

Because the Time is Short - Use Your Spiritual Gifts

Our Identity in Christ

By Ty Blackburn

Bible Text: 1 Peter 4:7-11
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Turn with me in your Bibles to 1 Peter chapter 4. 1 Peter chapter 4 and we're going to be talking about spiritual gifts this morning from this passage, and one of the things that we see about gifts is that they are expressions of God's grace and kindness to his people. Actually, the root idea is grace, his free favor, undeserved, that he bestows upon us, and what we see is that our spiritual gifts are not just things we have, but we are gifts to one another and every member of the body is a precious love gift from Jesus to us. And I say that as a way of also sharing in the joy that I have that Ms. Helen Spinelli is here today. Ms. Helen, you are such a treasure to us, and we praise God that you're back. She's 95 years young this year, February 20th is her birthday, and many of you remember, she fell back in the late part of this last year, was injured, and we weren't sure that the Lord was going to allow her to stay with us, that he might be taking her on home. You just never know. But she's just rebounded so wonderfully and we are so delighted that God's not finished with you and that he's still letting you be a gift to us and we rejoice in having you here this morning. And we prayed when I went to visit her one of the times that we prayed that she would be able to come back and see the body of Christ and be here, and so this is answered prayer, isn't it, Miss Ellen? So praise God for his goodness and we're so glad he's been so kind to us.

I do want to say another word before I dig into the text this morning. I want to mention just my own recommendation for you to be a part of what's happening next weekend. It's hard to express how excited I am about next weekend and what's going to be happening. The Men's Conference on Saturday morning from 8 to 12, Rocky Wyatt and XL Ministries is just an excellent ministry that is aimed at helping the church deepen the spiritual infrastructure of the church. We realize that we as elders need to go deeper ourselves, and part of what we're going to be doing is implementing a really intensive elder training that we're going to go through ourselves as elders. We're going to talk about leadership training for men, leadership training for women. A lot of times churches like our church that see the Scriptures and the clear teaching in the New Testament that leadership in the church is to be men leading the body, the same way it is in the home, we have a complementarian view of these things. Well, sometimes we'll overreact and then not talk enough about how women are still called to lead. I mean, the essence of being a disciple maker is it not you're leading someone, you're saying, "Follow me as I follow Christ." And the New Testament talks about women's roles of leadership in places like

Titus 2, also in the passages on leadership in the church. And so, we're going to have a leadership conference for the ladies, a briefer, just kind of one hour thing next Sunday at 12:30, lunch for any ladies that would like to come along with your husbands. They're invited too for that. And Rocky will be talking about the leadership training for ladies that we want to start. But the leadership training on Saturday morning, all men are called to lead. We're all called to be disciple makers, and we hope you'll come and be a part of it. I believe it's something that's just the right time for our church, and the Lord in his providence has laid everything out beautifully, so hope you'll be a part of that next weekend. Please RSVP so we can make appropriate arrangements.

Now, we're back to 1 Peter 4, and this passage, verses 7 to 11, and we're looking at spiritual gifts because that's the focus of particularly verses 10 and 11. The larger context is the passage verses 7 to 11, which we have noted. We've been considering this section of Scripture under the title, "Time is Short," because that's the emphasis that the return of Jesus is imminent. Peter was calling these believers, those to whom he writes, his audience, to live in the shadow of the Second Coming, to realize that everything that's happened in the plan of God that is required before Jesus comes back has happened when he writes these words and he says the time of the end is at hand, therefore, live a certain way. And so we've said time is short and we've seen that there are three emphases, time is short, pray. We've looked at that a few weeks back. Time is short, love. Love one another fervently from the heart, for love covers a multitude of sins. And then we looked last week at the third element, serve, because time is short, he wants us to serve. We talked about the ministries that we have as Christians. We said that all believers, every believer is called to serve. Every believer is truly a minister according to the New Testament. We are to minister for the glory of God. You are a minister if you belong to Jesus and the leadership of the church is to equip you, the saints, for the work of ministry, Ephesians 4:12.

And so, we need to be about our ministry and we began to look at that last week, but I want to focus this morning on spiritual gifts and how gifts are really the means of our ministry. The means of our ministry. And so, the message today is "Time is Short - Use Your Spiritual Gifts." Time is short, use your spiritual gifts. You know, when you think about the subject of spiritual gifts, certain questions jump to the forefront. What are spiritual gifts? What are the gifts? How can you know what your spiritual gift is? What's God's purpose in giving the gifts to the church? An observation, I think, that something that's become clear to me as I've thought about this and studied this issue, spiritual gifts are undervalued and under-emphasized in Reformed circles like ours. Undervalued and under-emphasized. I think it's largely because for two reasons. One, I think there's some difficulty in dealing with this issue. It's not easy to talk about and to figure out, and there's some complexity to the arguments of what gifts are still around. And then the other side of it is there's danger that we sense in opening kind of Pandora's box, as it were, to sort of the charismatic emphasis on the supernatural or signed gifts. Actually, check the word supernatural. I didn't mean to say that. All gifts are supernatural. All spiritual gifts are supernatural but the sign gifts, sometimes called the more miraculous gifts, in our concern not to get caught up in a misunderstanding of what the New Testament teaches about the sign gifts, and we believe that the sign gifts are not

normative for the church today, that as God has unfolded this, he's made it clear that the signed gifts are not normative. The other spiritual gifts are still in operation. Not that he can't do some things extraordinarily. He may choose to give them, but it's not normative.

Now, I want to refer you to, because I don't have time to talk about that. I'm having to stop at that moment with what I'm saying about that, except to say this. If you would like to hear some teaching on why we believe our church has the cessationist position, that is that the signed gifts are not normative for the church, you can go back on our website and if you scroll back under "Resources, Sermons," you can scroll back and watch video sermons for the last six or seven years. Well, a year ago on April 26 and May 3 on Wednesday evening, I preached two messages on why our church has the cessationist position, April 26 and May 3, 2023. So you can go back and watch them online. So I'm going to just refer you to that if you have questions about that.

Now, for the sake of our message this morning, we're going to look at this issue of spiritual gifts and what we're going to see is, well, first of all, this is one of the beauties of consecutive expositional preaching. I said it's under-emphasized and undervalued, right? We tend to, I think, subconsciously stay away from it. I don't think we intend to do it, but we sort of subconsciously stay away from that subject, but when you preach through the Bible, book by book, chapter by chapter, verse by verse, you come to a passage like this, and you have to preach on spiritual gifts because the text talks about them. So, that's the beauty of consecutive expositional preaching and so, thank God for that, that we deal with this subject again this morning because the text requires us to.

So every Christian is a minister, every Christian is gifted for ministry. These are the teachings of the New Testament. I said it's undervalued in the sense that there are five different passages which speak to spiritual gifts in the New Testament with some detail. This passage we're looking at today, 1 Peter 4:10, and 11; Romans 12, verses 6 to 8; 1 Corinthians 12 verses 4 to 11; and 1 Corinthians 12 verses 28 to 31; and Ephesians 4:7 to 11, 7 to 12, actually, and you have in each of those some listing of gifts. Now, let me say right up front that the lists of gifts are representative, not exhaustive. God is not trying to tell us every gift that he has made. He's giving us a representative list of the gifts that he has given, because spiritual gifts are just divine enablements to edify others. And there are gifts that go beyond, I mean, with certainly what we see in the New Testament, but these are representative and help us understand what spiritual gifts are.

So this morning we look at 1 Peter 4. We'll read verses 7 to 11 to see the context, but we're focusing in particularly on verses 10 and 11. Time is short, use your spiritual gifts. Let's begin reading at verse 7.

7 The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer. 8 Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. 9 Be hospitable to one another without complaint. 10 As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 11 Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances

of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Let's pray.

Father, we ask that You might now by the Holy Spirit, the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, open to us this text. Give us eyes to see, ears to hear, hearts to repent and believe more deeply in our glorious Savior and in Your wonderful design for Your people. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

You know, what has God up to in this giving of spiritual gifts? There's so much to that, and this passage speaks to it to some detail but essentially, what we're going to see is that one of the things that comes out of this text is that God has gifted the church to show and put on display his manifold grace, phrased in the text in verse 10, "good stewards of the manifold grace of God," as each has received a gift, use it as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. God has given his grace, he's bestowed freely in kindness gifts to his church, and we then are to be good stewards of the gift, deploy the gift, use the gift, and in so doing, the manifold grace of God is put on display. Manifold actually could be translated multicolored. It is a glorious tapestry God is weaving with the various gifts that he has given to the church and as you use your gift, you bring some color to the glorious picture.

Now think of an impressionistic painting and how color. It captures and presents and captivates the viewer as he looks at the picture, and you see the play of color and light. And so in the same way, God has gifted us to be a picture of his manifold, many-colored grace and so beauty is a key part of what he's saying here in this passage, and beauty results in glory, the beauty of God in his design. The fact that he has... what we're going to see is he's gifted us each individually, uniquely, distinctly. Your gifts are not exactly like anyone else's gifts. You may have the same general gift, but even the flavor of that, because of the unique character that God has given you, is going to be slightly different and what happens is when the body serves, when we have a ministry opportunity, someone's in need, and various members of the body move toward that need, and you see what happens is somebody comes and they see, let's take an example, a family. You know, maybe the husband is a young family, young children, wife staying at home caring for the babies, and he's incapacitated or even maybe possibly the Lord takes him home. Think about the needs of that family. Devastating loss. So many needs, practical and spiritual. How are they going to make ends meet? They need financial help. How are they going to take care of all the things that the man did around the house? Cutting the grass, looking after the car, fixing things inside the house. How's she going to deal with this loss of her young husband? The ache in her soul. These children who've lost their daddy, they need to be comforted. The questions that surround them. Why? How has God allowed this to happen? So many needs. This gaping wound, this pressing, this group, cluster of pressing needs, and the body of Christ, the Spirit mobilizes his people to move toward them, and as they move toward them, different people. We all see the big picture. We see

the things I've just laid out. You can't miss those, but we'll find ourselves drawn to particular aspects of those needs. Some will gravitate to the more practical things and gladly pick up. Suddenly one member's cutting the grass weekly in the summer. You got to do that regularly, don't you? And he's weed eating, and he's doing that, and he's just doing it, arriving, bringing his lawnmower, leaving, and the yard's cut. The woman now grieving, her heart heavy, so even though she can cook, she needs the support and people are bringing meals and they're helping and folks are sitting with her and mourning with those who mourn. Families that have children are taking the kids out for play dates that they hadn't planned, but now they know they need to do. And various ministries, exhorters are coming alongside, the gift of mercy to come alongside. The gift of administration. All these gifts come together and what those that look at it from the outside see is the manifold beauty of God and his grace.

This is what we're called to. This is what he's inviting us to in this passage. He's saying time is short, the end is near, we saw last week, focus your ministry first on the people of God. We talked about the manner of your ministry. Now we're really talking about the means of your ministry. How do you do it? What are the tools that you have? Well, God has given you a tool, at least one if you're a believer. You may have, well, you actually have more than one, tend to have one that tends to be dominant on average. I mean, we don't know this from the text. It just seems from experience. You can kind of see people have one gift usually, some people have more than one that are really strong. It's hard to pick which is the strongest. Others of us just have one, and there it is and we're like, "This is all I've got. I got one trick. I'm a one-trick pony." Well, no, we're really not, because we're supposed to learn all the gifts from each other. That's one of the beautiful things. As you move towards somebody and you minister to the need that you see, say you see the emotional burden, and you have the gift of mercy, and you're ministering to this woman in her pain, and as you're there, you see the servant coming around doing things, and you are reminded, "Wow, that's so helpful to have that practical ministry." And you're now learning, "I know I need to do that myself." And Jesus is teaching all of us to be more like him because Jesus had all the spiritual gifts. He embodies all of it. He is the most amazing prophet that the world has ever heard. Never did a man speak like him. Remember who said that? That was the unbelieving temple guards who were sent to dispatch to go arrest Jesus in the temple, they came back empty-handed. The chief priests and the priests are saying, "Why have you not brought Him back?" And their answer was, "Never did a man speak like He speaks." What a prophet, and yet what a humble servant who also washed his disciples' feet, who laid down his life and cared for the practical needs, touched the leper, healed his wounds, opened blind eyes, opened deaf ears, loosed the dumb tongue. He cared for the whole person, Jesus, and so as we use our gifts and the multitude of the gifts, what happens is in the big picture, people see Jesus. They see him on display ministering to all these needs.

So now with that introduction, let's look at the first point this morning. We're going to look at three questions, basically what, how, and why. First, what is a spiritual gift? What is a spiritual gift? The key word in the text this morning, and I mentioned it already, is the word translated in the NASB "special gift." If you've got a NASB, you'll see that "special" is in italics, which is the New American Standard's way of telling you it's not in

the original; they're adding it for the sense of the meaning. The actual word in the text is the word charisma. charis, c-h-a-r-i-s, the word for grace, with an m-a on the end, which means result of. That's the way Greek nouns operate. The m-a means the result of the concept that's before it, a result of grace, a gift of grace. It's actually translated literally, it says, "as each one has received a grace," the idea is grace gift. In the New Testament, there are various words used for spiritual gifts. 1 Corinthians 12:1, Paul says now concerning, and he actually uses the word pneumaticon, spiritual. Actually, spiritual, and you have to supply the word gifts. He had questions about spiritual gifts, and that's emphasizing these gifts are those which the Holy Spirit gives. Another word in Ephesians 4:7 is the word doreon, which is a word for gift. It actually means gift; literally, it's that which is given.

And so you have that which is given, spiritual gifts, and grace gifts, and grace gifts is actually the most prevalent word in the New Testament of all three. It's also found in 1 Corinthians 12:28. He speaks of spiritual gifts. The second time, he uses the word charisma. And it's found in Romans 12:6, another one of the key passages. So three of the key passages, of the five key passages on spiritual gifts, have the word charisma. It's grace gift. It's an expression of God's grace. God's grace is that which is given freely. God's grace is that which is intended to express his heart to us, but it's also that which brings joy. One of the key things to remember is the relationship of grace and joy. You can't see it in English. g-r-a-c-e does not relate to the word j-o-y, does it, in English, but in Greek it does. The word for grace is charis, c-h-a-r-i-s. The word for joy is chara, c-h-a-r-a. So grace is that which brings joy as well. It's God's gift to share his joy with his people and so his gifts are intended for the joy of his people. Now, they're not for the joy of the recipient, though, because we're supposed to use these gifts as servants, which we talked about last week. Whether you're a teacher or you're a practical minister, I mean, you're speaking gifts or practical gifts, we're all to use them as servants, waiting tables. We receive the gift not to glory in the gift. We receive the gift in order to give ourselves away in service to others for the glory of Christ.

So charisma, the key word, what is the gift, charisma? And we can define the gifts. In fact, this is a definition of spiritual gifts. It's gifts of grace granted by the Holy Spirit to enable us to edify others for the glory of God. Gifts of grace granted by the Holy Spirit to enable us to edify others for the glory of God. They're supernatural. Every gift is supernatural. It's from grace. It's not natural. Now listen, sometimes God's supernatural gifts come alongside with a natural disposition that you have. Maybe you had a natural gift and now it's empowered by grace now that you've become a believer. You understand that that's a possibility. Sometimes someone will be a good speaker and then they get saved and they become an even better speaker. This would be like Paul. He was a good speaker and a good writer, particularly a good writer better than a speaker, and when he got saved, he became a better writer, more compelling in his arguments and abilities. But sometimes you'll run into people who they had no desire to teach, never wanted to teach, were terrified of teaching, never taught, they get saved and suddenly they discover they have a teaching gift. You can see really clearly the divine enablement there. But either way, it's gifts of grace granted by the Holy Spirit to enable us to edify others for the glory of God.

A second part...so what is the spiritual gift? That was our first point, point 1A, key word, 1B, the two types of gifts. We're talking about what are spiritual gifts. This passage speaks to us about two types of gifts. This would be point 1B. He says, "Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies." It sounds like there's only two gifts, speaking and serving, but when we look at the other passages in the New Testament, we see that these are the two categories of gifts. All gifts fall under one of these two categories, they're either speaking gifts or they're serving gifts. They're either gifts that speak about us edifying by speaking the truth to our brothers and sisters or edify by meeting the practical needs of our brothers and sisters. When you look at the various lists of gifts, you see things like prophecy, which is the supernatural ability to see and understand the things of God and to communicate it with authority. Gift of teaching, orderly arrangement, to explain how things fit together. Gift of exhortation, the ability to come alongside someone and exhort them to follow Christ. These are speaking gifts. The serving gifts are the gift of service, which speaks of practical ministry, the gift of helps, the gift of administration. Even the gift of healing, though we don't see it in the same way that they experienced it in the first century as a part of the sign gifts, to come alongside people who are hurting to minister to them, physically, practical.

So you have these two types of gifts. There's 18 gifts, depending on how you group them, there's no less than 18 gifts listed in the New Testament and they fall under these two headings. Now, that's number one. What is a spiritual gift? Number two, how are we to use them? So after we understand what are spiritual gifts, number two, how are we to use them? And the first little subpoint under this is how are we to know what our spiritual gift is? This is one of the reasons that there's some complexity about it is I think in the evangelical church since, as long as I can remember, this has been a kind of a lingering question. Whenever you bring up spiritual gifts, people are like, "How do you know what your gift is?" You may wonder, "What is my spiritual gift? I don't know. Or maybe I think it might be this." How do you know? How do you find out? What's interesting, you read the Bible correctly, it's instructive for questions like this. How do you find out what your spiritual gift is? Do you need to find a test? Well, the New Testament, and this passage in general, and this passage in particular, assumes you will know what your gift is. So that's good news and bad news. Good news, you're going to know what your gift is. Bad news, you don't know yet. Well, I know that's discouraging. There's not a secret formula, secret sauce to figure out what your gift is. But it's instructive. He assumes you should know. Think about that.

So if I'm not sure, why don't I know? This is the way it is in all the passages. He assumes that we know. Well, I think sometimes we over-hyperanalyze. It's not just the fact that we sometimes get too... I think part of our culture and the way we think as Western people is we think more... in fact, this is the way we think, you know, I need to know what my gift is so I can serve. If I only knew what my gift is, then I would really serve. That's how we think in kind of a Western mindset. More of a Hebrew mindset is do before you know. You don't have to know to do. Greek mindset, we gotta know, we gotta know, we gotta know. Theory, theory, theory, theory, now maybe practice. Hebrew mindset, know and

practice, know and practice, know and practice. Do it as soon as you know. Even before you know fully. You know a little bit, do what you know and you'll know more.

I forget which theologian said, this is actually tangentially related. Sometimes we want to... Another way that we see this dichotomy between East and West, and particularly the Jewish mind versus the Greek mind, is to say, "I must know that I may believe. I need to have certainty, and then I'll believe." So, I know that I may believe and this theologian says that's wrong. Biblically, it is, "I believe that I may know." You trust God with what you do know, knowing that you don't know everything, and you believe even beyond what you know, and then you come to know on the other side of belief. Does that make sense? So think of it this way, we can then apply this. "I know that I may serve. I want to know my gift that I may serve." Turn it around biblically, "I serve that I may know my gift." Get to serving.

One of the authors that I read last year talking about this said, you know, we want to figure out, people talk about discovering your spiritual gift, discovering your spiritual gift, and they give you these tests to take, and he said, the New Testament teaches it this way, if you will serve, you know, it's like, I need to find my gift so that I can serve the way we think about it. Find my gift so that I can serve. He says, serve and your gift will find you. You don't have to look for your gift, it will find you. So the idea is, New Testament mindset is, look around you for needs, move toward the needs, serve, trusting in the power of God to help you to serve what you see, and to do your best to serve them by the power of God, depending upon the Holy Spirit, prayerfully, even as you do it, but move toward them and your gift will find you. I think that's actually what God intends. Much more important than taking a spiritual gifts test, not saying that you don't have to repent and come to the front and acknowledge that you took a spiritual gifts test. I've taken one myself in my life, but it's just not the way. The New Testament teaches, serve that you may discover your gift. So that's how you know.

Now, how are we to use them, though, once we know? I mean, there I am, I'm saying the same thing, strike that from the record. How are we to use our gifts even before we know what they are? If someone, we see a need that they need some encouragement, the idea is speak to them. Share something of God's word with them. Engage in conversation. Invite them to share their hearts. Listen so that you can know and discern what might be an encouragement to this person and speak. You look at their needs, you see a need practically move toward it. Now, what I want to do though, in 2B and C, how to use your gifts, I want to talk about using your speaking gifts and using your serving gifts because he gives clear instruction on how to use these.

So 2B, how to use your speaking gifts and in a couple of phrases, with dependence, and with authority. Use your speaking gifts with dependence and with authority. This flows from the phrase, whoever is speaking, who is speaking, whoever speaks is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God. Very important phrase there, "the utterances of God," literally the words of God. It seems to be a technical term used in Scripture when it's used in the New Testament and also in the Old Testament, the Greek Old Testament, the Septuagint, Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible. It's the same phrase. It means the

very words of God and so I think it means we're to depend upon God to give us the words, that's what it means to depend with dependence. So when you go to move towards someone who needs to have something spoken to them, the fundamental attitude is, "Lord, You must speak. Help me. You must speak. Help me." But also with authority because I think it also connotes the idea that when you speak, you are to seek to be speaking the very words of God. You're to be trying to be accurate in your handling of the word so that you're speaking what God wanted said when he wrote the word that you're quoting. So this doesn't mean that we're supposed to go around just praying, not thinking about what we're going to say to people until we get there. I mean, there's always wisdom about asking questions and discerning so that you know what they really need. But we want to be people who ask questions, discern what they need, and we know how to handle the word, because we've studied the Bible ourselves, and we bring a passage up, we're bringing it up correctly. We are handling the word accurately like it says in 2 Timothy, chapter 2, verse 15, we want to be workmen who need not be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. Cutting it straight.

That takes study and so this is saying, look, when we handle the word of God, make sure you're using the word correctly. Don't misquote a passage out of context. Too often we do things like that. We have sort of colloquial ways that we think that God has said this. I mean, we even add things in that we think are in the Bible. People say things like, "God helps those who help themselves," and think that's in the Bible somewhere. That's not in the Bible at all. But even sometimes we quote verses and we misuse them. One of the ones I remember from years ago that I heard, and finally it hit me that this doesn't make sense, I would hear people talking about their children, or maybe somebody's talking about some young person who has departed from the Lord, and they are hopeful they're going to come back and they would say in that context, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he's old, he'll not depart from it." The idea they were thinking was that, hey, bring this verse up as a comfort to the parent whose child is wayward now. The problem is that's not exactly what the text is teaching. The text is saying not that maybe they'll come back later. The text says nothing about that. The text says, train them up in the way they should go according to their bent, and they will never depart. So you're bringing up a verse that is completely irrelevant, right? So we want to handle the word correctly.

Now, that's what he's saying so we need to labor it knowing what the Bible actually says. Study the text in its context. This is why it's so important to learn how to exegete the Scripture. Exegete means to lead out the meaning of the text, it means to understand the meaning of the text as the author intended it. That's the control meaning, the text means what God meant when he said it, therefore, the text means what God's inspired author meant when he said it. That's why we talk about things like the historical context of 1 Peter. What were the circumstances of the audience, the author? When he said this, what was he getting at? When you understand that, that's the first step in helping someone with the word. You have to draw out the meaning correctly and then, that's exegesis, exposition is then exposing that and applying that to the present day. It's as if what you're doing when you handle the Bible is you're standing between two worlds, you're standing in the world of the original text to understand what it means, and you're standing in...now

you take a step into the world of the person to whom you're speaking, and you apply that meaning to their life, to their circumstances, to the questions that confront them in their present day. That's exegesis and exposition. Of course, that's what we do as preachers and Bible teachers, but really, as Christians, we all are called to do that because we have to speak, every one of us. I said last week, no matter if your gift is mainly a serving gift or a speaking gift, you have to do all these things. I have to do all these things. We all have to serve. We all have to speak. We can't say, "No, I don't speak. I only serve. No, I don't serve, I only speak." No, we're called to do all these things.

So speak with dependence and with authority, that is, when you understand that you've understood the text accurately in its original context, and you then apply that to someone, there is an element of "Thus says the Lord" in your words. But when you misappropriate, when you take a text out of context and you speak from it, there's a lacking of authority. I was at a conference one time for preachers and it talked about exposition. It was a small group meeting before a larger meeting. I was along with three of my seminary buddies. We drove from Jackson, Mississippi, where we were in school, to Memphis, Tennessee. James Montgomery Boice was there, and a man named Dick Lucas. They were both great blessings. You probably know the name James Boice, or you may know the name James Boice. You probably don't know the name Dick Lucas. He was an English preacher and he was very memorable because they were both fantastic, but Lucas was just very transparent and just right and direct. You know, he would ask us, he was asking the group for, "Hey, what does this text mean?" He would read a passage of Scripture and say, "What does this text mean?" And he was just like, "You completely missed it." And these are pastors. You know, we're seminarians. We're the young guys just kind of there in the room observing and these pastors, guys like my age, or even, you know, well between me and seminary, are there and they're saying, "Well, this passage, you know, like on Jesus walking on water, this is what it means." And he's like, "You have completely misrepresented that text." He said one time, "If I had a pen, I would come and prick you," said that to one of the guys. And we were over there just scared to say anything, and he started calling us the four chaps from Jackson, the four seminarians. He's like, "I want to hear from the four chaps from Jackson." So one of us had to answer some stuff. We actually did okay, comparatively. I guess he had low expectations for us. He didn't prick us with a pen. But what he was getting at is one guy had said something, and he said this to him, "That, you know, what you're saying, that's a good biblical message, but it is the wrong text. This text doesn't say what you're saying." That is, the Bible says it somewhere, but not where you are looking right now. And so, we need to learn how to make sure that we understand it. It's not that complicated. This was where they were getting a little figurative with like the walking on water and the storm and this kind of thing, rather than looking at the context, looking at the historical understanding, that kind of thing.

So, we need to study to show ourselves to be approved. In fact, I'm going to teach a class this summer, I'm planning on eight to 10 hours on exegesis and exposition. Sometime during the summer, we're figuring out when, on the weekends maybe, or Wednesday nights. You'll hear more about that later. But the idea is speaking gifts, use them in dependence upon God. God must empower you because all of the study, if the Spirit's not

working, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord." There's no hope unless the Holy Spirit's at work but that doesn't mean that we're not supposed to study hard to show ourselves approved. That's the balance. And when you have that, you speak with authority and you can say something that someone already knows, and yet because you're applying the Scripture to their life in a moment, they already know it, but you're speaking it, it comes forth as the utterances of God. It's amazing how God works through us hearing other people tell us what we already kind of knew but they apply it in the moment to the circumstance and it's like a key unlatches the prison door and we walk out set free, often wondering, "Why didn't I already know this myself?"

That's how we use our speaking gifts, so whether it's exhortation or teaching or prophecy, we're to use the gifts with dependence and with authority. Now, serving gifts, he tells us, we're to look at verse 11, whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies. The idea, first of all, is with dependence again. And here, dependence because it's by the strength which God supplies. Even as you go about doing practical ministry, we should do it in the power of God, depending upon the Lord. The brothers that did such a great job yesterday on the deck, the skill they have, all of that's important. It was engineering. It was, you know, some practical how-to experience that they had and skill and yet, to be honoring to the Lord, I hope they were depending upon the Lord as they did the work. And if not, even more so next time, right? That we should do that, remind ourselves if God's not building the house, they labor in vain who build it. And it's so beautiful to see the various gifts and you see that in times like that when I was up there watching, helping a little bit, but watching mostly, knowing my limitations, you know. But anyway, you watch guys and you see the way that they, the different gifts are at work. Like some guys are figuring out what to do and telling other people to do it and it's not because they're lazy, it's because they have the gift administration and it's just coming out of them to think, "We need somebody to do this, you need to do this, you bring over here," and other guys are just immediately picking up stuff and going and you just watch their spiritual gifts, and it's beautiful.

So serving with the gift with the strength God supplies. There's really a rich word here, "which God supplies, which supplies," this word supplies actually is a word, chorego, which is a very rich word in the Greco-Roman world. It's the language of the theater and the amphitheater. You know, you see as we uncover ruins all over the Greco-Roman world, there are theaters and amphitheaters all over the place. They were big on entertainment, you know, Greek playwrights and Roman, you know, the enjoyment of entertainment. Well, this word translated "supplies" is the name of the person who would supply for a chorus. Now, they used the word chorus differently then. The chorus would be the actors in a play, the singers, the dancers, all of those were in the chorus, and the chorego was the person who was supplying all the needs. It was taking care of everything financially, underwriting the project, paying for everything, the food, the transportation, the costumes. Everything that was needed to make a play or to make some kind of performance come off with precision and beauty, the person doing the chorego was supplying and he's saying, "God supplies everything that you need. There's no detail at which He won't supply. Depend upon Him for everything."

So it's with dependence, but it's also with power. If speaking gifts are with dependence and with authority, serving gifts are with dependence and with power, because he speaks of the power which God supplies, that is, the intrinsic might that God supplies. The ability itself is that which God supplies and when we think biblically, we understand that we are nothing apart from the grace of God, that he actually supplies your next breath. That's how sovereign he is and so, depend upon him for the strength which he supplies. Work hard, don't wait, don't sit there and say, "Lord, I'm waiting, I'm waiting on strength, I don't feel any strength yet." No, go serve. But as you go serve, "Lord, give me strength as I go." That's the balance.

So that's how we're to use them, with dependence and authority, speaking gifts, with dependence and power, serving gifts, and then finally, the third question, why? For the glory of God. "By the strength which God supplies," verse 11, "so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." When we use our gifts, moving toward needs, feeling inadequate always, that's the norm. To feel inadequate, that when you feel adequate, that's the time to be worried. "Let him who thinks he stand take heed lest he fall." When you feel inadequate, you're qualified. Go toward the need. Depend upon the Lord. Ask him for strength. Ask him for words. Ask him for power to serve. And in doing this, because God is supplying the authority, God is supplying the power, who gets the glory? God. From him and through him and to him are all things. We see his glory on display.

So that needy person we talked about in the beginning, the young family, as people move in various levels of uncertainty about how to help, they move toward her, and they minister, sometimes it seems to go well, sometimes it doesn't but you just keep at it serving, the various gifts being deployed, what happens is the manifold grace of God is set on display. Jesus is actually made visible. People see his glory. They see, they hear in the words of the people who are teaching and speaking and exhorting, authority. They hear an echo almost of what the temple guard heard, an unbeliever hearing this, hearing someone say with confidence, "We know that God has a plan for this. He numbered your husband's days before he was born. He loves you and He has a good future for you. He's going to use this to make you like Christ. He's going to use this in each of your child's lives, every one of them. The oldest who is going to remember him with the most longing, the youngest one who didn't really even know him is going to always wonder what his dad was like, God is going to use this for good to make them like Christ. He's going to bless them." Unbeliever hears you saying that and there's an echo, "Never have I heard someone speak with such authority." We're manifesting Christ.

When you go and you serve and you care for the practical needs and there's this giving that just keeps on giving, this liberality and generosity because it's grace flowing not just to you but through you, it's God's grace empowering. They look and they see Christ ministering to those who are afflicted, caring for those who are suffering, and it redounds to his glory and there's something incredible about the way, it's this multifaceted thing because the other part of it is they look and they see this disparate group of people. They see people from different backgrounds, socioeconomically, racially, even religiously, from different countries, they see people now coming together in a body with these

different gifts, and they sit there and they see there's a oneness, there's a unity, there's a love, and they know that what Jesus prayed for the night before he was crucified, "That they may be one Father as We are One. I in You, You in Me, that they may be in Us so that the world may know that You sent Me." They see that and they know Jesus is the Son of God because of the beauty of the body of Christ and the uniqueness.

It's like, you know, you think of how beautiful a symphony is. All the various instruments, you know, a hundred instruments or so, in an orchestra, beauty of the instruments we had today, woodwinds, brass, think how different the instruments are. Difference between a trumpet and an oboe, or cymbals and a harp. Just vast difference and you have, you know, you got a dozen or 15 first violins and a dozen or 15 second violins, and you got violas, and you've got all of these various, the bass, and then you have the various, all these instruments, and you have all the different people playing those instruments, and yet they're playing their note that they have been assigned by the author of the music and they're playing at the direction of the conductor, and they're hitting their notes and there's this beautiful melody and harmony and rhythm coming forth and it's captivating all who hear as each one does his part. And then above that, I think this is even more wonderful, what is the most beautiful instrument that God has created? Is there anything that can match the versatility and the beauty of the human voice? You have those instruments now accompanied by a choir, like our choir that sang a few weeks back, what incredible music we had. The richness of the human voice that God has made us to be able to worship and praise him and there's no two voices that are exactly alike. They're like fingerprints, I was reading this week. The distinctness, even though some people sound in the same general area, there's a distinctness about every single human voice and God has ordained that we join our voices in praise and what he wants to hear more than anything else, more than the trumpets, more than the oboes, more than anything else, is the voices of his people worshiping and adoring him. And when you and I use our gifts the right way, we are serving, we are worshiping him as we serve and it's truly, we are singing and people hear the beauty and the glory of the song, and they know the author that has written the song, and they see the conductor, the Holy Spirit that's directing the song, and they cannot escape the fact that Jesus Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords. So what we have to do, because time is short, is lay aside our fear, lay aside our complacency, lay aside our selfishness, our timidity, and we've got to use our gifts. Look for needs, move toward them, use your gift, and worship your King, and look at the symphony and the glory of the music that God is going to play. That's what we're called to do.

Let's pray.

Our Father, how grateful we are for the glory of the salvation that You've given us in Christ. We are so inadequate, O Lord, sinful from our mother's wombs, unworthy of anything but wrath. We deserve Your anger and Your judgment, which we read about earlier. We are guilty, and there is no health in us and yet You have set Your affection on Your people and saved us through the work of Your Son. The Lord Jesus Christ, His perfect life, His sufficient sacrifice, bearing Your holy wrath against my sin and our sin, He bore all of it and said, "It is finished." And when He died, He opened the pathway to

God and when He rose again, He declared that nothing can stand between us and nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. And now He sits at the right hand of the majesty on high, and He is a Savior to all who will call upon Him. And Lord, we thank You that You are not only a reigning King, but You're a glorious lover of Your bride and head of Your body directing that we would be one and we pray that You would make us one as we've talked about today, that You would make us earnest and urgent to meet the needs of those around us, that we would move in the power and in the authority that You supply, dependent upon You, and that we would do so only for Your glory, not for ourselves, but so that You might have pleasure and that people might see how glorious and beautiful and wonderful You are. Make us one, Lord. For the glory of Jesus, make us one. We pray this in His name. Amen.