

Community of Service

I Peter 4:10-11

Scripture

1 Peter 4:10-11 ¹⁰ As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: (ESV) ¹¹ If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen. (NIV)

Main Idea

Background & Focus

John Calvin had a perceptive insight on how the distribution of spiritual gifts in the church is one way God creates community in the body of Christ:

"But this consideration is also very important, that the Lord hath so divided his manifold graces, that no one is to be content with one thing and with his own gifts, but every one has need of the help and aid of his brother. This, I say, is a bond which God hath appointed for retaining friendship among men, for they cannot live without mutual assistance. Thus it happens, that he who in many things seeks the aid of his brethren, ought to communicate to them more freely what he has received. This bond of unity has been observed and noticed by heathens. But Peter teaches us here that God had designedly done this, that he might bind men one to another."
(Calvin's Commentary on 1 Peter)

This lesson is designed to help your group 1) understand the nature and purpose of spiritual gifts and 2) determine and/or affirm the spiritual gifts of each member.

Starters

- What has been the most rewarding service project/event that you've been a part of?

Discussion

Q1: Spiritual gifts are an often misunderstood reality of the Christian life. How does the idea of stewardship (def. of steward – a person who manages another's possessions for the owner's purposes/interest) help us better understand this reality?

Q2: If it is true that God's grace is released in all its variety and colors* when EACH person is using their gifts to serve one another then...

1) What does this tell us about how important community is in receiving and experiencing God's grace? AND

2) Why do you think churches are so often filled with people who aren't serving?

(*Note: "varied" in verse 9 can be literally translated – "many colored")

Q3. Peter tells us that the way in which we use our spiritual gifts is important. We should exercise these gifts in such a way "that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ". Why is this important and how can we tell if we aren't using our gifts for this ultimate purpose?

Q4: Verse 9 says that "each" Christian has received a gift—each of us is meant to be a channel of God's grace in some way. Many of us have a hard time identifying our spiritual gift(s) and are reluctant to serve because we aren't sure where we fit. Spend some time as a group helping each member identify their spiritual gift(s). Here's a few options on how to do this:

First, pray. Ask the Lord to specially guide this time of the group meeting to clarify everyone's gifts and calling in order that his grace might flow more abundantly to His people.

Second,

1) Have each spouse share the gift(s) they see in their partner. –OR–

2) As a whole group, put the gift "spotlight" on each member. As a group, share how this person has encouraged you or been a channel of God's grace in your life.

Third,

Allow each person to respond on whether they feel their gift(s) have been accurately identified.

<u>Romans 12:3-8</u>	<u>I Cor. 12:28-30</u>	<u>1 Cor. 12:8-10</u>	<u>Ephesians 4:7-12</u>
prophecy	apostles	word of wisdom	apostles
ministry	prophecy	word of knowledge	prophets
teaching	teaching	faith	evangelists
exhortation	miracles	healing	pastor-teacher
giving	healing	miracles	
ruling	tongues	Prophecy	
showing mercy	Interpreting tongues	discerning of spirits	
	helping	kinds of tongues	
	Governing	interpreting tongues	

Prayer

Hopefully, you've had some success in identifying your spiritual gifts. Use this time of prayer to ask God to use each member of the group to be a channel of His grace. If some are uncertain about their spiritual gifts, pray that God would make this clearer. If some don't know how to go about using their gifts, pray that God would provide wisdom. If some are using their gifts currently, pray that God would bless their ministries. And remember to pray that we would all see the full spectrum of God's grace and, in response, praise him more wholeheartedly.