

Serving Together
Being the Church 2017 | 1 Peter 4:1-10
Southern Hills Baptist Church
June 11, 2017

WELCOME

Welcome. Happy Sunday to you. It is good to be starting our week off together in God's Word.

Being the Church Recap

We are continuing our series, Being the Church. Believer, you are the church, go live like it. But what does that mean? What is the calling upon us as the church? We have considered the calling to Learn God's Word Together, we are Share Life Together, We are to Fight Sin Together, We are to Go and Share the Gospel Together, and we are to Give Together. God's calling upon His people does not stop here. We are also called to Serve Together.

If you have your Bibles, and I hope you do, turn over to 1 Peter 4, as we will be there in a second.

INTRODUCTION – CONSUMER-DRIVEN CULTURE

As you turn in that direction, let me tell you something you already know, but can forget due how deeply it permeates our culture... we live in a consumer-driven culture. We are pelted with advertising from every direction. Ads are everywhere, they even hide in the programs that we watch and the articles we read. Additionally, we are given countless choices for the purchases that we make as well.

iPhones and Pulpits

Something that made the iPhone stand out for a while is that unlike other companies Apple only gave you two color options for your phone, white and black. Now over time Apple has caved into the pressure and they offer a variety of colors. Consumers are used to getting choices and options to customize anything and everything. I remember when we were shopping for a pulpit, I joked to Matthew to make sure he picked one out that had a cup holder and he told me the one we chose could have one added for \$150 or so. Unbelievable, right?

We Expect Choices

In any event, **the fact that we have all of these options with almost anything that we buy has naturally reestablished our expectations.** We expect choices everywhere we go. We expect to get exactly what we want when we make choices, right? If one retailer doesn't have exactly what we want we will go somewhere else because someone else will and we will do it all from our couch on our phones or computer.

Consumerism Bleeding into the Church

This is the reality of the world we live in. One of the many troubling aspects of this reality is that **this mentality has bled over into how people view and think of the church. When people are looking for a church, they look for how they might be served, rather than how they might serve within the church. Many come to church with a "me first" mentality.**

- I have to love the music. I have to be moved by the music. The music has to be this kind of style.
- I have to love the preaching style of the Pastor. I want to laugh some. I want to cry some. I want him to package it up in bite-sized thoughts for me. I want to leave feeling good about myself.
- My kids need to have ____ program to be involved in. They need to think going to church is as entertaining as the other after-school events they attend.

- I have to like the feel of the atmosphere. The feel of the church needs to fit me. I want it casual, but not too casual. I want it friendly, but not where people are trying to invade my personal life.

Now, **don't get me wrong, you should be picky when it comes to choosing a church family.** You need to make sure that church teaches the Word of God unapologetically and strives to live it. Be picky about this, don't compromise.

At the same time, **if you are only looking for how the church will serve you** and meet your preferences, rather than looking for how you can serve the church, you have carried over your consumer mentality into the church. You have begun to treat looking for a church family like shopping for a new car.

About What You Can Give Too

Being a part of a church family is every bit as much about what you can give as what you can get from it. This is part of the calling upon the church. This is part of what it means to be the church. We are to be a people who Serves One Another, we are to Serve Together.

OPENING PRAYER

We are about to read from 1 Peter 4 in just a moment. Before we do let's pause and ask God to work in our lives through His Word.

Dear Heavenly Father,

You call us to serve one another and others around us, but our natural inclination is to serve ourselves. Help us battle this selfish, empty desire. Teach us to stop striving to serve others out of our own strength, but to do so in your strength for the glory of your name and the joy of our hearts.

We ask these things in the name of Jesus,

Amen.

CONTEXT

Let me share the context of what is going on in 1 Peter before we dive in. This letter was written by, you guessed it, Peter. **Peter was one of Jesus' disciples.** In fact Peter was one of the disciples who was part of Jesus' inner circle. We had a chance to learn a lot about Peter when we walked through the books of Acts a couple years ago as God worked through Peter in powerful ways to help lead the birth of the church. **Peter was one of the lead Pastors in Jerusalem. The letter He wrote in 1 Peter was directed to a handful of churches in what is now modern day Turkey.**

The Evil of Nero

Peter knew the hardships that these churches were facing as they all lived under **the evil rule of an Emperor named Nero.** Maybe you have heard of him. He was a bad dude. **He actively persecuted Christians, blaming them for harm that he brought upon the city** and even killing many of them for their faith in Jesus.

Purpose in Suffering

Knowing the immense hardship they faced Peter wrote to this group to encourage them. He wrote to help them understand God's purpose in suffering. He wrote to encourage them to pursue holiness and righteousness in the face of persecution and pain.

Follow Jesus' Example

As we enter chapter 4 we read Peter encouraging these suffering believers to follow the example of Jesus. Jesus suffered greatly in this life, yet He never abandoned a life of holiness. We are to follow His example, saying “no” to sin and “yes” to righteousness.

OUR TEXT

With this backdrop in mind, let’s take a moment to read our passage. We will be focused in on verses 10 and 11 this morning, but I’m going to start in verse 1 so we get the larger flow of thought Peter is expressing.

1 Peter 4:1-11

[1] Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, [2] so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God. [3] For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. [4] With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; [5] but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. [6] For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does.

[7] The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. [8] Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. [9] Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. [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.

Isaiah 40:8

[8] The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.

Struck by Peter’s Priorities Towards the Suffering

So Peter’s admonishment to these persecuted believers is to follow the example of Christ. Pursue holiness in the face of suffering. What an amazing thing when you think about it. These people were hurting and even scared. Peter has a tender heart for them, yet notice what Peter’s primary concern for these believers is, it isn’t their comfort, it isn’t their short-term happiness, it is their godliness. That is striking. You may have heard it said before that God is more interested in your holiness than your happiness. This passage affirms that. He is concerned about your happiness too, but that is a by-product of holiness.

Love Expressed Through Service

I digress. Peter calls these believers to continue to pursue Jesus in obedience by loving one another and one of the ways this love is to express itself is through service, they are to serve one another.

We Too Are to Serve

Church, the calling that Peter places upon these believers is upon us as well. While we are separated from these churches by a couple thousand years we are the same people. We are the children of God. We live in very different points and times in history, yet the calling remains the same. We are to serve one another in love. Peter gives us some important reminders to help us live this calling out. We are to...

- **Serve from God’s Grace and with God’s Gifts**

- **Serve by God's Strength**
- **Serve for God's Glory**

SERVING FROM GOD'S GRACE AND WITH GOD'S GIFTS (vs. 10)

We are called to serve one another, but as is the case with every calling and command from God **we find that these callings and commands are undergirded by a promise from God, a promise to supply what is necessary to equip us** to carry out this call upon our lives.

God Equips for the Call

You see, **God never calls us to something that He does not equip us for.** We see this beautifully in verses 10 and 11. Let's start in verse 10 as we see that our calling to serve is to be done from God's grace and with God's gifts.

Let me reread verse 10 for us as there is so much here...

1 Peter 4:10

[10] As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:

Seeing How the Phrases Relate

I want us to see how each of these phrases relate to one another, which will help us understand exactly what Peter is getting at. **We have each received a gift, which we are to use to serve one another and using our gifts to serve one another makes us good stewards of God's grace that has been poured out on us.**

Let's reassemble this thought in a more **sequential order... God's varied grace has been poured out on us, which has manifest itself with gifts that have been given to us that we may serve one another.**



Broader Grace

We talk about grace a lot because God is gracious and it is in His grace alone that we find hope. Often when we think of the word "grace" we think of it terms of salvation as God redeems lost sinners who are undeserving of His love. Grace has a broader meaning/usage than this in the Scriptures however. The term "grace" is also used of all of God's kind, **unmerited acts of love and provision towards His children as He works in their lives to make them more like Jesus.** It is this second definition that is in use in our passage.

Varied Grace

God's unmerited kindness is poured out on His children, imparting gifts. But before we get too far along here take note of the adjective in front of God's grace. His grace is varied, **meaning it is diverse, it is complex. The grace of God is not served up in cookie cutter format towards His children.**

The grace that God has poured out over you is unique, it is different than what He has shown to anyone else.

The Make Up of Your Gifting

God has given you a unique set of experiences, with a unique set of passions, with a unique set of skills and talents. **All of this brought together, your experiences, your passions, your talents and abilities, this is all God's grace in your life to shape you and make you who you are. All of this culminates to form your gifting.**

Over-Simplified Thoughts on Spiritual Gifts

Often we think of spiritual gifts in terms that are too simplistic. We think of gifts like teaching or evangelism or discernment or service. These are all gifts, to be sure, but God doesn't give cookie cutter gifts out like this. His grace towards you is varied and complex. He has tailor made a set of gifts for you, made up for your passion, experiences, and talents.

You Must Know This... You're a Unique Work of God

It is important that you know this. **It is important that you know your gifting is unique by the good design of God's varied grace** that has been poured out on you. **You and your unique gifts are the blessed result and very intentional work of God's grace.**

Only You Can Serve Like You Can Serve

Here is the significance of the reality that you are uniquely gifted... Only you can serve in the way that you serve. You are always going to have a **special spin** on the way that you serve and use your gifting. Your personality, your perspective, your passion, your talents, **all of these things will come shining through in a way that is uniquely you when you serve.**

We Need You!

Thus, we as a church need you. We need you specifically. God has saw fit, in His sovereign wisdom, to place you in our church family. He knows what we need and apparently what we need is the gifting of a Stella, of a Julie, of a Cameron, of a Jim, of a Yessinia, of an Austin, of a Yaya.

Our Mission Depends On You

God has called us on a mission together. Our mission is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. Our mission is to become like Jesus in our daily lives. Our mission is to make the name of Jesus famous and invite others to come taste and see that He is good. This mission can only be achieved when we are all serving together with the gifts that God has graced us with. We need you as a church, we need your unique and special gifting.

You Need Us

Not only do we need you, but you need us. The gifting that you have was given to you in order that you may use it to serve in the body of Christ, in the church. Peter wrote, "use (your gifts) to serve one another." God has graced you with your gifts for a reason. Your gifts were given with the intention that they be used in the life of the local church.

Paul echoes this thought in Romans 12...

Romans 12:4-8

[4] For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, [5] so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. [6] Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; [7] if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his

teaching; [8] the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

Paul **emphasizes the uniqueness of your gifting** due to God's varied grace as well when he writes, "Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us." Identical in thought to what Peter wrote.

He also **reaffirms the purpose of your gifting**, it is to serve the body. We are one body, though diverse in gifting. We are to have unity in diversity by serving according to the gifting God has given us.

So your unique gifting was provided by the grace of God that we would serve one another. God has every right to put this call upon you because these gifts are His. He has given them to you. You/we are called to steward them for His glory.

Missing Out on God's Grace

Here is yet another important observation from this text, follow this train of thought... If the grace of God is poured out on all of us in varied forms and it produces in us gifts that we are to use to serve one another then we become extensions of God's grace in each other's lives. **Thus to not be engaged in the life of the church, to not share life with those in the body, is to miss out on the grace that God has prepared and planned to show you. You are stealing joy from yourself when you are not engaged in the life of the church**, being ministered to by the grace of God through the gifting of others. Not only are you missing out on the joy of more of God's grace, but **you are stealing from our joy by holding out on us**. Your gifting is an expression of God's grace and you hide that grace by being distant from the body. **This matter of serving one another is a matter of joy as we get to be ministered to by the grace of God through one another.**

God's Incredible Provision in the Call to Serve

Before we move on let me call it out once more. We are called to serve one another, but God in His grace has uniquely gifted you for this calling. How wonderful is it to serve a God of this much grace. He always equips us for the calling that is placed upon us.

Transition

So the first thing we have seen in our text is that the call upon us to serve is one we carry out by the grace of God through the gifts that He has given us. As we continue on into verse 11 we see God's grace continue to hold us up and supply for us all of our needs. Let me read verses 10 and 11 for us again...

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: [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.

SERVING BY GOD'S STRENGTH (vs. 11b)

God calls us to serve and supplies the gifts that we are to use, the tools we are to use, in this calling, but God doesn't stop there. God doesn't only call us to go race and then gives us a car, He also supplies the fuel to make that car go. In verse 11 we are told to go and serve by the strength of God.

Ongoing Strength

Notice, Peter says we are to serve out of the strength God supplies. The word in the Greek for “supplies” is a present, active, indicative, meaning it is ongoing. **God doesn’t give you one parcel of sustaining strength at the start of your Christian life and it is up to you to ration it out the remainder of your life. No, He is an ongoing wellspring of grace and strength** towards His children that always run fresh and never runs dry.

Sweet Promises of God’s Equipping Strength

This is a sweet promise we find all throughout the Bible. God promises to strengthen His servants for the calling that is before them.

2 Corinthians 9:8

[8] And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

This is powerful. All grace abound to you. All sufficiency. In all things. At all times. That you may about in every good work. There are no loopholes here, right? God’s promise is to strengthen you by His grace to live for Him.

Philippians 4:13

[13] I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

This verse is often used out of its context to be a mantra for those needing a confidence boost in life when facing a challenge. The context of this passage is pursuing godliness when life is hard. God’s promise is that He will give you the strength to honor Him even when you feel weak.

Isaiah 40:28-31

[28] Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. [29] He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. [30] Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; [31] but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.

Those who wait upon the Lord, who trust in the Sovereign One, will find strength to press on.

Drained and In Need of Help

These are sweet promises **because we all find ourselves drained at times, right?** We know the calling that is before is bigger than us. **We know what we need to do, but wonder how we will get it done.** God, in His grace, supplies the strength that we need to press on.

The Many Forms of God’s Grace

God’s sustaining grace comes in many forms.

- One form we have already seen it take in our text is in the **gifting of others**. Sometimes God will strengthen you to serve through the gifted service of others towards you.
- Other times God will strengthen you by **giving you heart or a passion so deep** for the need in front of you, you will gladly make whatever sacrifice necessary to see that need met.
- Other times God will make it clear that you have an **opportunity to show His worth to others** through an act of service so you will press on out of an excitement to see Jesus’ glory displayed to others.

- Then there are times when God **supernaturally gives you energy** when you were running on empty.

God uses many avenues to strengthen His children to serve one another.

God's Strength is Necessary, Not Just Nice

Now this is not just a nice blessing that is available if you need it, no. **Peter tells us here that if we are going to serve God we need to do so out of the strength that God supplies. Meaning all of our service is to be done out of a heart that is motivated by a love for God** and a desire to see Him glorified through the way that we meet the needs of others through our service. **God doesn't merely want people who are busy with their hands, rather He wants people who have hearts full of love for Him so much so that it fuels the moment of their hands.** Serve by His strength, this isn't just a blessed promise, but it is also a command.

A Grace-Saturated Call

What blessed me this week as I studied this passage is just how grace-saturated this call to serve is. **Preaching a sermon, where the big idea is to call people to serve** could be a bit wearisome, but not when God is supplying the tools and the strength to see this calling through. While we are called to serve He has done most of the work, we are simply to steward and use what He has blessed us with.

Transition

God's blessing of gifts and strength to serve with are working towards a bigger goal than the mere service itself. We see this as we close up our passage in verse 11...

1 Peter 4:11

[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.

SERVING FOR GOD'S GLORY (vs. 11c)

God's ultimate goal in our serving one another is His glory. What does it mean to glorify God? It means that we **display the goodness and the worth of God to the world around us. The glory of God is the beauty of God, the power of God, the grace of God, the goodness of God, gone public,** for all around to see.

God is Worthy of the Glory

God is worthy of all of the glory in your serving. Again, just listen to the flow of thought from this text...

- It is God's varied grace that is poured out on you
- It is this grace that produces gifts. God has given you gifts to use
- It is God's strength which empowers you to serve

It is all of God, right? He invited you to participate in a race, gave you the car, He even gassed it up, so when you finish the race the glory is His.

Relationship Between Strength Supplied and God's Glory

God's glory is the goal in His working, which is why the strength that God supplies is not a nice back up plan if you get tired in your serving. **God must be the motivation of our hearts in our serving otherwise glory for the service could be falsely attributed elsewhere.**

Glory is His!

Why is it important that God receive the glory? Verse 11 tells us that. **All glory and dominion belong to God forever and ever. Glory is His. It isn't something that He is trying to achieve, it is His.** It belongs to Him. Glory finds its **origin, its meaning, its definition** in God so for glory to be attributed anywhere else without it tracing back to God is to falsely ascribe glory.

Stakes Are Raised

As I think about this, this truth, that all our service is designed to bring God glory, **heightens the stakes of our service towards one another.** The way you serve others isn't just about meeting the needs of others around you, **your service has cosmic implications.** Your service is intended to reflect the beauty and grace of God.

Can't Downplay Your Service

Sometimes **it is easy to look at service opportunities and downplay them.** We tell ourselves things like, "No one will notice. This won't really even make a difference. No one will feel the impact of this." Yet, this is not true. God notices and our service, when done with His gifts from His strength, brings Him glory and all of the sudden you have the only audience that really matters, right? **You are never without an audience of eternal significance when you serve others. Your acts of service are never stand alone acts, they fit into the larger, eternal purpose of glorifying God.**

What a joy to know and live in.

APPLYING THE TRUTH OF 1 PETER 4:10-11

Let's take a few minutes to apply the truth we have learned from 1 Peter 4:10...

1. What is your Gifting?

What is your gifting? God's varied grace has been poured out on you. He has given you talents and abilities, passions and interests, experiences and lessons learned and all of this culminates to form gifts in your life. Where is your gifting? **There are many who never seek this out in their lives, but you must.** God has given you these gifts for a reason. He has given you these gifts to serve others and to glorify His Name. You must learn your gifting. We are depending upon you. Your gifts are meant to be an expression of God's grace to the larger body, don't deprive us of that.

Discovering Your Spiritual Gift

So how do you learn and understand what your spiritual giftings are? You should be considering a number of things...

- You should be **talking to others** to gain an outside perspective on your talents
- You should **evaluate where you have seen fruit** from your efforts in the past
- You should consider the **unique experiences** you have had
- You should consider the kinds of service God has **given you a passion for**
- You should consider the opportunities that God has **placed before you**

Get to Work

Then you should get to work. One mistake **many Christians make is that they get lost in trying to find out exactly what their gifting is. They spend all their time trying to determine what their exact gifting is all the while opportunities to serve their brothers and sisters pass them by.** You

are called to serve, go serve, use your gifts along the way and what usually happens is that you will figure out your gifting in the process or maybe God will develop a gifting within you through that serving. The gifts that God gives us come in a variety of forms, some permanent, other temporary and they are all consistently being formed throughout our lives by God's varied grace.

2. Where do you Serve?

Where do you serve? The calling upon our lives from this text is clear we are to serve with the gifts that God has given by the strength that He has supplied. So how are you doing that? How are you using the gifts that God has given you? Peter was writing to churches and told them to serve one another. How are you using your gifting in the church? There are countless ways to serve in the body, some formal, some informal.

- What are you doing?
- What needs are you meeting?
- How are you ministering to others?

Serving On Their Terms

A mistake some Christians make is that they believe they should only serve with the primary gift they have been given. I have talked to some believers who when asked if they would serve in the Children's ministry they have responded by saying, "That is not my gifting. I am gifted in ____ so I am looking for a service opportunity there." They are only interested in serving on their terms, which is a bit ironic when you think about it, right? Service isn't about you, it is about meeting the needs of others and glorifying God. Here is the deal, please do look for service opportunities with the gifts that you have clearly outlined, but at the same time you need to be open to other opportunities that God is going to bring your way.

Your Calling in a Small Church

The reality is we are a small church, thus we don't have endless resources. We are all in this together. We are all going to have to wear many hats in this church. There is so much beauty in this to be sure, but it may take you out of your comfort zone at times. What a wonderful opportunity to glorify God though, right? You are willing to leave your comfort zone for His glory. What does this communicate about the worth and beauty of God to others around you? It says that Jesus is worth it and it displays His supremacy. What a wonderful thing.

So again, where do you serve? Put your gifting to work and take advantage of the opportunities that God places in your path. We certainly have opportunities aplenty here at Southern Hills.

3. Do your Gifts Glorify You or God?

God has uniquely gifted you. Whose glory do you use these gifts for? **How often do you find yourself making sacrifices to meet the needs of others? Have you applied your gifts to build a life of comfort for yourself or for others?** Remember, Peter wrote that God has given you gift SO THAT you can serve others. Your gifts were given to you so that you could use them for others. This is how God is glorified.

We must always remember, all of the gifts we have been given, were given to us as tools to use for others, tools to bring God glory.

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR THE CALLING TO SERVE TOGETHER

Let me close with two quick words of encouragement as we go and try to live out this calling to serve one another.

1. Pursue Your Joy

Acts 20:35

[35] In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

Serving others will require sacrifice, but **Jesus Himself explains that there is greater blessing, greater joy in giving, in sacrificing** for others than receiving or holding back for yourself. That greater joy will not always be experienced in the moment, but it will be experienced one day to be sure.

We are called to serve one another. **Take up this calling as an investment in your own joy.**

2. Look to Jesus

The last word of encouragement I'll offer up is that the life of Jesus ought to be our inspiration. Listen to Philippians 2...

Philippians 2:3-9

[3] Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. [4] Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. [5] Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, [6] who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, [7] but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. [8] And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Jesus sacrificed and served far more than you could ever dream. As a follower of Christ we are called to follow in His footsteps and here in Philippians Paul encourages us to remember the sacrifice of Jesus and His servant-hearted life that has given us new life and salvation. Jesus ought to be our motivation, strength, and example for who we are to be as servants.

Have this mind in you Southern Hills, which is yours in Christ Jesus, serve and sacrifice for one another, for the good of your brother/sister, for the glory of God, and for your personal joy.