

Church Theme Learning Series - Session #6

GOOD STEWARDS OF GOD'S GRACE

Belong & Serve



Connect & Grow

Remarks:

- The purpose of this study material is to cultivate a deeper sense of belonging for the church family across different generations for serving together and living out the reality of being God's chosen people, the Body of Christ, the Temple of God, living sacrifice, Christ's Ambassadors and good stewards of God's grace.
- For Personal Devotion, please refer to pages 1 - 6. With a dual purpose of preparing for group gathering, the questions are the same as for Group Discussion.
- For Group Discussion, please refer to pages 1, 7 & 8. Depending on the situations of different groups, group leaders may choose and pick the questions suitable for their groups. Group members are also encouraged to share their experiences related to this bible passage for helping others regarding its application.

Bible Verse

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

1 Peter 4:10 (ESV)

Introduction

Chapter 4 of the Epistle of 1 Peter covers some of the final exhortations of Peter to various groups. Here he provides general instructions for the entire family of God – the Church. In essence, these exhortations can be summarized as eschatological ethics. That is, Peter exhorts believers to pray (v.7b), to love one another (v.8), to be hospitable (v.9) and to exercise their spiritual gifts (vv.10-11) in light of the End. The foundation is stated in verse 7a: “The end of all things is near.” Put differently, believers ought to govern their lives by the perception that since the end of the world is near, they should live in light of God’s judgement. [1]

This bible study material will focus on the exhortation of using one’s spiritual gifts to serve others. Here Peter calls believers to a life of purposeful stewardship, urging us to live with the awareness that our time is short, and our responsibilities are great. He challenges us to speak and serve in a way that honors the One who has entrusted us with His gifts.

Join us in this study as we explore how to faithfully steward the varied gifts of God's grace, seeking to glorify Him in all that we say and do.

Remarks:

In April, we learned about the spiritual gifts God has given to each of us (“We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us.” – Romans 12:6a). We were reminded that using these gifts to serve others is essential for the healthy functioning of the church as the Body of Christ. It is also a vital expression of offering ourselves as living sacrifice to God.

Now, this same theme - using God’s gifts to serve others - reappears in 1 Peter 4. In this study, however, we will explore it through the lens of stewardship, focusing on why and how we should serve, especially in light of our accountability before Christ at “the End.”

Note [1]: “1 Peter (The NIV Application Commentary)”, Scott McKnight, Zondervan, 2000, Kindle version, p.235.

Personal Devotion

PART ONE

The end of all things is at hand. (1 Peter 4:10, ESV)

The Perspective That We Need

Peter, in his letter, has just reminded his readers that Christ stands ready to judge both the living and the dead (1 Peter 4:5). This statement likely addressed the concerns and doubts of early believers who had witnessed fellow Christians die, a fact that may have drawn the ridicule of scoffers. Such critics might have mocked the faith of these early Christians, saying, “The Christians died just like everyone else! What difference does your faith make?” In response to this, Peter firmly asserts, “The end of all things has come near” (1 Peter 4:7).

Modern skeptics might still echo this sentiment, questioning how anyone can claim that “the end of all things has come near” when nearly two thousand years have passed, and life continues as usual. Peter anticipates this objection in his second letter, where he addresses the perspective of such scoffers directly (2 Peter 3:3-10). He explains that the apparent delay in Christ’s return should not be misunderstood as a failure of divine promise. Rather, it reflects a profound difference in how God views time. For the Lord, a thousand years are like a single day, and any delay in judgment is a direct result of His patience and mercy. God does not desire for any to perish but rather that all should come to repentance. Therefore, the delay in Christ’s return is not a sign of divine indifference, but a demonstration of God’s grace and long-suffering toward humanity. However, Peter warns that this delay should not be mistaken for the cancellation of judgment – it remains a certain, inevitable reality. [2]

Peter’s use of the word “end” and the phrase “all things” carries a deep and significant meaning that needs careful consideration. The term “end” in this context refers to the ultimate goal or final outcome of a series of events. Peter employs this word to describe both the ultimate result of faith (1 Peter 1:9) and the final consequence of unbelief (1 Peter 4:17). In another instance, it is translated as “to sum up” (1 Peter 3:8), indicating a sense of completion or culmination. This “end” represents the final convergence of all of God’s plans, purposes, and prophecies. It is not a single, isolated event, but rather the grand conclusion of the divine story, where all things are brought to their intended fulfillment according to God’s eternal purposes. This “end” appears to have been set into motion with the first coming of Christ. That’s why Peter, according to his understanding, says the “end” is near. [3]

Even if Christ does not return within our lifetimes, the end is still, in a very personal sense, near for each of us. Human life is fleeting and unpredictable. No one is guaranteed tomorrow. As Peter’s words remind us, we must live each day with the awareness that our time is limited, and the opportunity to honor Christ is precious. While the broader history of the world may continue, our individual lives are finite, urging us to live with a sense of urgency and purpose, fully aware of the brevity of our days. [2] **This belief about the future should change everything about the way we approach the present. If we’re going to be good stewards, this is a vital perspective. The end is at hand. Time is short. Make the most of every opportunity.**

1. Why might some people struggle to take the idea of an imminent “end” seriously? How can we address this mindset both in ourselves and in others, based on Peter’s teaching?
2. How can living with an eternal perspective influence our relationships, work, and daily choices?

Note [2]: Excerpted & paraphrased from: Steven Cole (2013), “The Church’s Conduct in The End Times”, [url=https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-20-church-s-conduct-end-times-1-peter-47-11](https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-20-church-s-conduct-end-times-1-peter-47-11)

Note [3]: Excerpted & paraphrased from: Bob Deffinbaugh (2004), “Living on the Edge of Eternity”, [url=https://bible.org/seriespage/19-living-edge-eternity-1-peter-47-11](https://bible.org/seriespage/19-living-edge-eternity-1-peter-47-11)

Personal Devotion

PART TWO

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.
(1 Peter 4:10, ESV)

Embracing the Call to Serve

One common reason that many Christians hesitate to give generously, serve faithfully, or reach out boldly is a fundamental misunderstanding of the truth presented in 1 Peter 4:10. This verse contains both a clear command and a foundational presupposition upon which that command is built. The command is straightforward: "Use your gift to serve one another." However, the presupposition that underlies this command is equally significant: "Each one has received a gift." Unfortunately, this presupposition is often met with doubt. **Many believers struggle to see themselves as gifted or equipped for meaningful service.** They may assume that because they are not Bible teachers, church office bearers, or prominent leaders, they lack the necessary gifts to contribute to the work of the church. Such believers may dismiss themselves as "ordinary Christians," believing they have little to offer in their Master's service.

However, Scripture plainly teaches that every believer has been uniquely gifted by God. If you trust in Jesus Christ, you have received a gift. God has shaped you in distinctive ways, both through the natural abilities He has given you and the supernatural work of His Spirit within you. This divine equipping enables you to serve as an instrument of blessing to others and to glorify God in ways that reflect His creative design. Moreover, God remains free to bestow additional gifts and abilities beyond your natural capacity, as He wills, to further His purposes and edify His people.

To deny this truth is to give yourself an excuse, a convenient way to avoid the responsibility of using your God-given gifts. It allows you to slip into a passive role, rather than actively participating in the work of the kingdom. However, **when we truly accept the reality of 1 Peter 4:10 – that each believer has received a gift – we are left with only one appropriate response: to use that gift for the good of others and the glory of God.**

Why, then, do so many of us hold back? Why do we fail to give generously, serve sacrificially, or witness boldly? Perhaps it is because we underestimate the value of our contributions. We convince ourselves that our resources are too small, our abilities too modest, and our words too ineffective to make a difference. Yet this kind of thinking, while perhaps humble in appearance, is ultimately a form of unbelief. It denies the power of God to work through even the smallest offering, and it contradicts the clear teaching of Scripture. In light of this, 1 Peter 4:10 calls us to repent of this self-doubt and to embrace the truth that God has gifted each of us for His service. [4]

3. Why do some believers struggle to see themselves as gifted for service? How does this passage challenge that perspective?
4. Do you truly believe that God has given you a unique gift to serve others? If so, how have you seen this gift in action? If not, what holds you back from accepting this truth?

Note [4]: Excerpted & paraphrased from: David Strain (2019), "Stewards of God's Varied Grace", url=<https://fpcjackson.org/resource-library/sermons/stewards-of-gods-varied-grace/>

Personal Devotion

PART THREE

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

(1 Peter 4:10, ESV)

Being a steward - called to faithfulness

In the biblical context, a steward is someone entrusted with the management of another's household or resources, carrying significant responsibility and trust. This concept is vividly illustrated in the story of Joseph, whom Pharaoh appointed as the chief steward over Egypt, declaring, "You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command; only with regard to the throne will I be greater than you" (Genesis 41:40). In this role, Joseph was not merely a caretaker but a trusted representative, responsible for the wise and faithful administration of the entire kingdom's resources.

In a broader sense, Scripture teaches that every human being is called to a similar role as a steward of God's creation. From the very beginning, when God created humanity, He granted them "dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth" (Genesis 1:28). This divine mandate makes us stewards of the earth, responsible for the wise and careful management of all that God has created. The Psalmist reinforces this perspective, affirming that "the earth is the Lord's and all that is in it" (Psalm 24:1). This means that everything we possess, including our own lives, ultimately belongs to God. Our abilities, time, resources, and opportunities are gifts of grace, entrusted to us by our Creator.

The Apostle Paul highlights the essential quality of a good steward in 1 Corinthians 4:2, where he writes, "It is required of stewards that they be found faithful." **Faithfulness is the defining characteristic of a true steward.** It is not merely about managing resources effectively but about doing so in a manner that honors the trust of the one who entrusted them to us. The Apostle Peter adds a crucial dimension to this understanding, reminding believers that they are "stewards of God's varied grace" (1 Peter 4:10). This means we are not passive recipients or mere consumers of God's grace, but active managers, entrusted with gifts meant to bless others and glorify God.

Therefore, to be a faithful steward is to recognize that **we are not owners but caretakers of God's varied grace.** It calls us to a life of responsibility, integrity, and faithful service, using the gifts we have received to serve others and fulfill God's purposes in the world. [5]

5. Why do you think Peter chose the word "steward" to describe our role in using God's gifts? How does this image shape our understanding of Christian service?
6. How does recognizing that we are stewards, not owners, change the way we view our talents, time, and possessions?

Note [5]: Excerpted & paraphrased from: David Strain (2019), "Stewards of God's Varied Grace", url=<https://fpcjackson.org/resource-library/sermons/stewards-of-gods-varied-grace/>

Personal Devotion

PART FOUR

Please read Matthew 25:14-30

Parable of the Talents

In this parable, a master entrusts three servants with different amounts of money (“talents”) before going on a journey. Two servants invest and double what they received, and the master rewards them for their faithfulness. However, the third servant, out of fear, hides his talent and returns only what was given. The master rebukes him for his laziness and lack of initiative, taking away his talent and casting him out.

This parable reminds the Christian community that God has bestowed various gifts, and gifts in various measure, to all. It addresses the individual reader or the congregation hearing it in such a way that it exhorts each and all to make use of those gifts that God has given. Such gifts are normally considered natural endowments given by the Creator in creation (abilities in music, finance, the arts, and so on). But there are also particular spiritual gifts given by the Spirit (proclamation, teaching, work of mercy, and so on). In any case, all gifts entrusted are to be enlisted in the service of Christ. The metaphor of doing business in such a way that the amount is doubled (25:16) is powerful, signifying great efforts in the use of gifts one has. On the other hand, the burying of that which has been entrusted (25:18) signifies lack of use, acting in such a way that nothing has been entrusted at all.

The note of judgement is clear on the one who buries that which has been entrusted. But there is also within the parable much that can be celebrated. The very idea of risk-taking runs counter to a form of calculation that assumes that there is only way to please Christ. Taking risks is also the work of faith in action. **When it comes to serve Christ, one should be bold and not be afraid of risks.** The word of promise from Jesus, inviting disciples into the joy of his kingdom, are meant to be heard by all who do not worry too much about securing their own lives, but get on with lives of self-abandon and witness, knowing that the grace of God in Christ will more than compensate for any mistakes they might make. [6]

Many Christians only come to recognize their spiritual gifts after taking the initiative to serve Christ in meaningful ways. This often involves **a deliberate choice to step out in faith, embracing the risks and uncertainties that come with serving others for His sake.** Initially, they may feel unprepared or inadequate for the task, lacking the confidence that their efforts will make a difference. However, as they persist in fulfilling the responsibilities before them, it soon becomes clear — both to others and to themselves — that they have a genuine gift for this work, a gift given by the Holy Spirit. Once they identify this spiritual gift, they often discover abundant opportunities to put it to use, finding deeper purpose and fulfillment in their service to God. [7]

7. In what areas of your life might you be 'burying' a gift that God has entrusted to you? What steps can you take to start investing it more faithfully?
8. Share a time when you took a risk to serve others for Christ. What did you learn about your gifts and God's faithfulness in that experience?

Note [6]: Excerpted from: “The Parables of Jesus”, Arland Hultgren, W.B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2000, p.280.

Note [7]: Excerpted & paraphrased from: Ray Stedman (1970), “Living Dangerously”, url= <https://www.raystedman.org/new-testament/matthew/living-dangerously>

Personal Devotion

PART FIVE

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. (1 Peter 4:11)

The Pattern That We Must Follow

Peter highlights two major categories of ministry gifts that Christ has entrusted to the church: speaking and serving. These gifts are not reserved for pastors, teachers, or public leaders alone. Every believer has the potential to speak for Christ, whether to a family member, a friend, or a coworker. Parents, for instance, may not preach from a pulpit, but they can still teach their children about Jesus. Believers may give a reason to anyone who asks them for the hope that is within them with gentleness and respect. Peter encourages Christians to speak not with empty words or personal opinions, but with the “oracles of God” (1 Peter 4:11). This means **allowing God’s Word to shape our conversations, providing a foundation of truth when sharing our faith.** For those who hesitate, feeling uncertain about what to say, Peter’s advice is clear: commit Scripture to memory, immerse yourself in God’s Word, and let it shape your thoughts and speech. In this way, even in moments of uncertainty, you will have the living words of God to share.

Peter also emphasizes the importance of serving. Not all believers will hold formal roles like deacons, elders, or missionaries, but every act of service, no matter how small or unnoticed, is valuable in the eyes of God. This includes simple yet impactful acts like writing notes of encouragement, making meals for those in need, or praying for others. However, Peter cautions against relying solely on personal strength in these endeavors. He reminds believers to serve “with the strength that God supplies” (1 Peter 4:11). This encouragement speaks to the deep spiritual truth that **effective service flows not from human willpower alone but from a life rooted in dependence on God.** For those feeling weary or overburdened in their service, this is a reminder to draw on the limitless resources of divine strength rather than relying on their own. [8]

The Priority That We Must Maintain

Ultimately, Peter points to the true purpose of all Christian service: the glory of God. Our aim in speaking and serving should not be to sustain an institution or seek personal fulfillment, but to honor Christ. As Peter declares, our highest priority should be that “in everything, God may be glorified through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 4:11). **This perspective calls believers to make God’s glory their central focus, allowing it to shape every decision and action in their lives.** [8]

9. Do you see your everyday conversations as opportunities to speak life, encouragement, and truth into the hearts of others? In what ways might you need to strengthen your understanding of Scripture to speak more effectively for Christ?
10. What are some specific ways you can rely more on God’s strength in your daily service to others, both in your family and in your church?
11. What are the true priorities driving your life and decisions? How would your life look different if you truly made God’s glory your highest goal/priorities in every area?

Note [8]: Excerpted & paraphrased from: David Strain (2019), “Stewards of God’s Varied Grace”, url=<https://fpcjackson.org/resource-library/sermons/stewards-of-gods-varied-grace/>

Group Discussion

QUESTIONS

Please read 1 Peter 4:7a

The Perspective That We Need – “The end of all things is near”

This phrase captures the idea that the grand narrative of God's redemptive plan is moving swiftly toward its culmination. While **this “end” encompasses the final judgment and the return of Christ**, it also speaks to the present reality that **each generation lives on the edge of eternity**. Peter's words challenge believers to live purposefully, making the most of every opportunity, with the awareness that life is short, and eternity is long. This eternal perspective should reshape our values, motivate our service, and ignite our witness, compelling us to live fully for Christ in the here and now.

1. Why might some people struggle to take the idea of an imminent “end” seriously? How can we address this mindset both in ourselves and in others, based on Peter's teaching?
2. How can living with an eternal perspective influence our relationships, work, and daily choices?

Please read 1 Peter 4:10

Embracing the Call to Serve

Many Christians hesitate to give generously, serve faithfully, or reach out boldly because they misunderstand a fundamental truth in 1 Peter 4:10. This verse carries both **a command to “use your gift to serve one another”** and **a foundational presupposition that “each one has received a gift.”** Many believers struggle to recognize their own gifts, feeling inadequate because they are not pastors, teachers, or prominent leaders. However, Scripture clearly teaches that every believer is uniquely equipped by God through natural abilities, life experiences, and the work of the Holy Spirit. 1 Peter 4:10 calls us to move beyond self-doubt and use our gifts with confidence, trusting that God can use even our smallest efforts to accomplish His purposes.

3. Why do some believers struggle to see themselves as gifted for service? How does this passage challenge that perspective?
4. Do you truly believe that God has given you a unique gift to serve others? If so, how have you seen this gift in action? If not, what holds you back from accepting this truth?

Being a steward - called to faithfulness

The Bible presents the role of **a steward as one entrusted with managing the affairs of another, emphasizing responsibility and faithfulness**. Like Joseph, who was made a chief steward over Pharaoh's household (Genesis 41:40), every Christian is called to be a steward of God's grace. This stewardship extends beyond mere management to include the care of all creation (Genesis 1:28), where God grants humans dominion over the earth. Paul underscores the importance of reliability in this role, stating in 1 Corinthians 4:2 that a steward must be found faithful. Similarly, Peter emphasizes that Christians are “stewards of God's varied grace,” not merely consumers or passive recipients, but active managers of the gifts entrusted to them. This responsibility **calls for faithful and wise use of God's generous provisions**.

5. Why do you think Peter chose the word "steward" to describe our role in using God's gifts? How does this image shape our understanding of Christian service?
6. How does recognizing that we are stewards, not owners, change the way we view our talents, time, and possessions?

Please read Matthew 25:14-30

Parable of the Talents

This parable serves as both a warning and encouragement, urging believers to **boldly exercise their gifts, take faith-filled risks, and actively serve Christ**, knowing that their efforts, even when imperfect, will be rewarded.

7. In what areas of your life might you be 'burying' a gift that God has entrusted to you? What steps can you take to start investing it more faithfully?
8. Share a time when you took a risk to serve others for Christ. What did you learn about your gifts and God's faithfulness in that experience?

Please read 1 Peter 4:11

The Pattern That We Must Follow & The Priority That We Must Maintain

1 Peter 4:11 emphasizes two major categories of ministry gifts that Christ has entrusted to the church: speaking and serving. These gifts are not limited to pastors or leaders but are given to all believers, each of whom has a role in reflecting Christ's love and truth. Peter urges those who speak to do so as if speaking the very words of God, **relying on the authority and wisdom of Scripture**. For those who serve, Peter encourages them to **draw strength from God**, not merely from their own resources, to ensure that their efforts genuinely honor Christ. Ultimately, the **purpose of all Christian ministry is to glorify God** through Jesus Christ, making His glory the central focus of every action and word.

9. Do you see your everyday conversations as opportunities to speak life, encouragement, and truth into the hearts of others? In what ways might you need to strengthen your understanding of Scripture to speak more effectively for Christ?
10. What are some specific ways you can rely more on God's strength in your daily service to others, both in your family and in your church?
11. What are the true priorities driving your life and decisions? How would your life look different if you truly made God's glory your highest goal/priorities in every area?