

40 Days of Purpose Ministry: Shaped for serving God (1 Peter 4:1-11)

Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you. But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to men in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit. The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray. Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. **Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.** 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."

(1 Peter 4:1-11 NIV)

WIIFM and WIIFO

We have looked before at these two words “WIIFM” (What’s in it for me) and “WIIFO” (What’s in it for others).

Verse 10 of the passage we looked at this morning challenges us to be WIIFO people. **“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms”**

Serve as Christ Served – Being Christ-like

Last week we looked at being Christ-like. If we look at Jesus life, his whole attitude was to serve others. He spent his whole life serving God and serving other people. We also have to learn to serve like Jesus served.

One of the things you notice about Jesus is that he was very patient with people. He always had time for people. Was that because he didn’t have much to do, had a lot of time on his hands? On the contrary. In many of the gospel stories when we see Jesus helping others he is busy doing something else when he is interrupted by someone.

As Jesus and his disciples were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed him. Two blind men were sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was going by, they shouted, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!" The crowd rebuked them and told them to be quiet, but they shouted all the louder, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!" Jesus stopped and called them. "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked. "Lord," they answered, "we want our sight." Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him.

(Matthew 20:29-34 NIV)

I still find it amazing that wherever Jesus went he seemed to have hoards of people following him. You would think at some point he would get fed up of it all wouldn't you? But Jesus has all of these people following him, perhaps he's talking to them, perhaps teaching them as they walk along and they pass two blind men who are sitting at the side of the road. And the two men call out to him. "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us". And all the crowd go "shhh! – don't disturb Jesus, be quiet." But they shouted even louder. Notice this, Jesus stopped. And Jesus helped them.

I wonder how many of us would be happy to have our busy schedules interrupted. But this happened to Jesus all the time.

We should try to have the same kind of attitude to serving others but there are barriers that get in our way.

The first barrier is self-centeredness

Jesus told the story of a man who was attacked by robbers and left half-dead at the side of the road. We are told of two people who walked past. Do we do the same? Do we allow our schedules to be interrupted or do we prefer to say "I'm sorry, I'm too busy"?

Charles Wesley said:

"Do all the good you can,
By all the means you can,
In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can,
At all the times you can
To all the people you can

As long as ever you can!"

Or in other words:

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others

It goes back to WIIFM and WIIFO. If we constantly think "what can I do for others?" then we will have more of an attitude of serving others.

The second barrier is perfectionism

Solomon writes: "[Farmers who wait for perfect weather never plant. If they watch every cloud, they never harvest.](#)" (Ecc 11:4 NLT).

Don't wait for the absolutely perfect moment or until you are perfect because the chances are you will never get there. The trouble with this sort of perfectionism is that it usually means we do nothing at all. And that's a bit daft because in trying to be perfect we have done the complete opposite and done the most imperfect thing we could have possibly done – nothing.

We need to relax a little or as some people would say "Take a 'chill pill'" Why not just use the abilities God has given you as best as you can. You know it's a good job that in this church you don't have to be a perfect minister before you're allowed to stand here and preach. Because I wouldn't be standing here now. And the more I study at Spurgeon's, the more I realise that I will never actually be a perfect minister. I couldn't even dream of doing the job as well as others before me have done. So we might as well sing our last hymn and go home. But let's look at our verse again:

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others

I will never be a perfect minister but that doesn't mean that I shouldn't do it. The great preachers before me, even dare I say Spurgeon were not perfect. And if we wait until we are perfect we will be waiting forever. What we have to do instead is simply do our best. Yes, we might make mistakes but it would be an even bigger mistake to do nothing.

Your gifts are not for making lots of money

Let's look at our verse again:

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to [make lots of money](#)

Oh oops! That seems to have gone a bit wrong but you know that's what many people think this verse should say. Of course you need to make a living but the main reason God gives you your gifts is so as you can use them to serve others.

So let's correct that verse:

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others

Get in SHAPE

OK, time for a bit of a workout now. We don't need to be perfect to serve God, but we can make a better job of it if we get in SHAPE.

SHAPE stands for:

Spiritual Gifts

1 Corinthians 12:7 tells us that these are given by God for the benefit of all. Notice that the gifts are not given to us so as we can show off with them, they are intended to benefit others.

Heart

What is your passion in life? What is it that really excites you? This will be different for different people. When I was a teenager I had hair past my shoulders and listened to heavy metal. I thought it was great, my mom's comment was "it's just a load of shouting". You know how when you were kids you took it in turns of having your music on in the car? My turn never lasted very long for some reason.

Anyway, we are all different but our differences can be used as an advantage in serving. The things that you love doing, someone else will hate. And vice versa.

Abilities

That leads us nicely into the next attribute which is our abilities. God gives us all different gifts and as we have already looked at these should be used to serve others. Some people in this church are great at handy-work and you'll often see them in the church doing bits and pieces. Others are good at making the tea and you know these behind the scenes jobs are perhaps the most valuable in the church. If people come into a church and the sermon wasn't that good then they might be a little disappointed. But it doesn't make half as much difference as if they feel welcome. It's the little things that make the

biggest difference. A friendly face saying hello when they walk in. A clean and tidy environment, and a good cup of tea. They are just as important as anything else that we do.

Personality

God also uses our personality. Some people are good at small talk, they're great at meeting people for the first time. Hairdressers are great at this aren't they? They find all sorts of things to talk to you about. If you are like that, you might make a good evangelist. Others are good at listening to others when they have problems. You would be good at pastoral care. Some people are naturally witty. You would be good... in another church. (just a joke) Some are great organisers, you would be a good secretary. Others are creative, you are visionaries.

The list is endless and all of these things can be used in the church. Using the abilities and personality that you have means that you will not find ministry a hassle, it will be something that excites you. You will be doing the things that you enjoy doing and the things that you are good at. So if you are not enjoying serving God at the moment then ask yourself if it is because you are not working within your abilities and personality. Are there things that do fit with your ability and personality? Working out what these are makes for a very strong and very exciting church.

Experiences

Finally, God uses our experiences. You know, some of the people I have the most time for are some of the oldest people I know. One such person in the church at Sparkbrook was 95 when she died and another elderly lady in the church I grew up in. These two ladies I admire greatly and I uphold with the greatest respect. They were the greatest prayers I have ever met and they also had such wisdom.

Old people often are very wise, why? Because they've been through such a lot. They have a lot of experience of life. Experiences can shape us into better, wiser people as we learn to appreciate the good things of life and also learn the lessons from our mistakes.

All of these things give us our SHAPE which God can use if we allow him to.

We should be grateful to serve

Hold on a minute? I have to serve other people and I'm supposed to be grateful for it? Absolutely. We think about this all wrong because we don't see it as the wonderful privilege that it is. Think about this, the God who created the universe, the most important thing to him, the thing that he really wants more than anything else is to have a relationship with the people he has created. And he trusts you enough to let you help with that really important job. You have been entrusted with the highest ranking job there is.

We should also be grateful because of the enormous amount that God has done for us. Once or twice as a youngster I moaned about something that my mom asked me to do. She would then rattle off a list of things that she did on a daily basis for me without complaining. It's the same with God. We could never do anywhere near as much for God as he has done for us. He provides for us on a daily basis so we should want to serve him out of gratitude.

We should be faithful servants

In my last few months working for National Grid, I had to prepare things for the person coming into the job after me. Part of this involved finishing off jobs that needed to be done. Other bits involved work that would need to be continued. I had to write a manual on many of the jobs that I did to ensure that the new person wasn't left with a mess to sort out. I also spent about 18 months training one of my colleagues and teaching my boss what I did. In this time as well I told a lot of people that I was leaving and made sure that new jobs were managed by my colleagues. I even had to interview my potential replacements.

All of this is about not leaving things undone. Not leaving a mess for someone else to sort out. In John 17:4 Jesus says:

"I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do."

Jesus told a parable about a man who entrusted his servants with his wealth. You probably know the story ends up by each servant having to give an account of what they did with the money. The first servant of course, invested the money wisely and managed to double the money. And the master said "Well done, good and faithful servant!" Will God say the same to you?

Some people look for the applause of people. Jesus said "I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full". Instead of working to please others let us instead work to please the master.

Once Napoleon pointed to China on a map and he said, “There lies a sleeping giant. If it ever wakes up it will shake the world.” Could that be said of this church? “There is a sleeping giant. If everybody who came here served, how great would the impact be in this area of London, in Britain and the world?”

Serving God in serving others is far more important than your career, your hobbies, or anything else you can think of because they aren’t going to last. But this is. You were created for serving God.