re people that live in kingdoms of this world for the Kingdom of God. We need to know how to accomplish our mission, proclaim our message and engage in ministry. Peter tells us we’re elect exiles of the Lord.

I really believe when I Peter was written in the first century that we are currently living in a time (21<sup>st</sup> century) that is most comparable to this first century. As Peter and the other Apostles were spreading the Gospel there was this pagan, social world order enforced by powerful governments and it was hostile to Christianity and Christ’s church. Now in the 21<sup>st</sup> century we have the rise of centralized overreaching power, neopaganism (including sexual anarchy, promiscuity, perversion and immodesty being promoted) and the attack and focus upon Christianity. Other religions aren’t a problem because they can be manipulated but Biblical Christianity has to be targeted because it has things like the sanctity of life, marriage, gender, and family that stand in the way of creature centered world and life views. Peter wants us to walk in the triumph of Christ.

I know we have been the blessing in this nation and in western civilization which was affected by the Reformation, further affected by the Great Awakening and the Second Great Awakening so you could be out and serving Jesus where the culture would give you applause but

that's not true and increasingly not true anymore. We read in Revelation that Satan wants to devour the bride of Christ and he can't get to Jesus but God is sovereign in all of this and He tells us how to live as pilgrims in exile in the midst of adversity and suffering. That is another reason I wanted to start with I Peter and Peter tells the first church not to be surprised at the fiery ordeal. Peter is repeating what Jesus said when He said 'Everyone of you will suffer for My sake.' We don't know to what degree, where or how we will suffer but it will happen as we live in a broken and hostile world. We can either go and die in a pile of self pity or go and arise as His church with the strength and wisdom He gives us and one of those has to do with spiritual gifts.

Every text in the Bible is a potential misused text if it's not used in its context and with I Peter I'm going to take a few moments covering the context so that we not only don't misuse the text but also the context really enhances our understanding of the text. Peter gives us seven things in this text to help us and each one deserves its own study but I won't have time to do that but we will dig down deep on one of them and that's spiritual gifts.

I Peter 4:1-6 says *[1] Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, [2] so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God. [3] For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. [4] With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; [5] but they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. [6] For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the Spirit the way God does.*

When Christ came to earth He suffered and the church is know as the body of Christ so the church will suffer. To think the same way as Christ we have to have the mind of Christ, Biblical thinking with a renewed mind. We live in a broken world – a world that stands in adversity – and a world that we are to reach for Christ. We are to be in this world but not of it (John 14:7).

The first thing Peter is telling us here is to live in this world and to reach the people in the world is not to be like it, participate in it, enable it and empower it, but to be different. The Christian is called to be different and distinct in this age as we approach the coming of Christ. this doesn't mean we're isolated or segregated or we go live in a compound. We are to have modesty, clarity, love for Christ and be God-centered. We don't live with the mind of the world but with the mind of Christ and not with the weapons of the world but with the weapons of the Spirit, not with the world's manipulations but with the armor of Christ.

Secondly, Christians cease from sin. What does that mean? That does not mean on this side of eternity you will ever be perfect – for we will never be perfect on this side of eternity. When you begin to suffer, knowing that Christ suffered for you to save you, what it means to cease from sin is that in your heart and mind you mature to the point that you are done with sin. Sin is not going to give me those false empty promise and me believe it anymore. There is no profit in idolatry and rebellion. Sin's wages are not excitement and joy but death. In the midst of a world where you suffer for Christ, it simply reminds you we're dead to sin and in fact we're dead to ourselves. Galatians 2:20 says *[20] I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*

It is what God has called me to be and do – we're done with sin. God has broken the power of sin in our life and that includes taking away the shame of sin. I have been born again.

I have been given a new heart, a new record, a new family and a new life and now I want to be done with sin. I want to kill sin in thought, word and deed. Then I want to get on the pilgrim's progress of not only killing sin, but living to Christ – obeying Him whom I love because He first loved me. Their suffering just reminds the Christian that there is no profit in cosmic treason against God.

Thirdly, Christians are to manifest the fruit of the Spirit, including self control. I Peter 4:7 says [7] *The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.* The phrase 'the end of all things is at hand' means that when Jesus ascended the clock was turned on and we're moving to the end – we're in the latter times. We don't know how long it will take for Jesus to return but the end is in motion as we are now moving toward it and Jesus will return when the Gospel has been preached to all the nations and all the elect of God have been secured from every tribe and nation. So in light of that fact, Peter tells us to be self-controlled and sober-minded. In other words, this makes reference to the fruit of the Spirit.

Galatians 5:22-23 says [22] *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, [23] gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.* Notice this says 'the fruit' not the fruits because the whole thing comes together. God calls us to be self-controlled and sober minded – living controlled by the Spirit and not the passions of the age. We are to be sober minded because the mind of Christ is focused and it doesn't mean it's joyless by any means. The laughter of righteousness and faith is glorious. We have clarity of mind from the Word of God and the Spirit of God controls who we are as He molds us and makes us to focus upon Christ and our prayer life will be enhanced. That leads to the fourth one.

Fourthly, Christians are to love one another. I Peter 4:8 says [8] *Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.* Jesus tells the Disciples in John 13:34-35, [34] *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. [35] By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.* What is new about it? It is as Jesus has loved us and so we have this sacrificial, thoughtful love of one another that is supposed to dominate us, lead us and fill us. The phrase 'love covers a multitude of sins' doesn't mean that if you love someone you won't talk about the sin they are doing. No, it means the opposite for in love you will help point it out and try and help them kill it. Hebrews 12:6 and Proverbs 3:12 tells us that whom the Lord loves He disciplines. So, while you love one another, to expose sin we can grow in grace, but we don't wrongly expose one another. There is shame to sin but we don't use shaming and manipulation for on the contrary we envelop and love one another as we do that with focus and desire. This leads to number five.

Number five is we are to practice joyful hospitality. I Peter 4:9 says [9] *Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.* When we live in a suffering, perverse age of paganism, you express that Christian love in joyful hospitality. There is nothing more debilitating than to be around grumbling all the time. There is another word for grumbling and that is murmuring. When you murmur and grumble you will get what you want and demoralize people around you and those who are laying down their lives to love you and lead you. No, Peter tells us we're to do hospitality.

I would like to recommend to you the book by Rosaria Butterfield titled [The Gospel Comes with a House Key: Practicing Radically Ordinary Hospitality in Our Post-Christian World](#) and Edith Schaeffer's book [The Hidden Art of Homemaking](#), for both some of the best I've ever seen on hospitality. My wife Cindy and I call our home cherith for that means a brook

and it's the place the prophet Elijah found refuge. We design our home in such a way that we can use it for God's ministry – through our weekly Bible studies, monthly visitors and various others ways. We ask God to help us arrange our home for that purpose – the purpose of joyful hospitality. We don't want a home like a castle with a mote around it. We want a home that has doors that are open, and tables with chairs that are open.

Our model is Jesus for He came to seek and to save. As He seeks and save He goes away to prepare a place for us. He has designed a place for you in the new heavens and the new earth. Here is your model of hospitality. It's seeking, serving, saving and it does so by bringing people in to the refuge of our lives for our homes are lighthouses of the Gospel. Our homes when necessary are hospitals. Our homes when necessary are a refuge. That's what God's people do in a perverse age and they do it without grumbling. It becomes a joy.

Number six is Christians are to faithfully steward their spiritual gifts in order to stay on mission, on message and in ministry, in an age of adversity.

Number seven, Christians are to exalt and glorify God. I Peter 4:10-11 says *[10] As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied (multifaceted) 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.* Christians not only steward their gifts but they do it as they exalt Christ and by so doing they give glory to God.

Many are amazed at the ministries that have been brought out of Briarwood and they will add that it's because Frank didn't care who got the credit and I know what they're trying to say, but watching him all the time, I would say Frank cared deeply about who got the credit. First of all, he cared deeply that he didn't get the credit. Secondly, he cared deeply that Jesus got all the credit and those whom Jesus loved got the credit. He cared that God would be glorified and exalted and that others who would be used would get credit but as for himself, he didn't care about it. That's the motivation.

Now that we have looked at the seven principles of how Christians are to live in an age of adversity, I want to give you five framing principles on spiritual gifts. The word for gift used in I Peter 4:10 is *charismata* and comes from the word 'charis' which means grace – a grace given gift. So, there are a couple of principles that come from verse 10 and here is the first one.

The first principle is Christians have talent. I'm trying to be relevant here – Britain's Got Talent, America's Got Talent – Christians have talent. There are two types of talent. Hopefully as a Christian when you hear talent you think of a God given gift. Jesus gave a sermon on the parable of the talents and interestingly that word talent had nothing to do with a God given talent. The word talent in this parable was about a large amount of cash – a repository of money. Most people don't think about money when they think of the word talent, because they redefine the word which now becomes a God given resource that He has given to you.

There are two types of talents I want you to think about in this series. There are physical talents and spiritual talents. We have all kinds of gifts that God has naturally bestowed upon us and they are different. We won't be spending much time on those natural talents but we will be referring to them. Spiritual gifts will determine how you use those natural talents. In the church I pastored at in Charlotte – Christ Covenant – we had some single guys in the church who didn't necessarily know what their spiritual gifts were but they had noticed the number of single women in the church who they thought would be prey for those who do work on cars (perhaps the ones who don't know Jesus) but they knew they could help some of these single ladies that would not take them long at all and anything they couldn't do for them they knew people who

they could recommend who were reputable. They all loved to do that and so the next thing I know they and some single women started this ministry that happened once a quarter where single women and widows would bring their cars to have routine maintenance done on their cars. As the men worked on the cars the young ladies would fellowship with the ladies whose care was being worked on and when their car was done there would be a rose in the seat and the work was done. There I saw mechanical natural talent coupled with the gift of mercy that was used in ministry as something effective, helpful and more than getting cars fixed relationships were being established. That is the body of Christ working.

The second framing principle is the spiritual gifts are to be received. The Father has ordained your gift. Jesus has purchased your gift at the cross, and ascended whereby He gives gifts to men, then the Father has designed, decreed and send those gifts as the Son has accomplished it and now the Holy Spirit heart delivers it to you. Gifts are not invented. Gifts comes from God. They are unearned – they are gifts of grace therefore you may work on them and with them but you don't work for them or work them up for God brings them down and you receive them.

These gifts are multifaceted and they are gloriously seen in the lives of a Christian as they are put together. You may see three different people with the gift of teaching but all three teach differently. The very nature of God's gift is shown in the pallet, like that of an artist that has all different colors of paints on that pallet. The next thing you know there is a portrait over here and we're all those colors. The Holy Spirit blends this thing together so we can accomplish the mission, the message and the ministry that Christ has given to us.

The third framing principle is Christians are stewards – stewards of the house. In other words, the Trinity has given you a gift that you are to steward. What does a steward do? The steward manages. We (stewards) own nothing in this world. In our mind and heart if we live, we do not live unto ourselves, we live unto God for to live is Christ. God owns everything – everything we have in life – not just Sunday He owns all seven days, not just the tithe but He owns the bank account and thank God for the Sabbath and the tithe to teach us. He owns all my relationships and talents. I want to be a good steward of all that God has entrusted to me. Stewards also carry out the desires of the owner as they allocate the resources and use them. How does God (the Owner) give you direction to use His resources and spiritual gifts? He does it in His Word. His Word gives you the channel markers of life ministry.

The fourth principle is spiritual gifts fall into two interdependent categories. I Peter 4:11 says *[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.* In the next two texts we cover on spiritual gifts we will see unbelievable lists of spiritual gifts that will be specific and distinctive but here he points out two categories – speaking gifts and serving gifts. The reason I say interdependent is that speakers who have speaking gifts serve and servants who have serving gifts speak. They overlap and work together. We can see this in the offices of the church – elder speaking and deacon serving. We see these categories in the lives of God's people. As we get into the specific gifts you will see that they will fit into these categories.

The fifth framing principle are two indispensable resources. You have to speak the oracles of God which is an Old Testament phrase referring to God's Word. God's people need to hear God's Word to get the mind of Christ. So in whatever you do you are bringing God's Word. Secondly, we need the Holy Spirit. We need the Word of God and the Spirit of God who brings the strength of God to accomplish these ministries.

So here is your takeaway which is foundational and, in our series, we will keep filling it out over the next couple of studies. This takeaway wraps up the framing five principles. The takeaway is a spiritual gift is a God designed and God delivered ministry resource from God to be used in concert with other believers. I will tell you that you will never use your spiritual gift – discover, develop and deploy them – to the praise of God until you are connected to the body of Christ in a local church. Hands can't work alone. Arms can't work alone. Legs can't work alone. God has gifted us to be connected and serving one another to the glory of God. Other believers enabling Christ's church to effectively exalt Christ by staying on mission, on message, in ministry for the glory of God in the midst of adversity whether your gifts speaking or serving.

Every Christian has a gift and every one is unique. No one else has one like you even though you will fit into categories. Praise God that you are unique. Here is an illustration. I was invited because someone had done an analysis of Briarwood and wanted me to attend to hear his analysis to explain why we were able to hand off ministry from Frank Barker to Harry Reeder and it didn't get torn up in the process. So, I did and this man had an answer. This is what he said; 'the reason it was able to happen without getting torn up in the process is because the church leadership was smart enough to get the next guy who would line up in personality with the previous guy.' I thought 'Are you kidding me?' I love Frank and we believe God's Word and that we're supposed to make disciples. Yes, there was so much Frank and I agreed on but personality? I don't think you could have gotten any more different personalities than Frank and me.

This is why when we do gifts, it's fine to do surveys but don't rest on those that particularly rest on personality types. It is amazing what God does with an introvert, an extrovert and they both get to pastor a church. It's amazing what God does in life and ministry with all kinds of people. Spiritual gifts are not static, they are dynamic and developing. We can't create them but we can develop them, fan the flame of the gifts and deploy them. That is what we want to do in this series – discover them, develop them and deploy them – and God sovereignly designed and delivered yours to you. And you are accountable for them at the day of judgment for how you use it, manage it and allocated it. You don't want to get there with gifts that were unused, misused or abused, but employed in serving one another that Christ would be exalted in the Lord. Surveys can be helpful and gifts are from Christ, to Christ and for Christ in the body of Christ.

This is not done for personal gratification and satisfaction. You will get personal gratification and satisfaction but we don't do it for that. Our motivation in discovering, developing and deploying our gifts is for Gospel proclamation and God exaltation. If you make spiritual gifts all about you then you will get confused, you will be a candidate for divisiveness, there will be envy, competition and jealousy. Don't make it about you for that's the best way to be blessed. Make it about God's glory, Christ's proclamation, loving one another and serving one another well within the body of Christ.

What's the best way for you to get started in discovering your gift? The best way is to go start ministering. Take your passion and find a ministry that fulfills that passion. You will see people with different backgrounds working in the same ministry and contributing to that ministry because of that passion. For instance, here at Briarwood we have many who have the passion for the sanctity of life and they minister to those who struggle in this area and those who minister come from background in the medical area, the law area, experience area, counseling area, all kinds of different talents that add to this ministry. God takes these multi-varied things and puts

them together – it's easier to get the ship to the right port once it gets moving, it can't be turned when it is sitting still in the water.

I had a man in the church I pastored at in Miami who came to me telling me he had a gift for small group discipleship and enjoyed them so much. We needed to start those in our church so we started one together with four other couples that grew to 12 couples so I handed those 12 couples off to him so that I could go and start another group. The next thing I hear is that those 12 couples are down to three couples. Someone called me to tell me they needed help so I went back and I probably didn't disciple the guy well because I'm not a real good small group leader anyway so I decided to take him with me to the next group. It grew so I handed it off to him but then got a call later that people had left that group as well. Finally, I took him to a third group to help disciple him and I just love God's blind providence at times where a blind pig can pick up an acorn every once in a while. I had three interested couples but asked this guy who said he loved small groups if he and his wife would host this group and he agreed. It ended up being the best small group I've been a part of in my life (except for the one I'm doing now). I found out that this guy loved small group discipleship but he assumed he had a speaking gift yet we found out that he and his wife were the greatest hosts a small group could ever have for when you got to there home you didn't want to leave. He had a serving gift. He would still be wandering trying to make a small group going from house to house but we found out as he got into the ministry and that's how he discovered it.

Let's arise and let the strength that God gives us to give us our stride, and the Word of God to give us our direction. Everyone of your gifts is important. The Christian life is not a cruise ship where it's all about personal convenience. The Christian life is a battleship and the horn as sounded – 'all hands on deck' so man the position that God has called you to. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. Thank You for the privilege to get started in this for this subject is so engaging and to know its relevance to every Christian. Perhaps to see it in the life of a church where the ministries in the church and from the church into the world have people being in place as who are discovering, developing and deploying the gifts You have given to us can help those reading this today to get started on discovering their spiritual gift so God please give us that to Your glory. I thank You for my brothers and sisters in Christ and God if there is anyone reading this today who has never received the gift of eternal life from Christ, who so gives His people to serve Him, may they receive that gift of salvation today. If you would like to talk and pray about this gift of salvation please call us at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200 or if you'd like to talk about your life in Christ or your spiritual gifts please call as well for we'd love to talk and pray with you about this. Jesus thank You that we can worship and praise You and bless this Lord's Day, in Jesus' Name, Amen.