

CHAPTER 5



IDENTIFYING SPIRITUAL GIFTS in YOURSELF and OTHERS

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OVERVIEW

Members of your congregation can be more effective if they understand and match their God given gifts with ministry. Providing leadership opportunities and enabling people to be effective in ministry is one of the roles of the lay leader. Our goal is to equip you as leader with a better understanding of Spiritual Gifts. Knowledge of “spiritual gifts” can open the door to more effective ministry.

This material lifts scriptures relating to spiritual gifts. It points to online spiritual gifts surveys and lists resources that can be utilized for small group studies. It discusses the nature and scope of gifts as defined as a means of grace and gives practical suggestions to its use in a local church setting. It lists exercises and discussion questions for group settings, and the answers to frequently asked questions relating to spiritual gifts.

THE MEANING & SCOPE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

RESOURCES

SCRIPTURES: Romans 12: 1-8; I Corinthians 12:1-31; Ephesians 4:1-16; I Peter 4:10-11

SPRITUAL GIFTS SURVEYS:

Free on Line: www.elca.org/dcm/evangelism/assessment The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Free on Line: www.churchgrowth.org/cgi-dg/gifts.cgi Ephesians Four Ministries – Church Growth Institute

Free on Line: www.gbod.org – Leader Selection Gifts/Skills Data Bank

Free on Line: www.goingthedistance.org – down loadable survey

Your Spiritual Gifts Inventory from Rediscovering Our Spiritual Gifts by Charles V. Bryant – Upper Room Books, Cokesbury

OTHER RESOURCES:

Serving from the Heart – Finding Your Gifts & Talents for Service, Resurrection Resources – Abingdon Press (8 week study for small groups)

Spirit Gifts – One Spirit, Many Gifts – Discovering God’s Direction for Your Life, Patricia D. Brown Abingdon Press, Cokesbury \$6.00 (A workbook for individual use or group – includes spiritual gift survey, personal inventory – reflective activities, bible studies, biblical & contemporary examples of the gifts)

Equipped for Every Good Work – Gift Based Ministry, Dan R. Dick & Barbara Miller, Discipleship Resources. Utilizes tools of 1) spiritual gifts inventory, leadership/interaction styles, spirituality & task type preferences offers a process to help individuals and groups discover and understand the gifts, attitudes, beliefs and behaviors that influence their ability to live as Christian disciples and to lead within a community of faith. www.gbod.org/equipped or www.equippedforeverygoodwork.org

Team Ministry – A Workbook for Getting Things Done, Stephen L. Schey and Walt Kallestad, Abingdon Press, Cokesbury A Workbook approach that includes a spiritual gift survey and information, visioning, goals, how-to, creating environment for successful team ministry. – A step-by-step workbook for authorizing and empowering teams.

The Growing Points Star – A Tool for Disciple Formation Duane M. Gebhard, Discipleship Resources – A tool to help congregational leaders examine their system for discipleship including identifying gifts and responding to God’s call.

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**GIFTS ARE FOR EVERYONE, BOTH LAITY AND CLERGY.
WE ARE ALL MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL.**

A local lay leader who understands his or her gifts of the spirit will better enable ministry to be achieved for the glory of God. We recall, “There are many gifts – one spirit – many ways to serve”. To know one’s strengths is a gift in itself & but to recognize the gifts of others to enable people to partner in ministry might be a greater gift that can lead to more effective ministry. It is suggested that as lay leader, you use a spiritual gift assessment to discover your gifts; that you discover the area of ministry you are passionate about; that you seek out ways to use your spiritual gifts & that you thank God as you receive and or recognize your spiritual gifts. You will want to pass that process on as much as possible to your congregation as you encourage them to discover and use their gifts for ministry. Questions to consider are: What gifts have you observed in others, including your pastor? What are the ways you can help other recognize their gifts? How will you affirm & celebrate these gifts?

- You can help members of your congregation answer these questions through the recognition and utilization of their spiritual gifts:
- How can I find more meaning & joy in life?
- What is God’s plan and purpose for my life?
- What are my special gifts and abilities?
- How is God calling me to use my gifts?

The nature & scope of gifts can be defined as a means of grace. All gifts are for service. Gifts are given to every believer to serve others in Christ name. They enable us to effectively serve the people of God in the church and those outside the church. Service is done for others in the spirit and love of Christ.

Gifts have a divine purpose and are not given to us to be used as we wish. They are not our personal property, nor did we acquire them from a human origin, but we acquired our gifts from a spiritual source. Scripture clearly teaches that God give us grace-gifts for the good of all people. Our gifts empower us to ministry to others in Christ’s name.

Everyone who turns to God for salvation has received a grace-gift for serving the church. (Heb.2:4). Along with the gifts come responsibility to use them for the ministry and mission of the church so that we bring honor to Christ & glory God.

Paul introduces a list of the gifts, which was not intended to be comprehensive. He reminds us that the list of gifts is as limitless as God’s love. We cannot try to enclose God’s creativity with our limited understanding.

Gifts are sometimes classified into 3 groups:

- 1) *Gifts of revelation – word (what we say)* apostleship, prophecy, evangelism, pasturing, teaching, encouragement, knowledge, wisdom
- 2) *Gifts of power - deed (what we do)* assisting, giving, leadership, compassion, faith, helps, mercy, missionary, evangelism, hospitality, administration, suffering, battle, singleness
- 3) *Gifts of inspiration – sign (ways and signs that point to God)* discernment, miracles, healing, prayer-praise language - tongues, interpretation, intercessory prayer, spirit-music, craftsmanship, humor. .

A gift is a special calling upon our lives. How we live out that calling is seen in the roles & work we undertake. A person with a gift places a high priority on the gift in his or other life. Those of us without the gift simply incorporate it into the way we live our lives as one of the many ways we serve God & live out our Christian discipleship.

Spiritual gifts are not:

- 1) The same for everyone
- 2) For self gain
- 3) Given fully developed.
- 4) Skills or natural talents. Human talents are ordinary gifts and grace gifts are extraordinary gifts from God. Like a string through a piece of hose, our natural talents are conduits for our grace gifts. Natural talents enhance the quality of life. Grace gifts add a new dimension unique to the spiritual life of the believer and are not limited by the physical work, as are natural talents. We all have talents and abilities and skills that we have acquired through practice or that seem to be innate. God can only give gifts. God calls us to dedicate all that we have and all that we are in God's service.
- 5) Fruits of the Spirit. Spiritual Gifts are task oriented and the Fruit of the Spirit define the Christ like character of the Christian. Fruits of the Spirit are the normal, expected end of Christian growth

The Lay Leader working with the Leadership Development Committee can help see that their people with particular spiritual gifts have opportunity to utilize their gifts for effective service. The church must find meaningful and creative ways to match the gifts of persons with the time they can give to ministry. Bill Easum, in Leadership on the Other Side, says that all people with a call from God can be leaders when they exercise the spiritual gifts given to them by God. If you're not a leader, there's hope for you." He makes 3 observations, "1) God can use those whom others choose last. 2) No one knows who will or won't be a leader 3) Almost anyone who wants it badly enough can be a leader."

Our role is to help people discover and utilize their gifts for mission and ministry. The church must provide settings in which members of the congregation can share with one another the unique aspects of their spiritual journey. We need to recognize other members and the value of their gifts. Effectiveness in sustaining fellowship & outreach ministries comes from all gifts working together in mutual interdependence. (A training tool "From Nominations to Leadership Development" designed to assist the Nominations/Lay Leadership Development Committee is available at no costs through the Conference Headquarters Communications Department 1 405 530 2075.

Being Called into Service and Ministry: As we discover our spiritual gifts and talents & feel the tug on our hearts to use them in fruitful ways for the betterment of God's creation, we are actually responding to the call we received at our baptism. It is a call from God to live out our lives in service and

ministry as Disciples of Christ. The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church makes this clear: “All Christians are called to minister wherever Christ would have them serve and witness in deeds and words that heal and free. This ministry of all Christians in Christ’s name and spirit is both a gift and a task. The gift is God’s unmerited grace; the task is unstinting service” Book of Discipline.

An appropriate role of the lay leader is to help people recognize and name their gifts and find ways in which they may be used. A critical step in this process is to work continually at identifying; clarifying and selecting the various ways the church can use its gifts and resources for the transformation of the world. This occurs through:

- Small groups that study the scriptures, pray and ask God to help open eyes to the needs around them & help them find new avenues for ministry;
- Preaching and worship that encourages individuals to open up to the neighborhood and community with the sensitivity and compassion of Jesus;
- A clear vision of what it means to be the body of Christ at work in the community and living toward that vision
- Sensitivity to those who live in poverty or who find themselves on the margin of society, especially children and youth;
- A shared ministry process that helps people identify their gifts, find ways to use them and be supported in service.

All of the gifts are secondary in the Christian life to agape love being active in one’s life. Without God’s energizing love working in use, we cannot produce any positive results for growth and health in the body of Christ.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS:

- Start a new bible study to study the gifts of the Spirit.
- Encourage a Sunday school class to study the gifts of the Spirit.
- Ask your pastor to teach a bible study on the gifts before or during Pentecost.
- Explore with the Evangelism Committee the possibility of offering a study of the gifts as part of a new member training or orientation program.
- Have a retreat for new church leadership & study the gifts.
- Encourage your pastor to preach a sermon or series of sermons on the gifts of the Spirit.
- However you survey your congregation to let them know the ministries of your church, their interest and possibilities for volunteering, include a spiritual gift survey opportunity.
- Have someone who has taken “Disciple Bible Study” lead a bible study based on the 33rd chapter on Spiritual Gifts.
- Utilize the book, Serving from the Heart, Finding your Gifts & Talents for Service, Resurrection Resources by Abingdon Press as an eight-week study for small groups.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

- Read the 4 main scripture passages dealing with the gifts. Note the gifts & make a list of the gifts you have used at one time or another. In using those gifts, which of them gives the greatest satisfaction or makes you feel good in serving others?
- How are you witnessing to God's grace working in you?
- How might you use your gifts to bring God's healing & wholeness to your church community?
- Explore what your church might look like today if we would match the gifted person to the needs of the church.
- Which of your gifts have received affirmation from others? Are you discovering your grace gifts? What is your next step?
- How is Jesus calling you to use your gifts for ministry today?
- What reservations do you have?
- What new direction is God calling the church toward today?
- What is your Christian response to the needs you see in the world? How has God gifted you to minister to some of these needs?
- Name one person with the gift of helps who has touched your life. How has that person helped you?
- List the roles & work of ministry that are high priorities in your life. Do any of these coincide with the gifts you have identified in your life?
- List 10 things that burn within you and give your life meaning. Things that give you passion to live restore your energy; call forth the best in you. You know that you are living in God's will & your life has meaning. What clues does this list give you about your gifts? What patterns emerge?
- On a scale from 1 to 10, with one being equivalent to a security gate across your congregation's doors and 10 equivalent to a welcoming committee on the street offering valet parking, how would you rank your church's gift of hospitality?
- Think of a creative ministry in your community. What gifts of justice, wholeness & righteousness do you witness in that ministry?
- Invite persons to share how their gifts have enhanced their prayer life.
- Think about your particular gifts in relations to your congregation or your family. What kind of responses do people have toward your gifts? How do you feel about their responses?
- What gift or gifts is God confirming within you to help the church grow?
- How is your church calling you to use your new gifts?
- Make 3 columns: List the gifts you have discerned & are willing to name & claim as your own. Middle column – list the ways you are presently using each gift. 3rd Column – list concrete, tangible ways you envision yourself living out these gifts in the future.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Must one be baptized in the Holy Spirit to receive the gifts?

All believers are spiritual person. A person received the “gift of the Spirit” at their conversation (1 Cor. 12:3) Paul tells us that every born again person who says Jesus is Lord has received the Spirit or is baptized in the Spirit.

2. Does a Christian possess all of the gifts?

Paul in 1 Corinthians stresses that all do not have the same gifts. Each person receives different gifts to serve the body of Christ in a variety of ways for effective ministry.

3. Are gifts relevant today?

Jesus expected that God’s spirit would powerfully and effectively works through all of his followers to continue his ministry. He said that his followers would achieve even greater works that God had done through him. That is why Jesus asked God to empower his followers with the gift of the spirit to serve others in His name. That ministry is not finished.

4. Why is speaking in tongues so divisive?

People fear tongues because there is a lack of understanding about the nature of the gift, who receives the gift and how and when to use it. Paul tells us that all the gifts are given for the common good. Rather than causing division, the gifts are given to unify and build up the church, to help the church grow and mature according to God’s will and purpose. When everyone is doing his or her part to build the church, harmony is maintained. Tongues, as God intended them, should not divide the church.

5. Do the gifts have less power today than they did in the early church?

The writer of the book of Hebrews tells us that Jesus is the same yesterday and today and forever. Therefore the power of the gifts also remains the same. The gifts of the Spirit always produce the desired results when love is the guiding principle.

6. What happens when people do not use their gifts?

The church becomes weak and powerless; Christianity becomes a form of religion without the power; the people of God becomes spectators only; worship becomes clubby and empty; the church ceases to be an effective witness; the ministries of the Holy Spirit are diminished.

7. What happens when we use our gifts?

Our Christian faith comes alive; we reveal Christ’s love to others; we are empowered to serve others; others experience God’s love, grace, presence and power through us; gifts honor and glory God; the church comes alive through us; the church grows stronger.

8. How can I discover my gift?

Prayerfully seek to discover God’s will for your life. Study the bible to learn about the gifts. Read other resources. Worship – allows us to celebrate and give thanks to God. Share your faith. The more we serve others, the more we discover God’s gifts within us. Mentoring - Affirm God’s gifts in others. Experience the joy of the Lord. Anything we dislike doing or constantly try to get out is usually a good sign that we might not be gifted for that particular task. When we discover our gift for ministry, it is something we desire to do more than anything. Whatever the gift, the person usually has a passion for it. Not only does it bring joy but also we feel it is a great privilege to share in the ministry of Christ.