

Glorifying God in the Church by Serving One Another - 1 Peter 4:10-11

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at Gold Country Baptist Church on April 6, 2008

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Before we look at our text this morning, I want to begin in Ephesians. At the start of this year we began a series of messages on the church that ended up being 14 weeks and today we conclude our series on glorifying God in the church. This focus on God's glory through the basics of what the church is to do and be, this has been really refreshing and exciting for me to rediscover and reaffirm the essentials of the church Christ loves and died for, and He seeks to make us a holy bride to the praise of His glory & grace.

This is a series that I honestly would love to continue for many more months and years and would not have to run out of passages for expository messages showing the riches of God's glory. But it will be good to return to a consecutive series through a whole book and we'll be going through Titus (where we're going next on Sun. mornings). I pray the foundation and framework of God's glory being pre-eminent and central will always continue. Our study has been called the church series, but it's been ultimately about God.

A few weeks ago we studied Ephesians, which says in its central verse (3:21), the hinge on which it turns to the 2nd half of the book "To God be the glory in the church ... Therefore, walk worthy"

And we saw that Eph. 4 tells us *how* we are to glorify and exalt God which requires that for Him to be lifted high we must first be kept low and humble, patient, being diligent to preserve the unity and fellowship we have, and because we are recipients of God's grace, what He gives to each of us is to be shared with others.

Look for a moment at the cover of your bulletin this week – we get these pre-printed a year in advance, but it's neat to see how often God's providential timing orchestrates the cover and verse fitting very nicely with the message.

Eph 4:7 "Unto everyone is given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift"

This is very much the message of our main text in 1 Peter 4, and I want to first tie in the serving of one another in 1 Peter to what Ephesians 4 had to say about the purpose of the church. We saw in Ephesians 4:11-12 (if you weren't here, you need to get the CD, because that may be the most foundational messages all year) but that passage teaches that God gave pastors and teachers to the church for the equipping or training of the saints, so that the saints (the believers) can do the work of ministry, to the building up of the body of Christ. That same phrase, "building up the body" is used in v. 16 and it makes clear every member must do its part.

As James Boice reminded us:

"the early church often used the word 'minister' or 'ministry' as referring to what *all* Christians are and must do ... There are indeed pastors, as distinct from other Christians. But the difference is one of spiritual gifts and service rather than of ministry versus non-ministry."¹

It has also been said, ‘Christianity ... has become a professional pulpitism, financed by lay spectators!’ Nowadays we hire a church staff to do ‘full-time Christian work,’ and we sit in church on Sunday to watch them do it. Every Christian is meant to be in [ministry] ... There is indeed a special ministry of pastors, teachers and evangelists—but for what? ... For the [equipping] of the saints for their ministry.²

John Stott sums it up well, in explaining that this expression

‘about equipping God’s people is of far-reaching significance for any true understanding of Christian ministry. For the word *ministry* (*diakonia*) is here used not to describe the work of pastors but rather the work of so-called laity, that is, of all God’s people without exception ... the privileged calling of all the people of God. Thank God that in our generation this biblical vision of an ‘every-member ministry’ is taking a firm hold in the church.

It does not mean that there is no distinctive pastoral ministry left for clergy; rather it establishes its character. The New Testament concept of the pastor is not of a person who jealously guards all ministry in his own hands, and successfully squashes all lay initiatives, but of one who helps and encourages all God’s people to discover, develop and exercise their gifts. His teaching and training are directed to this end ... instead of monopolizing all ministry himself, he actually multiplies ministries.

What model of the church, then, should we keep in our minds? The traditional model is that of the pyramid, with the pastor perched precariously on its pinnacle, like a little pope in his own church, while the laity are arrayed beneath him in serried ranks of inferiority. It is a totally unbiblical image, because the New Testament envisages not a single pastor with a docile flock but both a plural oversight and an every-member ministry.’

John Stott warns of another model: ‘the model of the bus, in which the pastor does all the driving while the congregation are the passengers slumbering in peaceful security behind him. Quite different from either the pyramid or the bus is the biblical model of the body. The church is the body of Christ, every member of which has a distinctive function. Although the body metaphor can certainly accommodate the concept of a distinct pastorate (in terms of one ministry—and a very important one—among many), there is simply no room in it either for a hierarchy or for that kind of bossy clericalism which concentrates all ministry in the hands of one man and denies the people of God their own rightful ministries.

...If the sixteenth century recovered ‘the priesthood of all believers’ (every Christian enjoying through Christ a direct access to God), perhaps the twentieth century will recover ‘the ministry of all believers’ (every Christian receiving from Christ a privileged ministry to men).³

The word “ministry” or “minister” (*diakonia*) and its verb form is the word that is translated “serve” or “service” or “serving”

1 Peter 4:8-11 (NASB95)

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 [or “grumbling” NKJV] ¹⁰ As each one has received a *special* gift, employ it in serving one another [or “minister it to one another” NKJV] 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 [or “ministers” NKJV] *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.

God is Glorified in our Mutual Ministry When We Are:

1. Serving one another with the right heart – v. 10a

Peter writes in the first part of verse 10 that whatever we receive from God as a gift of His grace we are to use to minister to others with those abilities. We are to serve one another – each of us has been given at least one gift and God has given His grace *to us* so that He can also extend His grace *through us* in mutual ministry within the body. His grace and gifts are not to end with us, we are to be a channel through which flows service to one another, and this ministry must be done with the right heart.

Why do I say with the right heart? That's the prior context:

v. 8 – keeping fervent in love for one another (from a heart of love, not a spirit of legalism – fervent love should drive our ministry)

v. 9 – not grumbling or complaining as we show hospitality

God is not glorified when we minister with a bad attitude and without love in our heart for the body, when serve or give grudgingly or with grumbling. The great motive in v. 11 is not guilt, either, it's to glorify God by serving in the right spirit with proper motivation, with a happy and rejoicing heart.

The right heart is emphasized in the prior context and also the following context continues further with the type of heart we should have which is rejoicing and exulting even in difficulty. Vss. 12-16 clearly connect God's glory with our joy or happiness in the midst of great difficulty or even fiery trials.

¹² Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; ¹³ but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, **keep on rejoicing**, so that also at the revelation of **His glory** you may **rejoice with exultation**. ¹⁴ If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are **blessed** [truly happy], because the Spirit of **glory** and of God rests on you. ... ¹⁶ but if *anyone suffers* as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is **to glorify God** in this name. ["in this matter" NKJV]

We might think the things we have to do in service are a burden from time to time, but remember Peter is writing this who were really suffering – the “fiery trial” of v. 12 was literal fire for some. This is not those who might have to sacrifice some of their free time, but those who had to sacrifice families and freedoms and even their very lives at the hands of the Nero Caesar!

We don't have anything to complain or grumble about compared to the living conditions and fiery trials they went through then. But regardless of our situation, whether under persecution or peace times, we are to have a heart of joy in the Lord and love for each other. And when we don't feel that way naturally or when we have to persevere to serve even while under trials, that gives God glory.

What does verse 10 say when it says “minister to one another” or “serving one another”? The original language is continuing this thought from verse 9, where one example of service or ministry is showing hospitality to one another without complaining or murmuring. This is a command to be happily hospitable, especially showing hospitality to those in the body of Christ. The original literal meaning of hospitality has to do with love for strangers. This duty that God commands us to is not just hanging out with or having over your few favorite friends or those you know the best. It's a love and hospitable action esp. to those you don't know well, even

strangers. This is one thing that marked the early church, there was a genuine hospitality and love extended to visitors, travelers who were provided for, welcomed to meals.

We saw this last week in Acts 2, in the early church, their fellowship overflowed from church gatherings to house to house, eating meals together. They had open homes, open doors, open hearts, open arms to others, not just within their clique or circle.

Now verse 10 does mention using gifts, but notice that verse 9 is a command. It doesn't say "be hospitable" unless that's not your gift. The N.T. doesn't tell us to evangelize or serve unless that's not your gift. God does gift certain individuals more than others in certain areas, but that does not mean we can excuse ourselves from any biblical command or duty. Whether you think you have the gift of evangelism or not does not change your responsibility to evangelize and the same is true of hospitality or service.

In some of the teaching on spiritual gifts, one of the dangers is that people might look for their "gift" (singular) and once they find something, they feel that's all they need to do. Some churches do surveys or computer analysis which may find out what you *like to do*, but there is much service that needs to be done that isn't your preference. A big part of serving is simply "what needs to be done"

If the disciples took a survey or computer analysis of themselves, footwashing wouldn't have come up (but Jesus called them to it)

Here's a list of biblical commands of how we are all to serve:

The "One Anothers" of the New Testament ***Our Mutual Ministry of Service***

1. Be at peace with one another – Mark 9:50

2. Love one another – John 13:34
3. Be devoted to one another – Romans 12:10
4. Give preference to one another – Rom. 12:10
5. Don't judge one another's liberty – Romans 14:13
6. Accept one another – Romans 15:7
7. Admonish one another – Romans 15:14
8. Care for one another – I Corinthians 12:25
9. Serve one another – Galatians 5:13
10. Bear one another's burdens – Galatians 6:2
11. Show forbearance to one another – Ephesians 4:2
12. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another – Ephesians 4:32
13. Speak to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs – Ephesians 5:19
14. Submit to one another in the fear of Christ – Ephesians 5:21
15. Regard one another as more important than himself – Philippians 2:3
16. Bear with one another – Colossians 3:13
17. Teach and admonish one another – Colossians 3:16
18. Abound in love to one another – I Thessalonians 3:12
19. Comfort one another – I Thessalonians 4:18
20. Encourage one another – I Thessalonians 5:11
21. Build up one another – I Thessalonians 5:11
22. Live in peace with one another – I Thessalonians 5:13
23. Seek the good of one another – I Thessalonians 5:15
24. Stimulate one another to love and good deeds – Hebrews 10:23
25. Don't forsake assembling with one another, but let us encourage one another – Hebrews 10:24
26. Confess your sins to one another – James 5:16
27. Pray for one another – James 5:16
28. Fervently love one another from the heart – I Peter 1:22
29. Be hospitable to one another without complaint – I Peter 4:9
30. Employ your spiritual gift in serving one another – I Peter 4:10
31. Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another – I Peter 5:5
32. Have fellowship with one another – I John 1:7

God is glorified in our mutual ministry not only when we are serving one another with the right heart, but also when we're

2. Stewards of God's manifold grace – v. 10b

Not just the right heart, but the right understanding that we are simply stewards of God's grace.
Read the text again

¹⁰ As each one has received a *special* gift, employ it in serving one another [or “minister it to one another” NKJV] as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

This word “steward” is a rich N.T. word that literally refers to a house manager. In the historical context, a steward:

- had no wealth or possessions of his own
- he’s responsible for another’s resources
- this word refers to the responsibility of the proper use and disposition of something entrusted to one’s care
- he simply was responsible to distribute his master’s wealth and resources according to the direction and will of his master
- the steward knew that none of the thing he had control over really belonged to him, they all belonged to his master
- everything a steward did was answerable to his master
- he must always serve the interests of his master, not his own
- as one commentator wrote: “The Christian must always be under the conviction that nothing he possesses of material goods or personal qualities is his own; it all belongs to God and he must ever use what he has in the interests of God to whom he is always answerable.”⁴
- a steward was often a slave, a trusted slave, but still a slave

Peter was there when the Lord Jesus taught on this subject, and it may be His words were especially directed to Peter:

Luke 12:42-48 (NASB95)

⁴² And the Lord said, “Who then is the faithful and sensible steward, whom his master will put in charge of his servants, to give them their rations at the proper time? ⁴³ “Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. ⁴⁴ “Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions.

⁴⁸ ... From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.

18 centuries later, Charles Spurgeon used his gifts to explain:

Whatever “the gift” is, whether it be money, or talent, or grace, “even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” God gives much to you that you may give it to others; it is only meant to run through you as through a pipe. You are a steward and if a steward should receive his lord’s goods, and keep them for himself he would be an unfaithful steward. Child of God, see to it that you faithfully discharge your responsibility as one of the “good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”⁵

In more recent years, John Piper has used his gifts to help us see:

‘the picture we have in verse 10 is of a house with variously talented stewards who are given the owner's funds to administer. The house is the church, the stewards are all of you, the various talents are all our varied gifts, the funds are God's grace and the administration is the exercise of our gifts ... Grace is the currency in the household of God. We are called to be stewards of grace ... That's the way we should think of our responsibility in the church - all of us. We are recipients of grace and it is our duty to disburse this grace for others. The vehicle by which we make these disbursements is our

spiritual gift ... all God's stewards -- all of you -- should be waking up to more and more of God's grace that you have in Christ, and finding more and more ways to creatively disburse that grace to each other and to those outside by the use of your spiritual gifts. O, that the Spirit might cause a wheeling and dealing in the currency of grace at ... Church!⁶

The word "gift" here and the word "grace" are *charisma* and *charis*, both from the same word that refers to God's unmerited undeserved unearned favor and kindness toward sinners. Spiritual gifts are not natural talents, they are supernatural gift(s) given from God to all His children *when we're adopted* into His family. These aren't human endowments we're born with, spiritual gifts are divine enablements that we're born again with.

Spiritual gifts are not something originating in our fallen flesh, not something we acquire or attain on our own. It's God's *gracious gift* uniquely given to every believer to use in service and ministry to each other. God has given every child of His a *giftedness* - think of a pallet of colors that represent all the commands God gives us and each of us has a unique blend of certain colors, some areas stronger than others. All of us are responsible to obey the commands God gives us whether we feel gifted or adequate or not, but the beautiful thing is that God has given multi-faceted, multi-colored, manifold grace so that others can help fill in our gaps and where we lack and that together as we all do our part, God can use us as brushes in His hand to paint a beautiful canvas by His grace.

The word "manifold" in v. 10 is a colorful picturesque word:

- the same word used of Joseph's coat of many colors in the Greek version of the Old Testament
- this word was used of the temple's many-colored stones, that had their various shades or hues
- it was used in secular Greek for the skin of a leopard
- you would use this word for a marble stone with its different-colored veins and patterns
- this word was used of a beautifully embroidered robe
- the word could be applied to the changing of months
- it captured the variations of a strain of music
- one of the dynamic equivalent renderings of this verse has "faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms" (NIV)
- Phillips translates it here "magnificently varied" grace
- Another translation: "God's many-sided kindness" (WNT)

God has designed each of us to be unique, not to all be the same as each other, but to complement each other. And together in our own shape and shade and form and our own place, each piece fits in a stained glass window to the world to display God's manifold glory.

There's a third way God is glorified in our mutual ministry when

3. Speaking or serving by God's strength & power – v. 11a

¹¹ Whoever speaks, *is to do so* as one who is speaking the utterances [or "oracles" NKJV, "the very words" NIV] of God; whoever serves [or "ministers" NKJV] *is to do so* as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified

Most of the writers I read agree that when Peter refers to speaking and serving, he is referring to all types of spiritual gifts, because you can take the other lists of gifts in the N.T. and categorize

each of them under either speaking or serving gifts. The lists of gifts we do have appear to be representative, none of them are the same and probably none of them are exhaustive. But whatever divine enablements we have, whether public or private, up front or behind-the-scenes, manual or menial, vocal or physical, Bible teaching or building set-up, both elderly and youth have a place to serve here, whether you're seeking to change lives through discipleship or changing diapers in the nursery, singing in the choir or standing out front greeting people as they come in to church or serving as a helper or administrator – every part of the ministry and service is important and requires God's strength.

You might think that those who speak or teach are the ones who have to be utterly dependent on God (and I certainly am) but Peter makes clear in this verse that every type of service must be dependent upon God's power and strength.

Some type of serving is easier than others. Not all service is as hard work as others.

I was literally at this very point in writing out my notes on Friday when the lady who helps in PCS lunch program called me on the intercom system, interrupting my study, and asked "Do you want to *serve* today?" I was a little caught off-guard, and said "serve what"? Her reply: "we need you to serve by helping finish eating some of the pizza that was left over." What providence, that right while I'm studying service to have an opportunity I was happy to serve in – I came over to the kitchen singing "make me a servant."

But not all service is easy or enjoyable. The heart of a servant should be to serve wherever the Master wants us, wherever it's needed. If it's outside our comfort zone, God provides the strength in a way that glorifies Him.

In application, you might ask "Where is help needed around here? Where can I serve?" Well I'm glad you asked! Here's just a sampling of needs we've had unmet for awhile:

Greeters – couples or singles (20 minutes commitment, rotating)

3rd Sun. 2nd service

4th Sun. 2nd service

5th Sun. 1st and 2nd service

Nursery attendants – both AM services and PM service (the more we have the less times you need to be in nursery!)

Help with children's ministries

- don't have to be teacher, can be helper
- members willing to be substitute SS teachers – all ages
- toddler church help (OR REGISTRAR – 5-10 minutes)

Sunday AM CD copier – right after 1st service to copy 1 or 2 CDs
(10 Mins/wk.) Jan will train

MONDAYS - Bulletin mailers (approx. 1 hour or so/wk) with list from Jan - address, stuff, &

mail envelopes on Mon. afternoons -
 stamps, envelopes, bulletins provided, of course
 TUESDAYS - Prayer Ladies - Tuesday AM
 FRIDAYS - Bulletin folder(s) (approx. 1 hr. or so/wk.)
 SATURDAYS - Foyer duster (!) to prepare for Sunday services
 Men practical opportunities to serve physically for people in need, work-days, help ushers setup chairs after men's study

SEASONAL - VBS workers, AWANA in fall, etc.
 GENERAL – administrative, organizational gifts, encouragement?

There are other things you may see where there might be needs that you might want to volunteer to work with the deacons (their pictures are in the foyer there). It's the deacons' desire to get more people involved in various teams or areas of service, and Ron Skogstad said he's willing to talk to anyone about needs, etc.

I don't plan on reading through these things each week, but the point is there's a lot of needs around here – to the deacons and elders it can be overwhelming at times, but we know that God will supply the strength in such a way that He receives glory. We pray that the Lord of the harvest would send forth more laborers, more servants, more stewards who would minister God's manifold grace in God's strength and power. And we pray our hearts would be right, fueled by fervent love; not motivated by guilt but driven by God's glory

That's the final way our mutual ministry honors God. When we're

4. Seeking to glorify God in all that we do – v. 11b

... so that **in all things** God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

John Calvin wrote:

God does not adorn us with his gifts, that he may rob himself and make himself as it were an empty idol by transferring to us his own glory, but that, on the contrary, his own glory may everywhere shine forth; and that it is therefore a sacrilegious profanation of God's gifts when men propose to themselves any other object than to glorify God ... God justly claims all the glory; and, therefore, men wickedly take away from him what is his own, when they obscure in anything, or in any part, his glory.⁷

Peter says "in all things." Now, what are some of these *all things* in which God may be glorified? Not just the speaking gifts, including teaching as well as counseling, ministering over the phone, encouraging words, etc.

Also the serving or helps gifts, cooking a meal for someone in need, giving, cleaning up after a church function, volunteering to relieve one of the core people of a task, stacking chairs after Sunday School, visiting the sick, writing a note of encouragement, sending cards for certain events, visiting shut-ins or widows, praying for others, praying with others, practicing hospitality/

Whatever we do, whether we eat or drink, we are to do all to God's glory. This is a fitting way to close the message and to close this series, the note on which we began, that our ultimate purpose is to glorify God in the church by all the things He calls us to. We've seen in our series that our chief end and aim is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever together by:

- By Worship that is God-driven and God-exalting
- By a High View of God and His Word
- By Prayer that is God-Centered and God-passionate
- By Preaching and Teaching the Whole Counsel of God
- By Loving God and Obeying His Commands
- By equipping the body toward every member in ministry
- By evangelism and missions, here and in the nations
- By making disciples of our Resurrected Lord Jesus
- By fellowship, true spiritual sharing together
- By serving one another for God's glory

1 Peter 1:7 so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and **glory** and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

1 Peter 1:21 who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and [God] **gave Him glory**, so that your faith and hope are in God.

1 Peter 1:22 Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, **fervently love one another from the heart**,

1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, **so that you may proclaim the excellencies [or glories]** of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

1 Peter 2:12 Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, **so that** in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, **they may** because of your good deeds, as they observe them, **glorify God** in the day of visitation.

1 Peter 4:11 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.

1 Peter 4:16 but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is **to glorify God** in this name.

1 Peter 5:1 Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and **a partaker also of the glory** that is to be revealed,

1 Peter 5:10 After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal **glory in Christ**, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.

1 Peter 5:11 **To Him be dominion forever and ever**. Amen.

¹ James Boice, *Ephesians*, 141.

² Vance Havner, *Why Not Just Be Christians*, p. 63.

³ John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society : The Message of Ephesians* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1979, 1980), 166.

⁴ *The Letters of James and Peter*, ed. William Barclay, lecturer in the University of Glasgow, The Daily study Bible series, Rev. ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976), 255.

⁵ Charles Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, Vol. 52, # 2984.

⁶ <http://www.soundofgrace.com/piper81/031581m.htm>

⁷ John Calvin's *Commentaries*, 1P 4.11.