



LORDSHIP GENEROSITY

LEADER GUIDE | SESSION 2

Stewarding Our Spiritual Gifts



SCRIPTURE TEXT 1 Peter 4:7-11

SESSION IN A SENTENCE God is calling His followers to steward the gifts they are given, while using them to bring Him the glory only He deserves.

BIBLE BACKGROUND First Peter was written within the context of extreme persecution during the Roman Empire. Peter encouraged followers of Jesus to remain faithful no matter the circumstances, and to understand that suffering for the cause of Christ should be expected. Their suffering, however, should result in them being found faithful to fulfill the important mission of proclaiming the gospel.

THE BIBLE SPEAKS TODAY Those who call on the name of the Lord are saved and given a spiritual gift. These gifts are meant to be used to strengthen the church and its work in the world, thereby glorifying God. Spiritual gifts are more than a talent or a hobby. They are given to us to be used to advance God's kingdom. Some gifts are public (the spiritual gift of teaching is one such gift) and seen by many. Other gifts are behind the scenes (such as the gift of helps) but are just as vital to the health of the church. No matter the gift, God's people are called to steward them as God intended.

BIBLE STUDY

Get Your Group Talking

ASK: "What is the most memorable gift you have ever received?"

Transition to the Bible Study

SAY, "Our favorite gift pales in comparison to the gift that the Spirit gives us when we submit to Jesus as Lord and Savior. We will learn in today's study that our circumstances should not factor into our using the gift. We will also learn that we are called to be stewards of the gifts we have been given. When we steward the gifts the way God intended, He receives the glory that only He deserves."

INVITE your group members to fill in the missing blanks on their listening guide as you share each of the three main points in this study.

POINT 1: WHY STEWARDING OUR GIFTS IS IMPORTANT

1 Peter 4:7-9

ASK a group member to **read 1 Peter 4:7-9 out loud.**

⁷ The end of all things is near; therefore, be alert and sober minded for prayer. ⁸ Above all, maintain constant love for one another, since love covers a multitude of sins. ⁹ Be hospitable to one another without complaining.

GUIDE group members to understand the text by sharing some of the following commentary notes:

Commentary

V7: We all tend to change our behavior when we know that we are getting closer to the end of

something. When we reach the end of a school semester, we start reviewing our work. When we get to the end of a distance race, we summon up our last bit of energy as we approach the finish line.

Peter told his readers that the end of all things was near. This is a direct reference to the return of Christ. The church age began when Christ ascended to heaven, and the church was birthed; as each day passes, we are one day closer to His return. Just as we work a little harder to get across the finish line of a race, we must strive even more to steward the gifts that we have been given because Christ could return at any moment.

The last part of this verse is written as two separate commands to be lived out immediately. We cannot faithfully fulfill this calling and maintain the status quo. We cannot live out these commands while merely sitting on a pew and expecting the pastor and others to be the only

ones who use their spiritual gifts. Obedience must become normative as the end draws near.

V8: Because the end is near, we need to maintain a constant love for one another. Peter wrote to the church, therefore the church should be known as a loving place and not a place of conflict and turmoil. Instead, it should be a place of refuge, and a place for restoring love for one another.

It would be helpful for us to understand a couple of key words in this verse. First, the word maintain shows that work needs to be accomplished. If we want to maintain good physical health, then we need to work to eat right and to engage in regular exercise. Likewise, if we want to maintain a constant love for our brothers and sisters in Christ, then we need to make sure to share our spiritual gifts with them since this is how God uses us to encourage others.

Second, this love is to be constant. If we study this word in the original language, we learn that it is a word picture of an athlete who is consistently straining his muscles to get every bit of energy out of them. He is exerting maximum effort in the hopes of having the greatest impact upon the goal in front of him. Once again, this is applied to loving one another. This can only be had when intentional effort is given.

V9: We find one more action in this section. Believers are to be hospitable to one another. The word hospitality means to show kindness, care, and concern to strangers. It is important to acknowledge that Peter did not add a clause to this statement. We are to be hospitable no matter if the person deserves hospitality or not.

Let's be honest, it can be difficult to be hospitable to everyone. We may not feel like being hospitable to the cantankerous person at the end of the street, or even the difficult person at the other end of the pew. We often do not feel like living this out. Yet, our obedience to the Word of God need not be based on how we feel.

Peter went on to tell his readers they were to live this out without complaining; this applies to God's people today. When we were young and our parents told us to do something, we may have gotten in trouble if we completed the task with a great deal of complaining. Yes, the task was completed, but the attitude was less than ideal. We miss the point of hospitality if we welcome strangers with an unwelcoming heart and attitude.

DO: Invite the class to get into learning groups of 2 to 4 people. Ask them to discuss the following question: Since the end is near, what does it look like to be alert and sober minded today?

Ask the groups to come up with practical steps a follower of Christ can take today that will help them be alert and sober minded about the return of Christ. Ask one person from each group to be ready to share their answers.

TRANSITION TO POINT 2: Say, "Since we understand the need to be alert, it is time to focus on the next step. If we are alert, but do not move forward, then we are not living in obedience. Our next step, according to the passage, is to steward our spiritual gifts by putting them to use.

POINT 2: BASIC TRUTHS ABOUT STEWARDING OUR GIFTS

1 Peter 4:10

ASK a group member to **read 1 Peter 4:10**
out loud.

¹⁰ *Just as each one has received a gift, use it to serve others, as good stewards of the varied grace of God.*

GUIDE group members to understand the text by sharing some of the following commentary notes:

Commentary

We can learn several vital truths from this verse. First, we see that spiritual gifts are not limited to just a few chosen people. The audience of 1 Peter was “those chosen, living as exiles dispersed abroad” (1 Peter 1:1). If the text was to an apostle or a particular individual, the application for us today would be vastly different. But the letter written by Peter was to the church. Therefore, if we know Jesus as our Lord and Savior, then we are a part of His church, and the text applies to us today.

Peter was clear in pointing out that each follower of Jesus has received a gift. We now see the second truth. Not only do all followers of Jesus have a spiritual gift, but this gift was not earned. Many of us either work or have worked in the past. We would show up on time, give the boss or company our full attention, and receive a paycheck. We did something to earn it.

If we take this same principal and apply it to our spiritual life, we will be miserable. When we reflect upon our life and compare that to the way Jesus lived His life in total obedience to the Father’s will, we know that we fall woefully short of His example.

We know that we cannot earn God’s forgiveness. The good news is that God is aware of this and loves us any way. He knows that we cannot earn our salvation, much less a spiritual gift. Even with this knowledge, He still graciously gives us gifts to be used for His glory.

The call to action in this verse is found in the phrase “use it.” Some translations use the phrase “employ it.” The “it” points back to the spiritual gifts that every follower of Jesus has been given. If we study the original language in which Peter wrote, we will discover that the phrase is written as a present participle. This means that obedience is to take place in the moment. We need not delay in using our gifts when given the opportunity. Furthermore, the participle nature of the phrase shows that using one’s gifts is not a one-time act. Instead, obedience occurs when the gift is used throughout one’s lifetime.

Finally, we learn that using the gifts given to us is a stewardship issue. If we were provided a tool that would decrease our utility bills by fifteen percent, it would be wise for us to use the tool. If we chose not to use the tool, it would cost us significantly over an extended period of time. God has given us a tool (a spiritual gift) that can make us more efficient as we serve Him and the members of our churches. When the tool is used, it points others to the gospel of Jesus. To not use our spiritual gift, no matter the reason, is to be a poor steward of His grace, and we should actively strive to steward His grace gift well.

ASK: Since God expects us to use our spiritual gifts, how do we best discover a way to actively use our gifts?

SHOW: One key to using your spiritual gift is knowing what spiritual gift the Lord has given to you. Reach out to those in your group prior to

Sunday, and share the link below with those who have the means to open it online:

1. Spiritual Gifts Survey (by Lifeway Christian Resources)

If some in the group do not have the ability to access this online, print physical copies for them.

TRANSITION TO POINT 3: Say, “Many of us are wired in such a way that we want to know what happens when an action is taken. For example, what happens when a team works hard and gets a project over the finish line before the boss expected it? We learn in verse 11 what happens when a believer uses the gift that he has been graciously given.”

POINT 3: **WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE STEWARD OUR GIFTS**

1 Peter 4:11

ASK a group member to **read 1 Peter 4:11 out loud.**

¹¹ If anyone speaks, let it be as one who speaks God’s words; if anyone serves, let it be from the strength God provides, so that God may be glorified through Jesus Christ in everything. To him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

GUIDE group members to understand the text by sharing some of the following commentary notes:

Commentary

When we were young and learning how to ride our

bikes, we were not experts at the start. Yet, falls and skinned knees did not deter us from getting back on the bike and trying again. Now that we are older, we are more equipped to ride our bikes, and we can even help others learn to ride their bikes, too.

We have learned that God gives His followers gifts. He commands us to use them. When we come to understand that we are gifted and begin to use our gifts, we will not be experts at the start. We should not, however, allow a few moments of uneasiness or fear to deter us from continuing to understand and refine the use of our gifts.

Peter was direct in calling the members of the first-century church to use the gifts that were given to them. If someone was given the gift of teaching, that person was to teach. If someone was given the gift of leading, that person was to provide leadership. The truths that applied to Peter’s original audience, and it applies to us today as well.

When we are obedient to steward our gifts as God intended, then God is glorified. In the first recorded sermon of our Savior, Jesus said, “Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven” (Matt. 5:16). We have been placed on this earth to glorify God and one way that we can be found faithful in doing this is stewarding our gifts well. The point of using our gifts is not to draw attention to ourselves, but rather to serve others and point them to Christ.

DISCUSS: What could stop a follower of Jesus from using his or her gift as God intended, and how can we help this person overcome this?

DO: Lead the class in a brief time of prayer. Ask God to give each class member the faith and courage needed to not only understand their gifts, but to also steward them well.

TRANSITION TO NEXT STEPS: The outcome of studying God's word is not merely to gain additional knowledge for the sake of knowing something. The outcome should be to study and apply God's word so that we can live transformational lives in the world and thereby test and prove God's perfect and pleasing will. The next steps listed below are ways to apply what we have learned in today's study.

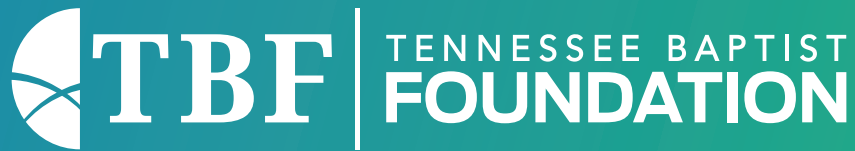


MY NEXT STEP

GUIDE group members to identify which of the following steps they will attempt before the group's next study. There is one step that is easiest, another that is more challenging, and a final one that will challenge even a spiritually mature group member. They are in random order in each session.

- 1. Complete a spiritual gift assessment** – Take 10-15 minutes to complete a spiritual gift assessment that was provided before the group time, or one completed during the group time. Go into this exercise knowing that there are no right or wrong answers. Ask God to guide you towards greater understanding of His perfect will and to give you the faith needed to live in obedience to His plans.
- 2. Volunteer outside the church** – While understanding that stewarding our spiritual gifts can occur inside or outside the church, ask God to lead you towards a ministry or place of service outside of the church. Ask Him to use your efforts to bring glory to Himself.
- 3. Volunteer inside the church** – While understanding that stewarding our spiritual gifts can occur either inside or outside the walls of the church, ask God to point you towards a ministry or place in which you can steward the gift you have been given inside of the church. Ask Him to use your efforts to bring glory to Himself as stated in this passage. Ask your pastor where the most pressing needs are, and speak to the person in charge of that ministry.

SUMMARIZE the session: We have learned from this study that the end is near, and we are called to be alert and sober minded. We do this by understanding that the gifts we have been given are intended to be used. When we live out these commands, God is glorified, and people are given the opportunity to respond to the gospel message. We are now one day closer to the return of Christ, let's steward the gifts we have been given and trust God to use our efforts to glorify Himself.



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