



The tribe of Issachar understood the times and knew what Israel should do

Issachar Ministries UK seeks to be a people who understand the times, listen to the Lord and know what should be done

*Resourcing for Prayer Network*

# SPIRITUAL GUIDELINES (10)

## Serving and Speaking

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*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. Amen*

(1 Peter 4.10-11).

**When the above passage in 1 Peter was written, the believers in the early church were already being put under pressure from those Jews who were not believers - and also to a certain extent from the Roman authorities. It is one of the latest books to gain a place in our Bible and it can have special relevance for believers today - especially when they too are under pressure.**

The emphasis in verse 10 is clearly being laid on the serving nature of the gifts. It is recognised that although some of the many gifts being exercised will require the believers to speak out, this is not necessary for every gift.

Being able to express yourself and your feelings in words is an obvious advantage and through the work of the Holy Spirit, God can put the right words in our mouths when we place our trust in him, but there are many passages which show that the tongue can be deceptive. And to counter this there are many others that show that deeds speak louder than words. So if speaking is not your gift do not despair.

**But it IS absolutely necessary for all the gifts to be used in a "serving" capacity - and they should always reflect God's grace. This grace is described as the free and unmerited favour of God. In fact if we look carefully at the other references to gifts we find that the serving nature is reflected in them all.**

### Ministry Roles

In Ephesians 4.12 we find that the prime purpose of the ministry roles given to individuals is to prepare God's people for works of service. Those who have these ministry gifts are often placed in leadership in our churches and they have a responsibility for equipping and supporting others on the front line. They are in effect a supporting ministry and can be regarded as 'a gift of serving' in themselves.

### Manifestations

The Manifestations listed in 1 Corinthians 12.5 each reflect a different spiritual gift. But if rightly exercised they are all different kinds of service and should all be exercised

or the common good. This is important for building up the body and contributing to the health and unity of the whole church.

## Natural Gifts

It is easy to see how the seven more natural gifts listed in Romans 12 have a serving capacity - *'teaching', 'encouraging', 'contributing to the needs of others', 'showing mercy'* but in verse 7 we find *'serving'* is also listed as a specific attribute - if your gift is serving it can have a wide range of applications as the need arises. Those with this gift will also have the ability to discern where the need is greatest and what is needed to be done. They must make a special effort to serve well.

## Servanthood

We cannot live a fulfilling Christian life without embracing the attitude of servanthood. Jesus gave us the ultimate example of what being a servant to others means - whatever our role in life. When his disciples were debating who would be the greatest Jesus reminded them that *'I am among you as one who serves'* (Luke 22. 27) and he washed his disciples' feet and set an example to us all of the way we should live.

In John 12.26 we read *'Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me'*. We are cleansed so that we can *'serve the living God'* (Hebrews 9.14). As followers of Jesus, we must follow his example and all aim to have a servant heart.

## What about those who are made to serve?

Serving must be undertaken with a willingness and for the right reasons. Elders and leaders are to care for those who have been entrusted to them, *'serving as overseers not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be, not greedy for money, but eager to serve'* (1 Peter 5.2)

Slavery was common in those days and also in times nearer our own. Jesus even told us *'.....and whoever wants to be first among you must become your slave. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.'* (Matthew 20:27-28)

We must always remember, when we are serving others, that it is the Lord we are serving (Colossians 3 24). And in everything we do, it should be done as for the Lord. The slaves in New Testament times, and many of the new believers came from that class of people who could not change their worldly standing. So they were encouraged to respect their masters *'so that God's name and our teaching may not be slandered'*. If they had believing masters they were *'to serve them even better'* (1 Tim 6.2). Paul also said *'We serve God whether people honour us or despise us, whether they slander us or praise us'*. (2 Corinthians 6:8).

## What should our attitude be to serving?

Paul's teaching was *'Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically'* (Romans 12:11). In Galatians 5.13 he tells us *'to serve one another in love'*. This is the primary message in John's letters. He continually pleads with the believers to love one another, and he reminds them that in so doing they were reflecting the love and care of the Father. He says *'How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called the children of God! And that is what we are!'*

## A Final Word from the Apostle Paul

*'This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but it is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the Gospel'* (2 Corinthians 9.12).

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