

# **Discovering Our Spiritual Gifts**

**A Seminar in  
Spiritual Formation**

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**The Basics  
about  
Spiritual Gifts**

**Greek Words  
Used to Denote  
Spiritual Gifts**

*charismatos*  
(literally “grace gifts”)

and

*pneumatekon*  
(literally “air gifts”)

**New Testament  
Passages  
That Describe  
Spiritual Gifts**

Romans 12:1-13  
I Corinthians 12:1-31  
Ephesians 4:1-15  
1 Peter 4:7-14

**One Definition of  
A Spiritual Gift**

A Spiritual Gifts is an ability, skill, or talent given through the activity of the Holy Spirit working in the life of each individual Christian. Collectively, the spiritual gifts possessed by the members of a local congregation enable that congregation as the body of Christ to perform the mission and ministry to which it has been called by God.

**Discovering Our Spiritual Gifts  
A Seminar in Spiritual Formation**

Welcome to this study of Spiritual Gifts! The material included in this booklet contains practical information and a variety of exercises designed to help you and the members of your congregation to discover and to explore your spiritual gifts, both individually and as a church family. In this material, you will find:

- **An Inductive Bible Study** of the 4 New Testament passages that describe Spiritual Gifts (Pages 3-9)
- **A Spiritual Gifts Inventory** (Pages 10-16)
- **Definitions of the 20 Spiritual Gifts** identified in the Spiritual Gifts Inventory (Pages 17-19)
- **An Essay** on how Spiritual Gifts can be used through your local congregation (Pages 20-23)
- **A Series of Strategies** to help you call out the Spiritual Gifts of other people (Pages 24-25)
- **A Bibliography of Selected Resources about Spiritual Gifts** (Page 26)

Again, welcome to this process of discovery as you learn about your own giftedness and how you can use your gifts through your church!

**Let's begin!**

## An Inductive Study Bible Study

The first step in our process of discovering our spiritual gifts is a careful reading of the four New Testament passages that describe spiritual gifts. The four passages are:

**Romans 12:1-13**

**I Corinthians 12**

**Ephesians 4:1-15**

**I Peter 4:7-14**

In these passages, two Greek words are used to denote spiritual gifts:

- *charismatos*, which literally means “grace gifts,” and
- *pneumatekon*, which literally means “air gifts.”

In this study, you will be asked to use an inductive approach. For general instructions about how to do an inductive study of the scriptures, please refer to the information in the sidebar on this page.

As you read each passage, you will be asked to respond to several questions. Please jot down your responses to these questions in the spaces provided.

After you have read all four passages, you will be asked to integrate your responses to these questions and your impressions about these passages. As a result of this portion of the study, you will:

- Identify common themes and images used in these passages.
- Write your own definition of a spiritual gift.
- List all of the spiritual gifts included in these passages.

**Study Tip:** It is often helpful to read from several different versions of the Bible. Each version will add a slightly different perspective in your study. Further, various versions use different English words to denote the same spiritual gift. Note these differences as you participate in the study process.

### **What is An Inductive Bible Study?**

In an inductive study of the scriptures, you first identify every passage in the Bible that addresses the topic in which you are interested. A high-quality study Bible or concordance will help you to identify these passages.

Next, you read these passages. As you read, you will begin to notice common themes, images, and words in these passages. You will also begin to form general impressions and ideas about your topic.

As you reread these passages, take notes, listing the common themes, images, words, ideas, and your own impressions.

Based on your reading and your notes, you should be able to develop a deeper understanding of and feel for the topic that you have chosen to study.

This approach to Bible study is a helpful alternative to the deductive approach most often used in Sunday School classes.



## Advise to Those Battling Corinthians 1 Corinthians 12

Read 1 Corinthians 12:1-31. As you read the passage, answer the following questions:

- Why are spiritual gifts given? (Verses 4-7)
- Who receives a spiritual gift? (Verse 7)
- According to verse 11, what is the source of all spiritual gifts?
- What image of the church is used in this passage? (Refer specifically to verses 13-26)
- In light of the situation described in the sidebar, what is the significance of this image with regard to giftedness?
- Which spiritual gifts are identified in this passage?
- How does this teaching about spiritual gifts relate to the famous Love Chapter (1 Cor. 13) which follows?

### Background Information

The first century city of Corinth was a major Roman sea port. It was a bustling, raucous town, filled with merchants, traders, and sailors. The town was also a noted center of pagan worship. A temple dedicated to the goddess of sex was located in the city. Sacred prostitution and ecstatic forms of worship were conducted in the area around the temple. Local craftspeople also produced and sold idols associated with the worship of this goddess.

Into this chaotic, heathen city came Paul, preaching the Gospel. Several Gentiles in the city responded to his message and became Christians. A fledgling church was established. After working to create a solid faith foundation for these former pagans, Paul moved on to other cities.

From time to time, Paul heard disturbing reports about the church at Corinth. Many biblical scholars believe that the book that we now call 1 Corinthians was a letter written in response to one of these reports. Paul penned these words of advice and correction to address a number of important issues that faced that congregation.

One of these issues was *glossolalia*—commonly known as speaking in unknown tongues. It seems that, in their previous pagan worship services, forms of ecstatic speech were interpreted as a sign of special favor with the gods. The Corinthians, when converted, brought these forms of ecstatic expression into their Christian worship. The unruly use of *glossolalia* was causing disruption in the fellowship.

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul attempted to address the inappropriate display and the disruptions that it caused. But rather than focusing exclusively on the misuse of *glossolalia*, Paul provided the longest, most complete teaching on the topic of spiritual gifts in the New Testament.

### **Background Information**

In his teachings about spiritual gifts in the book of Romans, Paul gave individual Christians advice about how to discover the will of God. In that book, he told the reader to present his or her entire life as a living sacrifice. He urged the reader to avoid a life based on the principles of this world; rather he counseled the individual to come to a new understanding of God's principles and how these principles might be played out in the world. His advice to the individual Christian was: in order to discover the will of God for your life, discover and use your spiritual gifts!

In his letter to the Christians at Ephesus, Paul shifted his attention from the commitment of the individual Christian to the commitments displayed in the life of the church. In his view, the church was a unique community established by God to continue the work of Jesus Christ.

While Romans 12 focused on the person and his or her giftedness, Ephesians 4 focused on the church and its community giftedness.

## **Welcome to God's Gym—Body Building 101 Ephesians 4:1-15**

Read Ephesians 4:1-15. As you read, consider the following questions:

- According to verses 1 and 2, describe the “calling to which we have been called.”
- In verses 3-6, how is the theme of unity described?
- Who receives a spiritual gift? (Verse 7)
- List the spiritual gifts named in this passage. (Verse 11)
- Why are spiritual gifts given? (Verse 12)
- What image of the church is used in this passage?
- How does this image of the church relate to the idea of “Christian body building”?

## Stewards of The Grace of God 1 Peter 4:7-14

Read 1 Peter 4:7-14 and answer the following questions:

- Describe the overall tone of this passage.
- According to verse 10, who receives a spiritual gift?
- Which spiritual gifts are identified in this passage? (Verse 11a)
- According to verse 11b, why are spiritual gifts given?
- Based on your reading of this passage, what have you learned about spiritual gifts?

### Background Information

While Paul often wrote to specific churches with which he had some associations, this epistle from Peter was probably circulated among a number of churches in rural Asia Minor. It is further believed that the letter was written in response to a local or regional persecution of Christians.

As a respected leader of the church in Jerusalem, a letter above the signature of Peter would have carried much weight with these persecuted Christians. They would have been comforted and challenged by his words of support and advice.

It is also important to note that two of the major leaders of the New Testament church wrote about spiritual gifts—Paul, writing to three separate and prominent congregations, and Peter, writing a general epistle with a wide circulation. These key leaders felt that developing insights into giftedness was important in discovering the will of God, in settling a church controversy, in describing how the church should function, and in providing stability in the face of persecution.

Developing an understanding of giftedness was very important to those first century Christians, for a variety of reasons. The same can be said of our contemporary context; giftedness is an equally important concept for twenty-first century Christians.

## Integrate the Results of Your Inductive Study

Congratulations! You have completed the first part of your inductive study of spiritual giftedness. Now it is time to integrate the results of your study. Complete the assignments listed in the following text boxes.

What **common themes, images, and words** did you find in these four passages? List them in the space below:

In the space below, **list all of the spiritual gifts** that you discovered in your reading of the four passages. Depending on the version or versions of the Bible that you used, you should have found between 20 and 22 different gifts.

Incorporating everything that you have learned in this study, write **your definition of a spiritual gift.**

## Integration Work, Continued

Based on your understanding of giftedness, respond to the following questions:

- Assuming that talents are abilities received at birth or skills developed over time, what is the difference between talents and spiritual gifts? Are the two related? If so, how?
  
- A well meaning Christian says, “I have no spiritual gifts.” How would you respond to this person?
  
- To what extent is this statement consistent with your understanding of giftedness?

*Spiritual gifts are congregational, not personal.*

This study is based was developed around the following definition of a “spiritual gift:”

A Spiritual Gifts is an ability, skill, or talent given through the activity of the Holy Spirit working in the life of each individual Christian. Collectively, the spiritual gifts possessed by the members of a local congregation enable that congregation as the body of Christ to perform the mission and ministry to which it has been called by God.

How does your definition compare with this definition? What points of clarification would you raise?  
Record your responses in the space below:

**Congratulations!** You have successfully completed an inductive Bible study of the four New Testament passages that describe spiritual giftedness. The next section of the study contains **A Spiritual Gifts Inventory** designed to help you identify your own individual gifts.

## A Spiritual Gifts Inventory

**A Spiritual Gifts Inventory** is a personal assessment tool developed to assist you in the process of identifying which spiritual gifts you may possess. This inventory consists of one hundred (100) statements. Some of these statements communicate concrete actions; some are descriptive terms; others are statements of personal values and beliefs.

### Directions

As you read each statement, decide to what extent that statement is characteristic of or descriptive of you (as you are now, not as you might like to be). Use the following scale to make your assessment:

5 .....Highly Characteristic of Me (90% or more of the time)

4 ..... Very Characteristic of Me (75%)

3 ..... Mildly Characteristic of Me (50%)

2 ..... Only Somewhat Characteristic of Me (25%)

1 .....Not At All Characteristic of Me (Less than 10% of the time)

Select the appropriate numerical response for each item and record that number in the space provided. Read each statement once and record your initial reactions; do not spend too much time on any one item. In general, your immediate response is the best one. Please response to each item.

1.		I love to praise God through singing or playing a musical instrument.
2.		I always tell the whole truth, as I see it, even when it difficult or unpopular to do so.
3.		Looking back on my faith pilgrimage, I can identify specific situations in which my personal experience and God’s Truth have interacted in powerful ways.
4.		I am a biblical scholar.
5.		In a classroom context, I am able to explain God’s Truth in such a way that others are able to understand it and apply it to daily Christian living.
6.		I take initiative to help others grow in their faith.
7.		I actively seek opportunities to share the Gospel message with persons who have not yet professed faith in Jesus Christ.
8.		I have a strong desire to take the Gospel to places where it has never been heard.
9.		When I see a person struggling with a problem, I am compelled to offer words of support and encouragement.
10.		Shortly after I meet a person for the first time, I have a good sense of that person’s character and abilities.

11.		When visitors come to my place of business or my church, I make sure that I meet them and talk to them.
12.		It is important for me to know the names of as many members of my church as possible.
13.		I empathize with people who suffer physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual distress.
14.		I have an acute awareness of such emotions as loneliness, pain, fear, and anger in others.
15.		When I see a person in need, I immediately take action to provide assistance.
16.		The first and most important goal for the church is to serve humanity in the name of Christ.
17.		God owns all of my “possessions.” I serve as God’s steward of those resources.
18.		I sense when others need prayer support.
19.		I seem to be “out front” in faith ventures, and others often follow my lead.
20.		I have the ability to organize ideas, resources, time, and people effectively.
21.		In congregational worship, music is a spiritual aide to worship, not a performance.
22.		When I discover a new insight in the Bible, I am eager to tell other people what I have learned.
23.		It is quite natural for me to embody biblical truth in my daily life.
24.		I find it easy to identify complex spiritual insights—in the Bible, in literature, in art—wherever these insights might be found.
25.		I believe that Sunday School should be a “laboratory for Christian living,” not a lecture hall.
26.		I am often asked to give spiritual guidance to others.
27.		I believe that the first and most important goal of the church is to win persons to Jesus Christ.
28.		Other cultures, races, and languages pose no obstacle to my desire to share the Gospel.
29.		People who need comfort, reassurance, and encouragement often seek my help.
30.		Often, I am able to affirm skills and gifts in other people that they may not see in themselves.
31.		I make strangers and newcomers feel comfortable when I meet them.
32.		I enjoy introducing members of my church family who do not know one another.
33.		I take the initiative to help people who are hurting.
34.		I have immediate compassion for persons who have spiritual, emotional, or physical pain.
35.		While my own needs and the needs of my family are important to me, I still feel a driving desire to address the needs of strangers and the underprivileged.

36.	I think of cleaning, typing, caring for buildings, ushering, caring for children, mowing, setting up chairs and other acts of service as significant ways to worship God.
37.	I carefully manage my own income in order to share my financial resources with those in need.
38.	When I hear a request for prayer, I immediately begin to offer prayers of intercession.
39.	I have clear dreams and visions about new ministries that our congregation might offer.
40.	I am energized by organizing a project, working out the details, getting the right people in the right places, and accomplishing the objectives.
41.	After I have sung or played music in worship, members of the congregation have told me that they felt a special sense of God's presence.
42.	I am sensitive to issues of right and wrong, of justice and injustice. I am compelled to express my opinions on these issues.
43.	When faced with difficult choices, I find it best to make decisions based on biblical principles, not on immediate consequences, no matter how appealing those consequences may be.
44.	I enjoy the challenge of exploring passages of scripture that are controversial or difficult to interpret.
45.	I am aware of the ways in which the gathered life of the congregation educates the preschoolers, children, youth, and adults of the church family.
46.	When I see others grappling with issues of faith, I am willing to listen to their stories and to support them in their struggles.
47.	I have led many people to make an initial commitment to Jesus Christ.
48.	When I travel, I seek out persons with different cultural backgrounds and actively engage them in conversations about their faith lives.
49.	By living out my faith daily, I encourage and motivate others to do the same.
50.	I have a good sense of "the right person for the right job."
51.	New people are not strangers—they are just friends in the making.
52.	At church, I intentionally try to create a warm and caring environment for fellowship and spiritual growth.
53.	I often feel compelled to pray for the physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual well-being of others.
54.	Care giving (in nursing homes, hospitals, hospice situations, etc.) is a part of my personal ministry.
55.	I enjoy helping other people as a direct expression of my Christian faith.
56.	Because of the special closeness to God that I feel when I do any kind of ministry, I am quick to volunteer.

57.	I experience a deep sense of joy when I share my resources with others.
58.	Of all spiritual disciplines, prayer is my favorite.
59.	At a time when there was tension and discord in my church family, I provided a stabilizing presence and a clear head.
60.	All ministries should be amply planned, sufficiently staffed, and carried out to the fullest detail.
61.	When I sing or play music, I feel a special sense of God's presence flowing through me.
62.	I see clear connections between biblical truths and contemporary life. I am compelled to express these connections publicly.
63.	The biblical themes of love, righteousness, grace, and peace, though very complex and rich in meaning, are easy for me to translate into practical acts in my daily life and in the life of the congregation.
64.	While the names, dates, and places identified in the Bible are important, the meanings and overtones of biblical themes and principles are more important.
65.	I find it stimulating to explore how biblical truth impacts my own life and I am moved to share my discoveries with others.
66.	I have led other Christians to explore and develop their own personal ministries and their role in the overall ministry of the church.
67.	I actively cultivate friendships with persons who do not profess faith in Jesus Christ.
68.	My understanding of the Christian faith transcends racial, economic, and language barriers.
69.	When I see potential in another person, I do everything I can to name and to encourage that person to reach his or her potential.
70.	I can tell when a person is genuine and honest.
71.	I am happy to open my home to and share my possessions with persons who are new to the neighborhood, community, or church.
72.	I like to participate in activities in which all members of the church family are invited to be together and to work together toward a common purpose.
73.	God uses my concerns and my efforts as a means to heal the distress of others.
74.	I am drawn to people with troubles and special needs, and I get special joy by helping them.
75.	I do not need to get recognition for my service to others.
76.	I serve others as a way to glorify God.
77.	Giving my time, talents, energy, and money is an everyday expression of my Christian commitment.

78.		Through my prayers, I believe that I serve as a channel for God's energy and concern.
79.		I am able to effectively communicate my own Christian principles to others in such a way that they are also able to articulate their own principles, even if they are different from mine.
80.		I enjoy showing others how they can work for God in the church and in the community.
81.		I know which musical pieces seem right for specific events in the life of the congregation.
82.		As a result of my relationship with God, I have felt compelled to share words of advice, caution, instruction, and encouragement with others.
83.		In my faith pilgrimage, I have learned how to discern God's will, both in my personal life and in the life of the congregation.
84.		It is obvious to me how biblical stories and teachings relate to universal human needs.
85.		Teaching is more than transmitting biblical truth; teaching is embodying biblical truth in such a way that students are motivated to do the same.
86.		I encourage other Christians to think theologically about their life experience.
87.		I have a strong desire to tell others about the impact that Jesus Christ has in my life.
88.		I feel compelled to share the Gospel message with the unchurched, the underprivileged, and others that the established church does not touch.
89.		I am able to help others who are troubled, depressed, or confused.
90.		I often affirm the gifts of persons who are trying new avenues of ministry and service.
91.		My home tends to be a gathering place for friends, neighbors, and other guests.
92.		The first and most important goal of the church is to create a sense of Christian community.
93.		Through my advice, touch, or prayer, people experience physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual healing.
94.		I empathize with the feelings of those in distress.
95.		I am drawn to people with troubles and special needs.
96.		I enjoy working behind the scenes to meet the physical needs of others.
97.		My stewardship of resources is motivated by joy and gratitude, not a sense of duty.
98.		I am often moved to pray for others, even though I do not know them.
99.		Through my initiative, my congregation has developed a new and exciting ministry.
100.		When I take on projects, my planning, detail work, and supervision lead to a good end result and a cooperative spirit among participants.

**For scoring directions, please turn to the next page.**

### Directions for Scoring the Inventory

Transfer your numerical responses to each statement to the appropriate place in the table below. Write a number in each space. When all responses have been transferred to the table, total the number in each row. Record the totals in the last column of the table.

<b>Spiritual Gifts</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>Resp.</b>	<b>Totals</b>								
<b>Music</b>	1		21		41		61		81		
<b>Prophecy</b>	2		22		42		62		82		
<b>Wisdom</b>	3		23		43		63		83		
<b>Knowledge</b>	4		24		44		64		84		
<b>Teaching</b>	5		25		45		65		85		
<b>Mentoring</b>	6		26		46		66		86		
<b>Evangelism</b>	7		27		47		67		87		
<b>Missionary</b>	8		28		48		68		88		
<b>Exhortation</b>	9		29		49		69		89		
<b>Discernment</b>	10		30		50		70		90		
<b>Hospitality</b>	11		31		51		71		91		
<b>Community Builder</b>	12		32		52		72		92		
<b>Healing</b>	13		33		53		73		93		
<b>Mercy</b>	14		34		54		74		94		
<b>Helps</b>	15		35		55		75		95		
<b>Service</b>	16		36		56		76		96		
<b>Giving</b>	17		37		57		77		97		
<b>Prayer</b>	18		38		58		78		98		
<b>Leadership</b>	19		39		59		79		99		
<b>Administration</b>	20		40		60		80		100		

Each row in the table represents a spiritual gift described in the scriptures. Based on the information that you provided about yourself in the inventory, the total scores recorded in the last column of each row are an indicator of which spiritual gift(s) that you might possess. A high score (between 20 and 25) in one or more

of the twenty categories means that you have described yourself as having characteristics highly consistent with that gift. These scores, however, are only an initial indicator of your giftedness. As you continue to explore your giftedness using these materials, please feel free to challenge, to disagree with, or to affirm the results of the inventory as appropriate.

### **An Initial Listing of My Spiritual Gifts**

In the space below, please record the three (3) spiritual gifts on which you received the highest scores:

- 
- 
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### **Tips on Taking and Interpreting the Inventory**

1. If you received a high score on several of the gifts (i.e. no one or two gifts stand out among the others), take the inventory a second time and be more discriminating about your responses (i.e. fewer 5's and 4's).
2. If you received low scores on all of the gifts (i.e. no one or two gifts stand out among the others), take the inventory a second time and be less discriminating about your responses (i.e. more 5's and 4's).

### **Questions for Interpreting the Results of Your Inventory**

- Do you agree with the results of your inventory?
- Were you surprised by any of the results?
- Have other persons affirmed these same gifts in you?
- Are these gifts consistent with your understanding of your own personality?
- Can you identify ways in which these gifts may be integrated and used in ministry?

### **For More Information**

For more information about the nature of the individual gifts listed in this inventory, please turn to the next section—**Definitions of the 20 Spiritual Gifts Identified in a Spiritual Gifts Inventory.**

## **Definitions of the Twenty Spiritual Gifts Identified in A Spiritual Gifts Inventory**

This section of the study material lists a definition for each of the twenty spiritual gifts described in the inventory. Carefully read all of these definitions in order to develop a better understanding of the meaning of each gift. Focus your attention on those gifts on which you recorded the highest scores in the inventory.

The twenty gifts identified in the inventory and defined below are listed in the four biblical passages that describe giftedness. This material is not meant to be an inclusive list of all spiritual gifts. Many biblical scholars, theologians, pastors, and Christian educators believe that there are many gifts not listed in scripture. Examples of these other gifts might include craftsmanship, faith, humor, voluntary poverty, martyrdom, and singleness.

As you explore the twenty gifts defined below, you are encouraged to explore other gifts listed in other resources. A few of these additional resources are listed in a bibliography on the last page of this material.

### **Music**

The capacity to create or perform lyrics and melodies that lead others to praise God through worship.

### **Prophecy**

The capacity to receive, to reveal, or to interpret God's Truth, publicly, no matter what the consequences.

### **Wisdom**

The capacity to convincingly illustrate the mystery of God's Truth in very concrete, practical, and specific ways.

### **Knowledge**

The capacity to cognitively comprehend the complexities of God's Truth and to explain these complexities to others.

### **Teaching**

The capacity to create an environment in which obedience to God's Truth can be practiced.

### **Mentoring**

The ability to affirm, to equip, and to support other Christians in spiritual formation and Christian ministry.

**Evangelism**

The capacity to discern when and how the Gospel message should be communicated to persons outside the Christian community.

**Missionary**

The ability to move beyond race, culture, faith tradition, nationality, or lifestyle to meet the physical and spiritual needs of neglected peoples.

**Exhortation**

The capacity to inspire, to motivate, and to encourage others in their spiritual formation and personal ministry.

**Discernment**

The ability to recognize and to affirm the skills, talents, and spiritual gifts of other people, especially other Christians.

**Hospitality**

The ability to meet the basic social needs of and to extend care to strangers, persons beyond one's immediate circle of friends.

**Community Builder**

The ability to help create *koinonia*, that unique type of inclusive fellowship that characterized the early Christian church.

**Healing**

A sensitivity to the pains and hurts of other persons and the capacity to participate in addressing these pains and hurts.

**Mercy**

The ability to identify with and to feel the pains and hurts of another person and the capacity to help that person move beyond those pains and hurts.

**Helps**

The ability and overwhelming desire to aid persons in need.

**Service**

The ability to perform the most basic acts of kindness as a means to glorify God and to embody the Gospel.

**Giving**

The capacity to manage one's own resources (income, time, energy, skills, and gifts) in such a way that there is more than enough to share with other people.

**Prayer**

The ability to sense whom and for what to pray.

**Leadership**

The ability to understand one's own principles and vision, to communicate those principles and visions to others, and to challenge others to move into the future, all in a non-reactive way.

**Administration**

The ability to organize resources and persons for effective ministry.

## **Spiritual Gifts “At Work” through A Local Church**

As we discovered in the inductive study of the biblical texts associated with spiritual giftedness, each Christian possesses at least one spiritual gift. A spiritual gift, however, is not given for the personal benefit of the possessor. Gifts are given “for the common good” and “for the building up of the body of Christ.” Each Christian is uniquely endowed with individual gifts to be shared in the context of the Church Universal and through a local body of believers. Grounded in the image of the church as “the body of Christ,” each Christian is given at least one spiritual gift to be used as the church strives to achieve its mission and ministry.

Each congregation contains a unique blend of spiritual gifts. When all the members of a congregation recognize, claim, and utilize their collective giftedness, the church is truly “on mission.” A gifted congregation can accomplish great things in the name of Christ!

In general, a church “on mission” addresses each of the following tasks:

- **Proclaiming the Gospel, primarily through acts of worship...**
- **Building Christian Community...**
- **Teaching Christian Faith and Lifestyle...**
- **Reaching Out through Witness, Service, and Ministry in the Name of Christ...**

Take a few moments to reflect on the following questions:

- How would you define each of these tasks?
- Would you add other tasks to this list? If so, which ones?
- For each of these tasks, list two or three specific activities in which your church participates.
- In which of these tasks does your church excel?
- Which of these tasks poses the greatest challenge for your church?

As indicated in the table below, sixteen (16) of the spiritual gifts listed in the inventory are matched to one of the functions described above. Four (4) of the spiritual gives are classified as “Foundational Gifts,” those gifts that underlie and support the total life and ministry of the church. Take a few moments to study the information contained in the table.

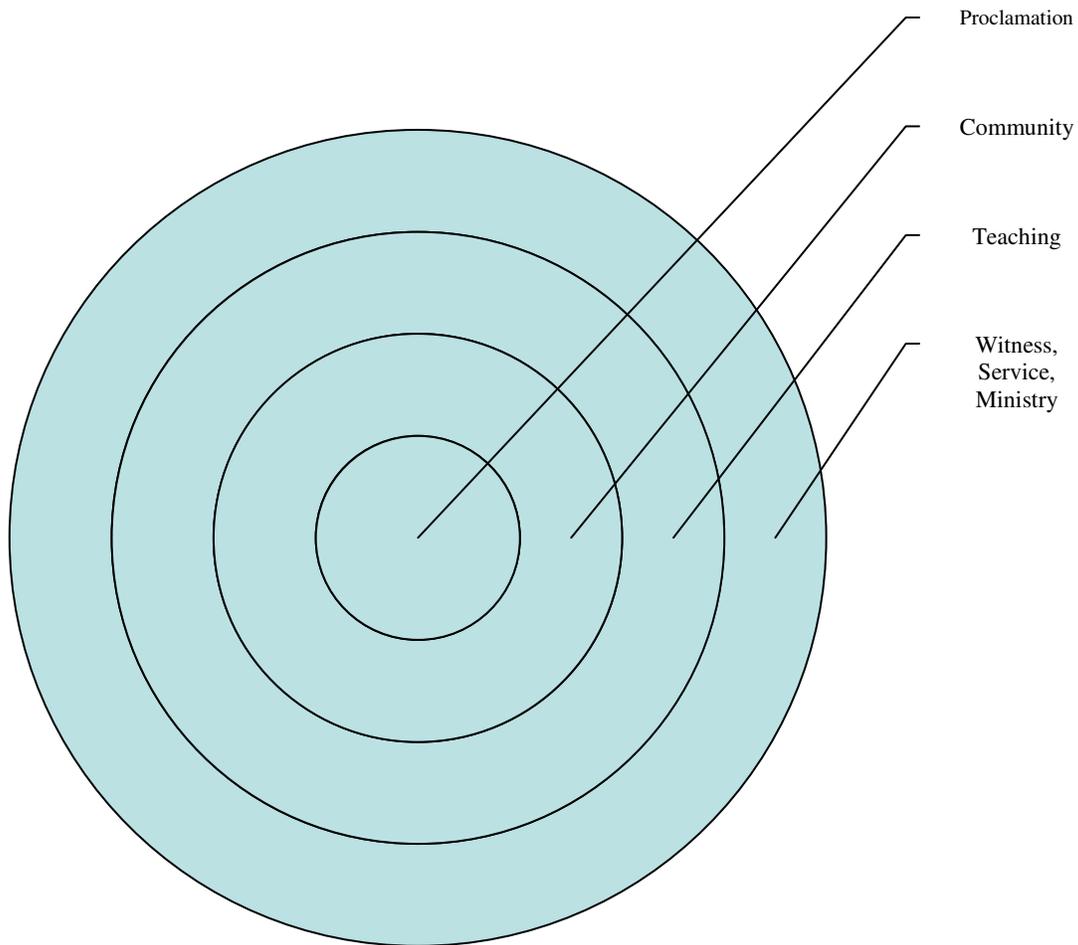
<b>Function</b>	<b>Associated Spiritual Gifts</b>
Proclaiming the Gospel	Music, Wisdom, Prophecy,
Building Christian Community	Mentoring, Exhortation, Discernment, Community Builder, Hospitality
Teaching Christian Faith and Lifestyle	Knowledge, Teaching
Reaching Out through Witness, Service, and Ministry	Healing, Mercy, Helps, Service Evangelism, Missionary
Foundational Gifts	Giving, Prayer, Leadership, and Administration

Based on your understanding of the tasks of the local church, of spiritual giftedness in general, and of your personal giftedness, brainstorm several specific ways in which you can help your church to be on mission. Write your ideas in the space below. Once you have listed several ideas, classify your answers according to the following criteria:

- Which of these activities that you listed focus specifically on the life of your church?
- Which of these activities focus on ministry, service, and witness to persons in the community and world beyond your church?

The following diagram is offered to visually demonstrate one understanding of how these various tasks work together to position the local congregation in relationship to the world.

## The World



## The Mission of the Church

If this diagram is descriptive of the mission of your church, it appears that certain functional tasks are designed to minister *within* the church and other tasks are designed to minister *through* the congregation to the needs of the world.

First, certain tasks (and their associated gifts) are accomplished in the context of the church family. For example, according to this diagram, the task of proclamation (or worship) is the core activity of the local congregation. Proclamation takes place best, however, in the context of Christian community (the next concentric circle in the diagram). The teaching task is then designed, primarily, to bring people into community, so that they may eventually participate in worship.

Second, other tasks (and their associated gifts) are designed to interface with The World, to provide an avenue through which people are invited into a growing relationship with God through Jesus Christ. If we are not actively about the business of interfacing with The World (i.e. actively working with the tasks of witnessing, serving, and ministering to The World), then the congregation becomes a closed community.

Obviously, a healthy, growing congregation must find a balance among all of these functional tasks. Further, a healthy, growing congregation must acknowledge that a variety of spiritual gifts are needed to address these functions. Because a congregation is made up of many individuals, each uniquely gifted, each local family of faith contains a unique blending of spiritual gifts. As all members of a congregation recognize, claim, and utilize their collective giftedness, the church is truly “on mission.”

### **Connections Between Personal Ministry and Corporate Giftedness**

One of the goals of this study is to encourage each member of your church to discover and activate a **personal ministry** that supports **the corporate ministry** of the congregation. Some people see their personal ministry focused within the life of the congregation—working inside the four walls of the church. They teach a class, sing the choir, or perform services for other church members. Other people see their mission field in The World—in public schools, in the office, at home, or in their neighborhood. Again, obviously both types of personal ministry are needed for your church to be on mission.

For those persons who are actively about the process of discovering or rediscovering a personal ministry, a study of spiritual gifts is an excellent tool. If you have no idea where to begin a personal ministry, begin by identifying your gifts. Then brainstorm with family and/or friends, identifying a variety of ways that your particular blending of gifts can be used in ministry.

As you reflect on this process of self-discovery, please remember that many gifts have dual functions, facilitating ministry **within** the church and **through** the church to The World. A few examples are listed below:

- Teaching, as defined in this material, can be expressed in the Sunday School classroom or in the public school classroom.
- Service, helps, mercy, and healing can be offered to members of the congregation; but these gifts expressed in The World can be a powerful way to communicate the Gospel message in very tangible ways.
- Hospitality can help to integrate new members into the congregation and can be an outreach tool to persons who might never come into a church building.

As you continue to explore your own giftedness, reflect on the following questions:

- What is your understanding of your own personal ministry?
- Are the gifts identified in the inventory related to this personal ministry? If so, in what ways?
- Does your personal ministry focus on congregational life? Or does it focus on being an interface to The World?
- How does your personal ministry relate to the corporate ministry of your church?

### **Looking Ahead**

In the final section of these study materials, you will read about three specific strategies designed to “call forth” the gifts of other people.

## How Can I Call Forth the Gifts of Others?

In this section of the material, we will explore three specific strategies designed to help you to help others discover their giftedness. These strategies include:

**Using Your Own Gifts**

**Becoming a “Parent”**

**Becoming a “Patron”**

### Introduction

One crucial aspect of *koinonia*, or Christian fellowship as defined in the New Testament, is the discovering, developing, celebrating, and sharing of our spiritual gifts. In the list of gifts associated with this study, at least four spiritual gifts are specially associated with this type of *koinonia* fellowship—exhortation, discernment, hospitality, and community builder. Hopefully, your church is blessed with many members who possess and use these gifts to call forth the gifts of others.

There are, however, several strategies that each member of your church can use to assist in the development of a *koinonia* fellowship. Read and respond to the following strategies to learn how you can call forth the gifts of other Christians.

### Strategy #1 Using Your Own Gifts

Read the following quote from Gordon Cosby, former pastor of The Church of the Savior in Washington, D.C., from his book, **The Calling Forth of Charisma:**

“No matter how much we love a person, accept him, give him support, have warmth and affection for him, no matter how much we help him in so many ways, unless we can actually call him forth so that he is himself exercising the uniqueness God gave him, then the love is incomplete; he is not free, he is less than fully human.

We have said that the most effective thing we can do to call forth the gift of another is to employ our own gift in freedom. This may seem selfish at first. Aren't we supposed to help the other person? What does our gift have to do with it? We start here.

The charismatic person is one who, by her very being, will be God's instrument in calling forth gifts. The person who is having the time of her life doing what she is doing has a way of calling forth the depths of another. Such a person is herself Good News. She is the embodiment of the freedom of the new humanity. Verbal proclamation becomes believable. The person who exercises her own gift in freedom can allow the Holy Spirit to do in others what He wants to do.”

Reflect on the following questions:

- If you accept the premise of Dr. Cosby's statement, how does the truth communicated here affect your understanding of your own personal ministry?
- Based on this statement, how would you respond to a person who says, “If I don't use my spiritual gift, it's my business. I'm not hurting anybody by not using my gift!”

## Strategy #2: Becoming a “Parent”

Read the following quote from Elizabeth O’Connor, a former leader of The Church of the Savior in Washington, D.C., as written in her book, **The Eighth Day of Creation**:

“A primary purpose of the Church is to help us discover and develop our gifts and, in the face of our fears, to hold us accountable for them so that we can enter the joy of creating. The major obligation of the Church to children is to enjoy them and to listen to them so that each can grow according to the design which is written into the being of each and emerges only under the care and warmth of another life. One of the reasons we experience so much difficulty with our gifts is that parents have thought their chief function in life to feed, clothe, and educate the young. However, their really important ministry is to listen to their children and enables them to uncover the special blueprint that is theirs. There is one line in Scripture that will instruct us in these matters: ‘But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered over them.’ (Luke 2:10 NEB)

Every child’s life gives forth hints and signs of the ways that it is to go. The parent that knows how to meditate stores away these hints and signs and ponders over them. We are to treasure the intimations of the future that the child gives to us so that, instead of unconsciously putting blocks in the way, we help that life to fulfill its destiny. This is not an easy way to follow. Instead of telling our children what they should do and become, we must be humble before their wisdom, believing that in them, and not in us, is the secret that they need to discover.”

Reflect on these questions:

- If you accept the premise of O’Connor’s statement, how does the truth communicated here affect your understanding of your personal ministry as a “parent” of the children in your own family, your own and those of your siblings, cousins, etc.?
- If you accept this premise, how does the truth communicated here affect your understanding of your personal ministry as “parent” of the children who are a part of your church?

## Strategy #3: Becoming a “Patron”

Read the following definition of a “patron” as described by O’Connor in **The Eighth Day of Creation**:

“A patron is one chosen, named, or honored as a special guardian, protector, supporter, or the like. A patron is much more fundamental than we have thought to the discovery and emergence of gifts. Very few people creatively and happily engaged in their work can look back without seeing behind the evolving of their gifts the face of their patron saints.”

O’Connor goes on to list several activities of a patron. A patron helps you to uncover and affirm your gifts. A patron helps you to identify the gifts you have by naming them or helping us name them, perhaps in a way that is particularly fitting or evocative. A patron encourages you, believes in you, and calls you forth.

Reflect on these questions:

- Who are the patrons of your church?
- Who have been your personal patrons?
- For whom have you been (or should you be) a patron?

## A Bibliography of Resources About Spiritual Gifts

If you are interested in exploring spiritual gifts in more depth, the resources listed on this page are highly recommended.

### Empowered! Reclaiming the Meaning of Missions Through the Power of the Holy Spirit

By Esther Burroughs

Each year, the Woman's Missionary Union of the Southern Baptist Convention commissions a book to support the overall WMU theme for that year. In 1990, the theme and resulting book focused on spiritual gifts. This resource provides both a solid biblical background for giftedness and a wide variety of practical applications of giftedness in the area of missions. Copies are available through the WMU.

### The Eighth Day of Creation: Gifts and Creativity

By Elizabeth O'Connor

Active in the leadership of The Church of The Savior in Washington, D.C., O'Connor has written a provocative book about, not only discovering spiritual gifts, but also nurturing and supporting other Christians who are also in the process of claiming their giftedness. The book was published in 1971 by **Word Books** of Waco, Texas. You will probably have to ask your bookstore to locate a copy for you.

### Spiritual Gifts The LifeSearch Series for Small Groups

By Kent Millard

This excellent workbook for small groups is available from **Abingdon Press**. To order, call 800-251-3320, or visit the publisher's website, [www.abingdon.org](http://www.abingdon.org).

### Uniquely You in Christ Resources

This publisher approaches the topic of spiritual gifts from a conservative biblical perspective, but, interestingly, integrates their understanding of spiritual gifts with elements of psychology, specifically, personality theory. They offer several study guides and spiritual gifts inventories. Some of these inventories are integrated with the **DISC Personality Type Inventory**. For more information about these resources, call their business office at 800-501-0490.

### The "Rediscovering Our Spiritual Gifts" Series from Upper Room Ministries

In mid-career, Methodist minister Charles Bryant "rediscovered" the concept of spiritual gifts—and it revolutionized his ministry and the ministry of his church. In his book, **Rediscovering Our Spiritual Gifts**, Bryant tells the story of this process of spiritual renewal. Further, he provides one of the best resources that you can find to help you and the members of your church go through the process of finding a fresh perspective on giftedness.

In addition to Bryant's excellent book, another support resource is also available through Upper Room Ministries. A **workbook** by the same title, written by John I. Penn, is designed for members of a class who wish to learn more about giftedness.

To order these materials, contact **The Upper Room** at (615)-340-7110, or through their website, [www.upperroom.org](http://www.upperroom.org).