

The Victor and His Gifts

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Bible Text: Ephesians 4:7-10
Preached on: Sunday, October 22, 2017

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Let's go back to Ephesians. Ephesians 4. We've been on the theme of unity as the apostle writing to the church at Ephesus gets to his most pointed exhortation, his first exhortation after that he has laid the great theological foundation of salvation by sovereign grace. And by the way, all of this depends on one another. You have to grasp the glories of sovereign grace to get what he is saying about churches functioning in a true, God-ordained, Spirit-empowered unity. So we are still on the theme of unity, though I don't actually list it that way in the outline of my exposition of Ephesians, but it nevertheless is the final outworking or outworkings of the theme of unity in the local church.

Let me just begin this way by saying as the apostle in verses 1 through 6 of chapter 4 has irrefutably established the truth that unity is essential to being a church, in other words, it is a radical unthinkable contradiction for there to be a true church in disunity. Now, again we have to talk about the day and the age and when you have a cultural Christianity and congregations everywhere, as I have said for the thousandth time, I tell pastors all the time when they take a church, "Well, you have a congregation, now you must preach the word and the Gospel in the power of the Spirit and find a church in there somewhere. Find those who are truly God's called out ones versus those who just culturally have become a part of something." But when you find a congregation where the majority or I hope the strong majority are true, regenerate, called out ones, then unity is there. It's just God's way of doing it. So it's a foundational truth to the being of the church and the well-being of the church and the purpose of the church which is always the glory of God. If we are not in true God-ordained, God-wrought, Spirit-empowered unity, then we rob God of the glory he wants his church to give him in time and space history.

So as we looked at chapter 4, verses 1 through 6, that's old stuff and this is a brief review. Unity is our high calling. He says there, "walk in a manner worthy of this calling." And again, he gives us almost exclusively the divine perspective, God's work in saving his own and making them local churches. He says, "Now walk in a manner worthy of that. Walk out your Christianity." And he talks about patience and love for each other and just getting over things to maintain the unity of the church. Then he said it is your high calling. Then it is fostered by true Christian unity. He continues talking about our gentleness and our humility toward one another. Then in verse 3 he said, the author and the sustainer of this unique unity his local church has, is the Holy Spirit. Then in verse 4 he says we are all equally part of one body and we are all birthed by one Spirit and we all

have the same one hope. Verse 5, we answer to and gladly submit to and love the same Lord. We all hold to the same one faith. We all have partaken of the same baptism and we all are under the same Father. Thus he lays out that glorious foundation of, "Look how unified you are by your very core nature as Christians and a Christian church."

Now, our unity is based on the essential equality of all believers but, and this is where the new dimension comes in today, but it is dependent upon our diversity. So unity is built on the essential equality of all members but it is dependent upon us also being diverse. So there is a diversity that creates a unity. There is diversity of gifts. There is a diversity and varying degrees of honor; some gifts put some persons in more of an honored position just from the human perspective, not that it is more honored in God's eyes but humanly speaking there is more honor. There are varying gifts. There is varying honor. And there is differing influence. Certainly those of us called to preach just have a role in the church that gives us more influence than those who have the gift of service or the gift of mercy.

So those diverse things are going on but all of these work together to the essential unity of the whole. I mean, I have pastored a church where I am blessed to have hundreds of people who get and who thrive and are blessed in their ministries of service and helps and mercy, whether they are ever seen or noticed or not. And it takes all of us together. I am deeply and very aware that nothing good comes out of my ministry if we are not all in this together. I'm not by myself. God has made us interdependent and reciprocal. We all have to have each other. This diverse body with all these diverse gifts, diverse honors, and diverse influences, all come together for one great whole.

So we come to this section, Ephesians 4:7 through 10 which I have entitled "The Victor and His Gifts." Paul is going to use the analogy, the illustration of a military victor of his day and how in his day the general, the commander would conquer an opposing Empire, an opposing kingdom, and he would bring the spoils of that victory back to build his own kingdom and he says in effect, that's what Jesus has done. He has entered the human realm, he has conquered his enemy, and he has apprehended the spoils of battle and brought them back to build his kingdom because we were all of the enemy camp, we were all of the opposing kingdom, we were all of the darkness, not of the light, but he came into our realm, he conquered and he made us his new captives and we and the gifts he gives are the spoils of that victory.

Well, let's look at it together beginning in verse 7 of Ephesians 4.

7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.

Now he quotes from the Psalm in verse 8,

8 Therefore it says, "When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men." 9 (Now this expression, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the

lower parts of the earth? 10 He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.)

So we are mindful and very aware that a new world order, a new kingdom, is right now being established by God. It is not built on communism. It is not of capitalism. It is not built upon socialism. It's not a totalitarianism, at least not one with a man at its center. Who heads this new kingdom that God is building? Well, it's not the Prime Minister of anything or the President of a representative democracy. It's not a totalitarian dictator. It's not the king of a monarchy. It is the one that Joshua saw as he was about to make conquest of Jericho and Joshua called him the Captain of the Lord's Host. That was Jesus Christ. He is the one. Yes, he has already come, Paul says, and he has conquered his enemies, he has redeemed his elect children, and now today this is where the focus is, now he has shared with those children the spoils of the victory and he has given them the marching orders with these resources from the victory to carry out the completing work of building his great and glorious kingdom.

Now, this is what we have in the model prayer and we pray it all the time. It's called the Lord's prayer but really it was a prayer the Lord gave to remind us of what the priority of praying should be. "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name." That's first. That means, "Glorify your name. Make much of yourself in all that you do." Okay, how do we want God to do that? Well, he gives us the rest of the prayer, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." God, the centerpiece of all we want to be about is you getting glory by us participating, working together with our diversity that forms a unity, building local churches, that is building your kingdom until you finally come and set up your eternal global kingdom. That's what the model prayer is and that's where Paul is getting to here, that Jesus has conquered, he has taken the spoils of his victory, he has distributed these spoils to his children to now use to utilize and build his own kingdom.

Well, let's look at it. Look at verse 8 there in our text where he quotes from the Psalm, Psalm 68:18, which is a Psalm of triumph and victory and it says, "Therefore when He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men." Now the picture of him ascending is a picture of a valiant and victorious king ascending to the throne after a mighty victory over his foe.

Then he said, "He led captive a host of captives." Now, there is quite a bit of debate about what does Paul mean when he quotes from the old psalmist that phrase and gives it reference to Christ, "He led captive a host of captives"? Could he be talking about his enemies? Because in that day it was well known that when you captured an opposing kingdom, you took their people as slaves to go back to help build your own kingdom, and often they would put hooks in their nose and connect them by chains and the commanding generals and the soldiers of the conquering army would lead those captives back with chains and hooks in their nose back into the kingdom that conquered them. So perhaps that's what we see here. Satan and sin and death and hell and the grave, all the enemies that oppose our Christ, are now in effect have hooks through their noses and chains chaining them, and then Jesus walks back up into heaven and says, "Look what

I've got. Look who I have conquered. Look who I have taken control of. Look who is in my captivity." I believe it speaks to his enemies.

Some cross-references here. Colossians 2:15, he says, "When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him." Again, it's the picture of a triumphal entry of a general or an army commander as he takes the spoils of battle, in this context, the spoils being the very slaves he is bringing back from the conquered country into his own kingdom to be slaves and servants to build the new kingdom. 2 Corinthians 2:14, "But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph," that's a word that would be used, again, of a triumphal entry in this day, "triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place."

So on the cross when Jesus died, the battle for the souls of men and the dominion over the universe was waged and won by Jesus Christ. He has triumphed. His foes are now defeated. But I take the position that it doesn't only speak of him taking captive his enemies and now utilizing them to his own ends, I like what Martin Luther said and, by the way, I'm planning to preach next Sunday on the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, but Martin Luther said, "The devil is God's devil." God is not the author of his evil but the devil can only do what God has ordained; it might be to the final end of God performing the work of building his own kingdom and glorifying his own name. The devil is the devil but he is God's devil. He's not just running around here and God is trying to catch up with him and smack him on top of the head. I want to tell you, the devil has a hook in his nose and a chain on that hook and Jesus pulls the chain because he is conquered.

But more than just picturing that he has made captive of his enemies, I think it means that he has made captive of his own children. It pictures that he went to the cross. He redeemed and won the title deed to the souls of men. He has wooed and won his bride through his efforts and his conquest here down on planet earth and all of us have become his captives. And I might tell you and I mean this with all of my heart: my Lord has captivated my heart. Has he captivated your heart? Has he captured your heart? He has captured mind and that's why I can enjoy things in the world but only for a while and then my heart says, "But it's not like the joys that my new Captor has given me." It's a glorious, blessed, wonderful, gracious, encouraging, marvelous captivity. Jesus says, "Take my yoke upon you," he said, "because my yoke is easy." It's a different kind of yoke because it's a different kind of captivity. "Take my yoke upon you. My yoke is easy and my burden is light compared to that other yoke you were under and that other burden, the burden of sin and Satan you used to live under."

Now we come to verses 9 and 10 where he expresses here the full and total conquest of our Lord and he is elaborating in verse 9 on verse 8. He says, "Now this expression, 'He ascended,' what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things." The point is he has marched through all the regions of the earth and the universe and he has reclaimed it all. It is signed, sealed and soon to be

delivered up as his own. This is all fully and finally settled in the eternal mind of God. We are just right now waiting on time to catch up with the eternal decree of Providence.

It's all done. It's settled. I'm going to tell you, Jesus has the title deed to everything. There is not one square inch of any place in the universe, in the cosmos or on planet earth, where Jesus can't point to it and say, "Mine." It's all his. The psalmist said it first, Paul reiterates what the psalmist said. Go to the highest spot in the universe, he went there and he made conquest. Go to the lowest depths of hell, he has done been there and made conquest. Everything has been signed, sealed, delivered, earned, bought. It's finished. It's Christ's. It's his. Psalm 110:1, "The LORD says to my Lord: 'Sit at My right hand Until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet.'" In other words, it's only a matter of time before all this comes out in physical fruition and we see it all before our very eyes.

Now verse 10 has an interesting phrase to elaborate on this in the last part of verse 10, "so that He might fill all things." He might fill up all things. As I thought about this, I thought about my grandmother's house. When I was a little boy, I would spend the night at my grandmother's house from time to time and I remember she would be up about the time the sun would get up and I would hear her running the vacuum cleaner or dusting. She was a disciplined everyday you do your job in your home and she did those things, and I would lay in bed and I don't know, it was just a blessing to me to know she's in there just taking care of stuff. Then I would hear the pots and pans rattle in the kitchen and I really liked to hear that sound, and it wasn't a very big house and it wasn't long until I smelled bacon frying or sausage frying, homemade biscuits and gravy, and that's the kind of stuff I was raised on. But do you know what? Her home was an older home, kind of like the carpet at my house right now, the carpet was getting older and it had that grandmother's house smell. Do you know what I'm talking about? Just a little musty. Just not kind of bright and shiny and new. Always clean but... And if she wasn't there, if you went in there, it was just a little bit eerie. Do you know why? Because she made it a blessed place. She made it a sweet place. She made it and homemakers, when you are diligent in your homes, what you do for your family, you make it a place of blessedness and security for the home. It was just different when she wasn't there. She filled the house full.

That's what this verse means. Jesus has descended into the lower realms of whatever is reality, hell itself. He has ascended into the highest realms of whatever is in reality, the external links of the cosmos of the universe. It's all his and he fills it all. He has given all of it a blessedness. He has given all of it a sweetness. He has given all of it a goodness. He makes it all right again. Can I get an amen there? You look at this world and watch Fox news and see what's going on out there, doesn't something in your heart say, "Oh Christ, come again and make it all blessed and sweet and right"? Well, it's going to happen because he has already bought it and paid for it and he is going to fill all of it to the full. It's already done in the mind of God.

It's much like our glorification. The Bible reminds us in Romans 8:30, "and these whom He predestined, He also called." Now, "predestined" means "to mark out beforehand." That's past tense. He already marked out beforehand and then he called in time and space history those who are his. And from the human side, they must repent and believe. When

they repent and believe, they are now justified. And whom he predestined and then called, those are justified. And those whom he has justified, past tense event again, he says he has also glorified. Wait a minute. I'm looking at you and you're looking at me and you don't look glorified yet. But it is settled in the eternal mind of God already. It's already a fact in God's heart and mind as a child of God. That's why we believe in once saved, always saved. What a lot of our brethren and friends who don't believe in the eternal security of the believer, what I think they get wrong is they say, "What about that one? What about that one? What about that one? He believed or she lived or he believes and she believes and they went AWOL and they haven't lived right, they haven't even been back to church." Well, in our opinion, you're talking about folks who were counterfeits. The faith that fizzles at the finish was faulty at the first.

Philippians 2:9 and 10, therefore also "God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name." Why? Because he has reclaimed everything and he fills it all with goodness and blessedness. It's all going to be right again. "At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, those who are on the earth, and those who are under the earth." Everywhere.

So Christ, our conquering King, has reclaimed what was his and now he is sharing the spoils of victory with his children. That's what this text is about. And these gifts he gives us, these spoils, that's the figurative language Paul uses in this illustration, are the resources we are to use to build and advance our Father's church, i.e. his kingdom. It is the new world order God is building.

I'm reminded of what happened in 1945 when the Allied forces defeating Nazi Germany and the Allied forces took the spoils of the victory. Wernher von Braun and 116 other prominent German scientists were the spoils of victory. They were brought back to America. They were taken to Huntsville, Alabama, and their Wernher von Braun led his team of German scientists to build the first long range ballistic missiles, the Jupiter and Saturn missiles, which lay the foundation for the future space shuttle. What happened? The Allied forces won, we brought the spoils of victory back and built our nation with them and that's what Jesus has done. He came and conquered. He won and now he has shared the spoils of the victory by giving gifts to his children that we use in his local churches to build his kingdom. And as we use these diverse gifts, different gifts with differing honor, differing responsibilities, differing influences, but we all do our part – now listen now – we come together in this glorious, unexplainable, divine, unified oneness that shows the power, the wisdom and the beauty of God to the world. Nothing else on earth shows the world God's power, beauty and wisdom and, therefore, glorifies God like a true, sound, functioning church. When I was driving to church this morning, the sun was just coming up. Did y'all see it? The dawn where the sun was coming up was a fantastic array of lavender and pink hues and it was just amazing and it showed the glory of God. But that's God's lesser glory. His greater glory is what he is doing through his Son in building his church as we function together in diversity but in unity together.

Now, some conclusions for practical application. I call these CPAs. I've been doing this for 30 something years. CPAs. Here are some CPAs. 1. Note the manner in which the

gifts are given. The manner. Three sub points here. First of all, they are distributed to all. Not a one of you has been left out. When he made conquest of his enemies, when he reclaimed everything that is, he said, "I'm going to build me a kingdom of people to repopulate my new heaven and new earth that I purchased and claimed for my own, and I'm going to give to every one of my subjects, my children, my citizens, a special gift that they are to use in this work of building up and building out my kingdom, my local churches." It's distributed to all. Every single one of us. That's what it says there, what is it, in verse 7? Yeah, "But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift."

Secondly, they are diverse. Again, wouldn't it be terrible if every one of us had the spiritual gift of leadership. It would be all out warfare and anarchy every Sunday. It just can't function that way. It's understandable that God would give only the gift of leadership to a few, but a whole lot of folks the gift of service and helps and mercies. They are diverse, differing gifts according to Christ's gift. He is the official source conferring the gift and he is the official authority behind the gift.

3. A third point, the manner in which he gave them: they are distributed without respect of persons. He didn't say, "Now this guy over here, he is really sharp so I'm going to give him some real special spiritual gift. And this lady over here, why she is so sweet so I'm going to give her this special..." He did not do that. In his sovereignty, he distributed the gifts as he chose without respect to what you are naturally.

Do you remember me telling you about Billy Graham being on the Johnny Carson show? Now if you're old, you know what the Johnny Carson show is. That's back when you could watch late night and it wasn't quite so filthy and vile. Billy Graham, the great evangelist, was sitting there with Johnny Carson. Johnny was cutting up with him but Johnny had respect for him. Boy, that would be unusual in a late night guy, wouldn't it? Have respect for a Bible believing evangelist? And Johnny said to Billy Graham, "Billy, do you think I could be a Gospel preacher and evangelist?" Billy Graham said, "Well, yeah. God chooses some of the worst sinners to be his preachers."

Well, that's the point. You can't figure this out. It's without respect of persons. It's a grace gift. You didn't earn it. You didn't deserve it. There is nothing special about you. And it's really strange that there are men in this church, and some ladies but men come to my mind first, who are real powerbrokers out there in the business world. I mean, they are tough guys. I mean, they are Donald Trump tough sometimes. Just tough guys. They run their business, they do it right and they ought to be tough. I'm not saying they are bad guys. They are doing something, but they walk into these doors and do you know what they are? Gentle servants of Jesus Christ. They do not wear that in the church house. God is no respecter of persons. Now God may have gifted some of them with a spiritual gift of leadership in the church. I'm not saying he doesn't do that but here's what I'm saying: it just doesn't matter what you are in the world. What you are in the church is God's business.

2. Conclusion for practical application: determine to rejoice in your gifts and your role in the church, God has sovereignly chosen it for you. It is sovereignly chosen for you. 1 Corinthians 12:18 reminds us as Paul is writing to the Corinthians. They had messed up bad on their spiritual gift issue. They were very fleshly, very worldly, very carnal in the use of spiritual gifts and everybody wanted the showy gifts. Everybody wanted to speak in tongues, or everyone wanted to speak in prophecy, and Paul spent an abundance of time trying to get them back down to a selflessness for the good of the body. Your gift is not about you, it's about God's glory and the good of the church. Your gift is not for your blessing. Did you hear me? Your spiritual gift is not to bless you, it's to bless the family of God and then it does bless you, but always in that order. Amen?

Sovereignly he distributes them so there is no place for pride, there is no place for jealousy or envy in the body of Christ. Now, let's go back to the context. He sovereignly chose us, chapter 1, verse 4. He sovereignly predestined us for himself, chapter 1, verse 5. He sovereignly redeemed us for himself, chapter 1, verse 7. He sovereignly birthed us into his kingdom by the Spirit, chapter 1, verse 9. He sovereignly sealed us by his Spirit for himself, chapter 1, verse 13. And now he has sovereignly gifted each member for service in the church, Ephesians 4:7 through 10. It's all one package. The doctrine of sovereign grace bleeds over to your actual service in the body of Christ. It's his choice and it's his doing. It's completely of him.

As a matter fact, right quick, look over to 1 Corinthians 12. Would you do that? Turn to 1 Corinthians 12 and look at verse 19. We'll start there. Again, Paul trying to repute, reprove, rebuke and get the Corinthians back on track with properly handling spiritual gifts. Let me just go to verse 18 of 1 Corinthians 12, "But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired." His sovereign decision. Now, "If they were all one member, where would the body be?" If all had the same gift, how would you function as a body?

Verse 20, "But now there are many members, but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you'; or again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.'" Now, one might say that the eye is more important than the hand. It may get more attention but it's not more important. It may have more influence in some ways but it's not more important. Then he said in verse 21, "or again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.'" Now the head could say, "I've got the brain in here. I'm the most important part." No, no, you may have more influence but you're not more important in God's eyes. We all have to have each other.

Verse 22, "On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor." In other which, it's natural that some gifts receive more honor but we choose to determine even those who don't get naturally the attention and the honor, we esteem them as very important also. It's a choice we make to do because it's true in the mind of God.

Go on to verse 24, "whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, so that there may be," here it is, "there may be no division in the body." That's what Paul is writing about in Ephesians 4:7 through 10, or Ephesians 4:1 through 10 about the unity in the body. "But that the members may have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it."

So in God's sovereign work to build his kingdom, he sovereignly chose his own, he sovereignly predestined his own, he sovereignly redeemed his own, he sovereignly birthed his own into the family, he sovereignly sealed them by the Spirit, securing them for the day of glorification, and he has sovereignly gifted each one for their place and role and service in the local church body.

Verse 8, back to our original text in Ephesians 4:8 says that, "He gave." It's emphatic in the original. You see, if you refuse your gifting, then you refuse your choosing. If you refuse your gifting, then you refuse your predestination. If you refuse your gifting, then you refuse your redemption. If you refuse your gifting, then you refuse your sealing. And on and on. It's all one thing to God who chose and predestined and called and justified and sealed, is the God who gives. It's all of his sovereign purpose.

Charles Hodge, the Presbyterian theologian, has a great great commentary. He said, "To refuse the position assigned to us in the body is to refuse to belong to the body at all." Did you hear that? To refuse the position assigned to us, that is by God, in the body is to refuse to belong to it at all. "We can tell, therefore, whether we belong to the body of Christ by ascertaining whether we have contentment with our assignment." You see, when you understand God has sovereignly gifted me for this role and because he did that, I'm going to repent of all the notions and all the influences to do differently and I'm going to be contented right here. Right here. In fact, I would challenge you and I'll get to this in just a brief moment: what you should focus on is the lower role. What you should focus on is the non-seen role. What you should focus on are the service and the mercy and then if God wants you somewhere else, he'll get you there. And if you focus on the top – now listen to me – and you're not supposed to be at the top, then God takes it upon himself to bring you down. You don't want to be in that kind of position.

3. This won't take but just a moment: determine to rejoice in this diversity of giftedness knowing that it is essential for our unity and for the glory of God. You see, no other collectivity on earth has this but God's church where there is all this diversity and all this oneness in unity all going on at the same time. This shows to the world the superior wisdom of our God. This shows to the world the superior beauty of our God. This shows to the world the superior power of our God. As each member dies to self and joyously fulfills his or her role in the body, we present a powerful testimony of our God to this world.

4. And my last one: repent of the Achan spirit as it rises in your heart. Remember old Achan? Israel had walked right through Jericho and just destroyed them but God had

ordained not one penny, figuratively speaking, not one aspect of the victory or the spoils of victory are to be kept by any individual Israelite. All of it is dedicated to God and God's glory. But Achan saw some silver and some golden things and he coveted them and he secretly took them and he buried them in his tent so in the next battle over tiny Ai, the Israelites were defeated. They couldn't defeat tiny Ai and Joshua, the commander and leader, is crying and crying out to God. It's such an interesting text because God in effect says, "Joshua, stop this praying and go and fix the problem." That's basically what he says. I think a lot of pastors ought to do that. "Well, we're praying for God to do this and God to do that." Why don't you go and do what God said to do in the church? Get busy. There are things you haven't even started that are clearly biblical. Get to work on those and pray as you do them.

So God revealed that it was Achan who was the problem. There was sin in the camp. Achan confessed his sin and the children of Israel stoned Achan and all of his family and all of his livestock and it was called the Valley of Achor, the Valley of Trouble. It was where they were stoned and the stones were heaped up over them. What was the point, though? Achan coveted what God had not ordained him to be or have. Repent of the spirit of Achan. "Well, I'd like to be this. Or I'd like to have that role. Or I'd like to have that role." Then you just do the role you can do and trust God is going to get you there and repent of the proud spirit of Achan because to one degree or another, Jeff Noblit and all of us have to repent at this point.

He has gifted us for service in his local church and we are to walk in that giftedness until the work on earth is done. Let me give you this simple little statement. We have been using this for year after year after year just to help us. You say, "Pastor, well, how do I know exactly what my gifts and my role is?" Really simple. I will pledge to you that if you will do this, you cannot miss what your ultimate role in service is in the body of Christ. Get in your small group. Ask your small group leaders, "Is there a service that needs to be done?" Whatever it is, and they tell you. We're not asking you to do anything that you're really uncomfortable doing. Now, sometimes you have to push out of your comfort zone a little bit but basically speaking, we are not going to ask you to teach the lesson next week if you have no inclination to be gifted as a teacher. But there are 1,001 other service and ministry gifts. And you say, "Okay, is there a service that needs to be done?" Secondly, can you do that? Thirdly, does the leadership affirm you doing it? That's it.

You say, "Yeah, but I think I'm gifted this way and this way and this way and that gift over there, what you're asking me to do doesn't..." Well, it's kind of like the eight years I spent under another pastor before I could be a pastor because I needed that eight years to learn to grow in some spiritual character and maturity so I could handle the role when God got ready to put me in the role. God is more interested in building your spiritual character and maturity than he is you working in your giftedness. God has got a lot more gifted people than he has humble people. Is it not a blessed and wonderful thing when you see men and women who are really gifted but they are comfortable where God put them in God's work?

Does it need to be done? Can you do it? Does the leadership affirm you doing it? You have to submit to authority in this thing because there is no way we could call out to a thousand people and say, "All of you come and tell us what God has told you to do next year." That would never work. That's just ludicrous. The natural world as God has ordained things to function in the work world and everything else, it doesn't function that way because God has not ordained things to function that way. Is there a service that needs to be performing? Can you do it? Does the leadership affirm you doing it? Then just do it. The Victor and His Gifts.