

FOCUS: We are called to give glory to God in everything by using the gifts he has graciously given us to serve others.

FUNCTION: To help listeners understand practically how to glorify God with their gift and resolve to act on it.

### 1. How do we practically give glory to God?

Recap – lots of BIG concepts and realities – God’s glory present in creation, in us, demonstrated in his cross, rescued, reconciled, raised. Today – the how, the practical, the hard work, but also the real change. Hints through Scripture (any wd make a good sermon) –

*Then Joshua said to Achan, “My son, give glory to the LORD, the God of Israel, by telling the truth. Josh 7:19 NLT*

*O God, we give glory to you all day long and constantly praise your name. Ps 44:8 NLT*

*Give glory to the LORD your God before it is too late. Acknowledge him before he brings darkness upon you, causing you to stumble and fall on the darkening mountains. Jer 13:16 NLT*

*Has no one returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?” Luke 17:18 NLT*

*Therefore, accept each other just as Christ has accepted you so that God will be given glory. Ro 15:7 NLT*

*Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God. Ro 6:13 NLT*

*So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. 1 Co 10:31 NLT*

However, wading through different texts when J sent me this one – a simple compact, wonderful guiding statement for bringing glory to God – here it is –

*God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another. Do you have the gift of speaking? Then speak as though God himself were speaking through you. Do you have the gift of helping others? Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies. Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ. All glory and power to him forever and ever! Amen.*

## 2. We all have a gift – what's yours?

*God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts.*

A couple of things about this little sentence –

- the word used here for gifts is linked strongly with the word for grace. Other versions – ‘the manifold grace of God’, ‘faithful stewards of God’s grace’.  
The idea of a gift (ideally) is a grace – we don’t pay for it or earn it. Freely given.
- Great variety - manifold –**multi-colored**. - used when describing the many colors of a painting or a tapestry or a field of flowers. the many angles, hues, and dimensions of God's glory. I love this - the creativity of the Spirit in giving gifts is not limited, an infinite range, individuality. Sometimes we who have been in church for a while forget this – we think there are a few basic gifts – usually the upfront ones that we see, or the ones specifically listed in other parts of the Bible. But this verse tells us God is much more imaginative than this!
- So what is a gift and how do you know what yours is? An ability/talent/passion given by God for a task or activity which contributes to the church and builds up others. This is not only a definition but a way of discovering what your gift might be. What is something that you love to do (or wish you could do), that you are (or could be) good at, which could make a positive difference to other people?
- Time now to write some thoughts, pray, ask – hand out paper.
- Once you’ve thought of something, a couple more steps –
  - o Pray about it and ask God to confirm this in some way
  - o Ask people who know you well what they think about it
  - o Try it – more than once! (newness can mislead)

## 3. Use them well to serve one another

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4 volunteers (plan ahead?)

1 = Holy Spirit, 3 = us, congregation = ‘others’

1 tips/gives chocolates to A – hands out but lets chocs fall, B – gathers them up and eats one, C – Gather up and gives to people in congregation, comes back, gets more, gives out, B gives one to C.

This is what it looks like. Not A – just not use gifts. Not B – use them for ourselves. C – use them to serve others. And as we all do this, we all receive as well (‘one another’ – mutual).

[Other versions give more sense of the word here – steward – ‘faithful stewards of God’s grace’.

A steward receives orders or supplies from their master and passes on or distributes them to the people. Looks very like what we have here.]

- Time now to write a way to use the gift you have thought of.

## 4. God will supply the means

*Do you have the gift of speaking? Then speak as though God himself were speaking through you. Do you have the gift of helping others? Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies.*

Now, Peter uses two examples to show how this works. Remember he has just said there is a huge variety of gifts. The first example – speaking. This tends to be a gift not many people aspire to have! But it’s not just about standing up like this and bringing a sermon. It could be having a conversation

with someone who is hurting, or has questions, or speaking up in your growth group or youth or kids church and sharing what's on your mind or how the Bible has spoken to you, or even calling or texting someone (not envisioned by Peter!). I already know some of you have this gift and you may not even realise it.

- The advice to people with this gift is to speak as though they are God's words. This might mean being careful how you say the words – what tone would God use? What words will make it clear? How will the person I am speaking to hear this? It might mean speaking even when you'd rather not, or you feel awkward or you're not sure how the words will be received. It might even mean NOT speaking when there are thoughts in your mind that God would not say! This is what it looks like to use the gift of speaking well to help others. And what's more, the more you practice this, the better you will get at knowing when God wants you to speak on your behalf and he will supply the words you need.

What about the second example? The gift of helping others (serving). This is an interesting one because we are actually all called to do this but there are many ways to do it, and there are also some people who are particularly gifted at helping others – I know who some of you are too!

- The advice to people with this gift (and any gift!) is to *do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies*. I find this really helpful. Serving can be a taxing gift - this verse gives us parameters at both extremes – for those who tend to underdo the helping – get out there and use the strength and energy God has given you, - for those who can give too much, or who have real limitations which frustrate them – simply do what God enables you to do. In both cases he supplies the right amount of strength and energy, and he expects it to be used.

The fact that God must be the supplier of everything needed for the gift makes sense in that GOD himself will be glorified through us and our actions. When we serve other people in our own capacity, with our own skills and ability and energy, the temptation is that we ourselves are glorified instead. MSG - *God's bright presence will be evident in everything through Jesus.*

## 5. Then we will, together, bring glory to God in everything!

So back to where we started – this using of his gracious gifts for serving others is the main way God wants us to glorify him. Singing songs, coming to church, giving money – that's all good but it only glorifies God if the way we live and treat others lines up with what we sing. The OT Israelites often gave God grief for this very thing – doing all the worship things then ignoring injustice and exploiting people during the week – he hated it!! [*Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you.* James 1:27 (NLT)]

At this point, Peter has finished his big summing up statement but he can't help adding in a declaration of praise - *Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ. All glory and power to him forever and ever! Amen.*

*That way, God's bright presence will be evident in everything through Jesus, and he'll get all the credit as the One mighty in everything—encores to the end of time. Oh, yes! MSG*

All glory belongs to God, will return to him, and will be his forever!

19<sup>th</sup> C author and preacher – John Henry Jowett –

*“[God uses] the note of my life to make the music of his kingdom and if the note be absent, he will miss it and the glorious music will be...incomplete.”*

The last question on your piece of paper is – How do I get started? As the service concludes you might like to jot something down. At the very least, have a conversation with someone today about what you wrote. And if you'd like further help to get started, any of the staff would be delighted to talk with you.

May everything we do, no matter how small or how mundane, make his glory shine more brightly in the world!