

Gifted to Serve

Part 2

1 Peter 4:10-11

Dr. Kevin Maurice ---- June 4, 2023

Niccolò Paganini was a world-famous violinist in the 18th and 19th centuries in Italy. He played for kings and queens. He filled cathedrals and concert halls. When he died, in his will, he gifted his favorite Stradivarius violin to this hometown of Genoa. And the people of Genoa were so excited to receive this gift, they immediately set to work building a display case for it. And so, they keep this wonderful instrument behind glass under lock and key.



And to this day you can go visit Genoa City Hall and see this violin. Tourists come from all over Italy, from across Europe and around the world, to gaze upon this renowned relic. But they'll never hear it played. The gift was given and then never used.

There's something sad about that, isn't there? A violin is meant to be played. The purpose is to produce music. But now that violin just sits there. It's collecting dust, untouched, unused; not doing what it was made to do.

If you're a Christian, you have a gift. You have a gift. Are you using it? Or is it behind the glass?

Today we're going to continue through our exploration of spiritual gifts. And if you haven't yet, please make sure you get your nametag from one of those tables in the lobby. We're going to use those in just a second.

Last week we learned these two questions—two questions that we're going to begin to ask over and over. You're going to hear them all the time around this church. These are two questions that we believe could change the nature, the heart, of who we are.

What is your spiritual gift?

And how are you using it at Grace?

Let's just say those together. I'll count us off, one, two, three. Let's ask the first one: one, two, three ... *What's your spiritual gift?* And the second one, one, two, three ... *How are you using it at Grace?* Let's find out together.

Would you please turn with me in your Bible to the Book of 1 Peter? Our passage this morning is 1 Peter chapter 4, verses 10 and 11. And if you're able, would you please stand with me as I read God's Word.

¹⁰ "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace; ¹¹ whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To Him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

You can have a seat.

1 Peter reminds us that each Christian receives a gift. When you became a follower of Christ, the Holy Spirit entered your life, and began to reside within you. And when the Holy Spirit lives in you, He empowers a manifestation of himself. So, if you're a follower of Christ, you have a spiritual gift.

In just one sentence, you can define them this way: spiritual gifts are abilities to do something well. They're given by the Holy Spirit. They're for the edification of the Church.

Now as we just saw, there are a variety of gifts—that's God's varied grace—so they can be used in a variety of ways. And last week we put on the screen five passages in the Bible where spiritual gifts are listed or mentioned. And from our careful consideration of those verses, here at Grace we believe that there are sixteen spiritual gifts that we see in the Bible and that we see most at work in the Church in the world today.

Let me just very clearly state that these sixteen gifts are not a conviction for us. It's like a light roast, medium belief. It's based on a careful study of Scripture—absolutely. But it isn't key to salvation. Nor is it something that we should ever become divisive about.

Now, if you read those passages last week, you likely noticed that there are gifts in the Bible that are not on our list. And in any discussion of spiritual gifts, these are the ones that people want to discuss or might even disagree on the most. Specifically, they are the gifts of healing and speaking in tongues. And we call these sign gifts. And they are in the Bible. These are things that the apostles, the early disciples, the early Church, did. And when those gifts were used, they served to edify the body of Christ and to give a sign of, to give testimony to, the truth of the Gospel.

And the Bible does not conclusively state that sign gifts have stopped occurring. What the Scripture seems to indicate is this tapering down of those gifts as the Church grows and matures. So, you have a lot of sign gifts at Pentecost, the foundation of the beginning of the Church, and then less and less later on. So, what appears to be most consistent with the Bible is that sign gifts are not normative in the Church today.

Now please hear me: we do not dismiss or discount the power of the Holy Spirit and what God may choose to do in certain unique situations. God in His will absolutely does still heal people and perform miracles today. The distinction, the difference, is between God choosing to do those things at certain times in certain places, and them being a personal specific gift given to an individual.

So, we respect, we love, our Christian brothers and sisters who may choose to practice or use these gifts. But as a church we don't encourage or teach the manifestation of sign gifts. We're a non-charismatic church, but we're not an anti-charismatic church.

So, let's be humble about this; not hard-headed in either direction. And let's not argue with other Christians about it. Because the purpose of the gifts is for us as a body. They make us a body. That's what the Bible says. And a healthy body has parts that are unified, not divided.

And so, a healthy church is going to have a diversity of gifts working together. So, if you are a part of this body, you have a spiritual gift. And listen, Grace needs you.



So, what's your spiritual gift? As you walked in, we asked you to put on a nametag with a specific color and the title of what you believe is your primary gift. And we grouped those sixteen gifts into four categories of similarity, four areas where the gifts kind of revolve around a particular kind of ministry. And those four groups are leading, training, service, and compassion. We think that these categories can be helpful for understanding how our gifts operate within the church. But these groupings are not biblical. There is nothing sacred about them. The colors themselves are not meaningful other than to help us see that we have a variety of gifts.

You might have more than one spiritual gift. I've seen several overachievers, and they've got three or four or five stickers. That's great. Maybe you've got a couple that are tied at the top. Scripture doesn't define the number of gifts a person receives. Sometimes it does look like people have gifts and they all stack up in one of those quadrants. And you look at them and think, *That person is gifted in compassion*. Other times your top three are scattered. You've got a green and a red and a blue and you're just collecting them all.

I believe that I personally have two primary gifts: leadership and teaching. That's what I've seen. It's what others have confirmed in my life. On the assessment they're tied, so I could

have picked orange or green. I'm wearing green today—the orange wasn't burnt enough for my tastes. That's okay.

And so, listen, it's okay to just pick one. Because those categories are not the most important thing. The important thing is that you know how God has gifted you. Nametags, categories—they help us to see how God has gifted this church. So, let's see how we are gifted to serve.

In just a second, I'm going to ask you, if you're able to, to stand so we can see how the Holy Spirit has gifted us. If you're watching at home, you can do this too, right where you are.

So, if you have a primary gift in that blue quadrant—those with the main gift of compassion—would you please stand up for us? This is discernment, encouragement, exhortation, mercy, wisdom. If you have the gift of compassion, we need you. How are you using your gift at Grace? You can have a seat.

Next up, those in the green group. You're probably all ready to go, the people with the leading gift. You wanted to be first. Administration, apostleship—would y'all stand up, please?—leadership, shepherding—those with a green gift. If you have a leading gift, this body needs you. How are you using your gift at Grace? You can have a seat.

Okay, orange—your gift is in that training category. Please stand up for us, anybody with an orange gift. Awesome. Evangelism, knowledge, prophecy, teaching. If you are gifted in this area, there's a place in our church where we need you. How are you using your gift at Grace? You may have a seat.

Okay, our folks in the red--service gifts. Your turn. Please stand for us. You have the gift of faith, of giving, of hospitality, of serving. Service gift people, we need you. How are you using your gift at Grace? Please sit down.

Isn't that fun? God blessed this body with a variety of gifts. And we need all of them. We need your gift.

I recently saw a video of an Amish barn raising. It's this incredible feat where a community of people come together for the common good. They help a friend or a family or a neighbor build their barn. Barn raisings are a tradition in Amish communities. And they give that group of people a sense of belonging. Because everybody serves. Nobody does it alone.

Sometimes, though, it's difficult to build the barn in the place where it's supposed to sit. And so what happens is that they build the barn and then they move the barn. And remember, they're Amish, so no machines, no vehicles. They move it by hand. Check this out.

Video of Amish Barn Building

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/xqwiexzt0oruzpj/Amish%20shed.mp4?dl=0>

[Video shows perhaps up to a hundred men moving a barn across a country road to its resting place. The men are inside the barn as they move it, so not much of them is visible other than their legs and feet.]

Isn't that fun? Do you know what I love about that? Every single person is involved. Some people are in front, some are in the back. There's one guy who is walking backward; I'm not sure why—maybe he's onto something. Some people are visible—you can see them and see their faces. Others are part of the crowd. But they're all working together or that barn doesn't move an inch. That's what we're supposed to look like. That's the Church. Red gift, blue gift, orange, green—we all have a part to play. Let's not be like that one guy in the video not doing anything. He's clearly not Amish—he's on his phone, right? So, he's not a part of that community. He's just watching. He's a spectator. Get in the barn. Let's move this thing.

God gives us gifts to be used in the context of community. Our gifts are for the body, and in the body of Christ, everybody serves. Nobody does it alone.

Turn with me again to 1 Peter. **“As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace. Whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies.”**

You have a spiritual gift, but we don't just need you to have that gift; we need you to use it. Don't keep it behind the glass. All of this talk about spiritual gifts cannot just be an exercise in self-reflection. None of this is just about figuring out how God gifted you. It's about learning how to use how God has gifted you.

So, if you took that assessment and you don't agree with the result, or you got several gifts and you're still kind of confused about which one's yours, that's fine. That assessment is just a catalyst to help you recognize what your gift might be. It doesn't cause you to have that.

The best way to think about it is that the assessment helps you figure out the zip code you're living in, but it can't give you your address. If you really want to know where you live; if you really want to know if that is your gift, you find out by using it. You find out by using it. First, pray. Ask the Holy Spirit, *Is this how You gifted me?* And then just start serving. Do something.



And as you serve, look for three things. Be on the lookout for three things, three A's, that when they overlap, they generally confirm that this is your spiritual gift.

The first A is affinity. In what way do you love to serve the Church? What do you like to do around here? How do you enjoy serving other people? There are things that I do here at Grace, that if I'm honest, I don't enjoy. Be honest—there are maybe things you avoid doing. Yes? Just me? Okay, great, just me. Oh, man.

Some of you though, I know, you love meeting new people every single week, and you thrive on introducing them to that person or helping people get connected so that they feel plugged in. But the idea of talking to the same group of people every single week? You have no desire for that.

Some of you do not want to talk to another grownup here at church. You talk to enough grownups during the week at work. But that Grace Kids building on Sunday is your place. You love it.

What is that area that when you serve there, when you do that, you feel alive? That's affinity.

Next, do you have the ability? And remember, this is not natural ability. It's not talent or some skill that you acquired.

Where do you see an experience of supernatural ability in your life? 1 Peter 4 says we use our gifts with the strength that God supplies. It's His strength. So, what comes easy for you and where are you effective? And not because of you, but because of the Holy Spirit within you. Because with spiritual gifts, remember, the math gets fun. It's supernatural, so the equation doesn't make sense anymore. The plus sign becomes an "x.". Addition becomes multiplication.

Where have you seen Spirit empowerment in your life? Do you have any of those stories? Maybe in your men's small group on Thursday you're sitting in that circle and your discernment radar goes off. And you know that one of the guys in the circle is not doing well this week. And so, you ask him, and he says, "Yeah, I lost my job, my marriage is falling apart. I don't know how to raise these kids. I need help." And before you even asked him, you knew that. You knew that. But it wasn't you; it was the Spirit telling you.

Or in women's Bible study you're reading this passage and all of a sudden, everything just clicks into place, and you see the truth. You see this truth. You have this prophecy gift and you share the truth in a way that just blesses the rest of that group and causes people to grow. But you know it's not you. Somehow the lights just all came on.

If you have affinity and ability, supernatural ability, you've got a good idea of what your spiritual gift is. That zip code just got a little smaller.

In the movie *Chariots of Fire*, the Scottish runner, Eric Liddell says, "God made me fast. And when I run, I feel His pleasure." Where is it that when you run, you feel His pleasure? Affinity and ability.

One more important piece, the third A—affirmation. How have you been affirmed with that gift? So, you're serving somewhere, you're using what you think is your gift. Get honest feedback from other believers. Ask a mentor. Find an older, wiser Christian and ask, "Hey, do

you see this gift in my life?” Ask the people with whom you serve, “Do you think this is my gift?”

And you might get direct feedback. That’d be great. They might say, “Yeah, absolutely.” Or, a little harder to hear, “No, that is not your gift.” When it’s clear like that and it’s obvious, that can be really helpful. But also, be on the lookout for that smaller affirmation of a heartfelt “thank you.”

Hey, thank you so much. We couldn't do this without you. Would you do this again? Would you come back next week?

Hey, thanks for being here. That group of third graders love you.

Hey, thanks for praying with me. That meant everything.

Thanks for visiting me when I needed somebody to visit me.

Thank you for serving.

Sometimes a “thank you” is gift affirmation. So, listen for it. Be on the lookout. Affinity, ability, affirmation. Where the three of those meet and overlap, that’s probably your spiritual gift. That’s a good sign.

Now please hear me on this. Do not wait until you figure out exactly what your gift is before you start doing something. Just start serving.

If we get myopic about, *Well, I'm only going to use my gifts*, we’re in trouble. If we don’t do anything until we have it all figured out, we’re doing this body, this church, a disservice.

There’s going to be an empty pizza box on the grass outside today and three people are going to be standing around looking at it. And the person with the green administration gift will say, “I should organize a ministry that picks up pizza boxes.” And the guy with the orange knowledge gift is going to say, “Hey, this reminds me of that verse: ‘Man should not live on bread alone.’” And the blue compassion person is going to say, “Hey, is everybody feeling okay? Did you eat too much pizza? Anybody need to pray?” And the pizza box is just going to sit there, because the person with the red service gift is already taking out trash. They’re somewhere else. That’s can’t be us. Grace, that cannot be us. Just start serving.

Not every gift comes with a specific role or job title. It may just be that we need to walk around more aware of what God has prepared for us to do. And as you serve, you might find that area that you just enjoy. And other people might start affirming what they see in you. And you start seeing God doing things through you. That’s your spiritual gift.

You have a spiritual gift. Now use it. And use it to serve here at your church.

1 Peter 4—this is such a great, concise explanation of what spiritual gifts are. “As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another ...” And then the passage goes on and says, “... so that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To Him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

We’re gifted to serve so that Christ may be glorified. So, before we’re ever tempted to think that the spiritual gifts are primarily about us or for us, the Bible declares, No, it’s all about God. They’re from Him and they’re for Him. So, we use our spiritual gifts to serve one another ... in the church ... to glorify God.

If you use your gift in your family, at home, that’s great. It probably should show up there too. If your spiritual gift also blesses your workplace, that’s wonderful. If your neighborhood benefits from your gifts as well, great. But make sure that you use your gift where it was intended to be used—for one another here, for the body of Christ. And for the bride of Christ—for His bride.

Ephesians 5 refers to the Church as the bride of Christ. And what’s been so helpful for me as I’ve studied spiritual gifts is that I’ve started to think of them as wedding presents. Spiritual gifts are gifts for the bride.

So, imagine you’ve got this incredible friend and she’s getting married. And you pick the perfect gift for her, something special just for the bride; something you know she’s going to enjoy. It’s going to bless her husband, it’s going to bless her family for years to come. And you spent quite a bit of money on it. You got her name engraved on it, you wrapped it beautifully. And on the day of wedding you proudly walked over there and set it on the gift table.

But then, during the reception, you look over and one of the bridesmaids is kind of standing by the table. And you notice that she’s opening up the presents. And she’s shoving them into her purse. What are you going to do? Some of you would walk over there. Others of you would run. And you’d say, “What are you doing? That’s not for you. That’s for her. The person in the white dress—she’s the bride. This gift is hers!”

At a wedding, the gifts are for the bride. In the Church, spiritual gifts are for the bride of Christ. We use our gifts to serve her.

So, do you have the gift of hospitality? We need you. Are you showing hospitality here at Grace? Or is that gift only blessing friends and neighbors in your own house? Give your gift to

the bride. Hold a door open on Sundays and smile and greet people. Don't sit in your adult community; walk around, meet new people, make them feel welcome and like they've been a part of that group for years the moment that arrive. In this room, see who you could meet on a Sunday morning to make this big room feel a little smaller for somebody. Use your gift here.

Do you have the gift of giving? We need you. Are you using your gift at Grace? Or are you blessing a bridesmaid? Are you giving to other non-profits or outside ministries? Give your gift to the bride. Tithe. Give ten percent and more. Sponsor Grace missionaries. Give a scholarship to a student to go to camp. Use your gift here.

Folks with an administration gift or a leadership gift, we need you. Are you leading here at Grace, or is it only at work or while coaching your kids' soccer or baseball team? Give your gift to the bride. Mentor a group of middle school boys. Lead that MOPS small group. Organize and then lead a mission trip.

There is nothing wrong with using your spiritual gift in other places as an overflow of how you use it here. It should show up in your life outside as a manifestation of the Spirit within you. But make sure you use your gift for the bride, not just for the bridesmaids. Because there is something entirely spiritually different about the Church. The body of Christ is different than any other group of people. The bride of Christ is significant in a way that no other community can be. We are gifted to serve one another.

So, what's your spiritual gift? And how are you using it at Grace?

I know in a large church like ours it's often easy to say no to serving because it feels like, *You know, somebody else has already got it covered. I don't know if they really need me.* And so, we as a church want to do a better job of showing you opportunities where you can use the gift that God gave you. And you can help us by saying, "Hey, here I am! I think this is my gift. Send me! I'm ready."

If you're already serving here, that's wonderful. God bless you. Use your gift where you're involved. See if this is your gift.

But if you're not serving—if you haven't found that place that you love and where you're affirmed and you see that supernatural ability, I want to invite you to do two things. First, pray about it. Pray, ask God, "Where do you want me to use this gift that you gave to me?" And then, secondly, just start serving. Just start serving.

You can do this today. Visit grace360.org/serve, and you can explore the places right here where you can use your gift to serve the bride. Each of our ministries has identified these areas where you could get involved using your particular gift. Each of our ministries has said, *Hey, we would love for someone who's got this mercy gift, and they could do this for us. That would bless the body.*

And you can visit that site today. Check some boxes and just raise your hand. Say, Here I am. And you just might find that place that fits, where those three A's connect. That's awesome. Let's start serving. We have a lot of barns that we need to move.

So, this summer, going into this fall and going forward, let's not be people who just go to church; let's be people who are the Church, the body. We're gifted to serve.

And I'm personally thankful for those Grace Kids volunteers who glorify God and show the love and the grace of Jesus Christ to my children every single week. They are the body of Christ to my daughters in a way that I simply cannot be on my own. They show my kids who Jesus is. And many of those folks are using their spiritual gifts. They're serving in those classrooms, they have affinity for it, they like it. They have a supernatural ability to be there. If you've met my daughters, they need that supernatural ability. They've received affirmation. The kids will ask them, "Hey, will you be my teacher again next year?" They have found their place to use their gift.

Others over there are still trying to figure out if that's their place. And it might not be. But they're serving their church, because they know that in the body of Christ, nobody does it alone.

Let's use our gifts to serve one another ... for the common good ... for the health of this body ... for the love of the bride ... so that God may be glorified.

Would you please pray with me?

Heavenly Father, we thank You for who You are and what You've done for us; that You love us enough that You sent Your Son; that He would live and walk among us; God, He went to the cross for us. And Jesus tells us that it's better that He went away so that He would send the Holy Spirit to be with us. So, Holy Spirit, we pray that we would recognize and know how You are involved and invested in changing our lives.

God, we pray that we would use the things, the gifts, that You have given us to bless this church, so that we would be a body that shows off Jesus to the city of Austin and to the world; God, that we would be a bride perfectly adorned for her wedding night. God, we pray that You would lead us and guide us. We pray these things in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.