

discipleship essentials

Essentials for Spiritual Leadership
Leader's Guide

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

LESSON 1: WHAT ARE SPIRITUAL GIFTS?

INTRODUCTION

This lesson is part of a Discipleship Essentials module titled Spiritual Gifts. The module examines a broad range of spiritual gifts mentioned in Scripture, and how believers can use these gifts in serving God and His people. Participants will be given guidance in how to identify the spiritual gifts they and others around them possess. They will be encouraged to put their gifts into practice, in fulfillment of God's purposes, by serving each other and worshiping in spirit and in truth.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

The intended audience for these lessons is Christians who are maturing in their faith and desiring to serve God sincerely. The lessons will also benefit church leaders who wish to encourage people in their Christian service, and identify spiritual gifts in those they are discipling.

The Leader's Guide is intended to help you as a leader in your preparation. These lesson outlines may be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials found online at www.discipleshipessentials.org.

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SPIRITUAL GIFTS

LESSON 1: WHAT ARE SPIRITUAL GIFTS?

PURPOSE

The purpose of this lesson is to define spiritual gifts, when they are given by the Holy Spirit, and how one can identify their own spiritual gifts.

LEADER'S NOTE

In some communities, the concept of spiritual gifts is a contentious one; different denominations may have differing opinions on what spiritual gifts are and how they manifest themselves in the lives of a believer. For the purposes of this lesson, we have taken the approach that all spiritual gifts are still given to believers today to strengthen the church. However, you may wish to teach denominational distinctives which are not outlined in the lesson. We have not included a formal spiritual gifts 'test' or 'questionnaire', but there are many examples of such tools online. You may find it helpful to provide one of these tests for your students. We know that the Holy Spirit will reveal to each individual their spiritual gifts through self-reflection and confirmation by others within the Church community.

INTRODUCTION

Select two or three of the following questions to ask the group.

- ❖ Who do you know who is very gifted at what they do? Why do you say that about them?
- ❖ What do you enjoy most when serving in your local Church? What ministries are you currently involved in?
- ❖ What evidence is there of the Holy Spirit's work in your life since you became a follower of Jesus Christ?
- ❖ What have you experienced in your life or in your church that can only be attributed to the power and work of the Holy Spirit? Can any of these be connected to abilities God has given to people?
- ❖ What is your understanding of the term 'spiritual gifts'? What are they, who has them, and what is their purpose?



STUDY

Instruct the group on the following points.

TEACH

- ❖ **What Are Spiritual Gifts?** One of the most amazing aspects of being a follower of Jesus Christ is that the Holy Spirit is in us and equips us as we serve others. Each of us is uniquely prepared to carry out the plan God has for our lives and the work He has called us to do. Throughout the New Testament, particularly in the book of Acts, we learn that spiritual gifts were vital to the work and identity of the early church. Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, “Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uniformed” (1 Corinthians 12:1). We also should understand these gifts and what our response to them should be.
 - **When do we Receive Gifts?** After Jesus left the earth, the Holy Spirit was given to all believers at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-6). Before that time, the Holy Spirit was given to specific individuals for a certain time or purpose. Now, all believers receive the Holy Spirit when they are saved (Acts 2:38, John 16:7-15). This is not a passive action, but an active one! We can see evidence of the Holy Spirit in our lives in many ways:
 - This Spirit leads us to obedience (Ezekiel 36:27).
 - The Spirit counsels and teaches us (John 14:26).
 - The Spirit helps us to become more like Christ (Galatians 5:22-23).
 - The Spirit empowers us to accomplish great things (Acts 1:8).
 - The Spirit gives spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12).
 - **What Are They For?** Every Christian receives at least one spiritual gift. Having a spiritual gift is not a mark of spiritual maturity, but spiritually mature Christians will learn to use their gift(s) well to accomplish God's purposes. Their purpose is for the “common good”, specifically to bring glory to God and to strengthen His Church (1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 29-30, Ephesians 4:12).
 - They are not for our amusement, for the elevation of our status, or to bring us applause.
 - The spiritual gifts are given so that the Church may be equipped and enriched for its mission of making disciples.
 - Spiritual gifts are also mentioned as a foretaste of the eternal life that is to come. These gifts will continue to be distributed until the Lord's return (1 Corinthians 1:7, 1 Corinthians 13).
 - **How are Spiritual Gifts different from Natural Ability?** We may naturally be excellent at sports, or mathematics, or working with our hands. Each of us has a unique personality and possesses various talents. If all our talents are from God who made us, we might wonder how spiritual gifts differ from our natural ability. There are similarities, but there are also differences.



- o Spiritual gifts are given *at salvation* and are a result of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. They are not dependent on genetics, training, or life experiences.
- o While anyone can have a talent, spiritual gifts are possessed only by Christians. Non-Christians can be talented in a number of areas, but these abilities are used for non-spiritual purposes.
- o The Holy Spirit may empower a Christian's natural skills and talents and use them as spiritual gifts to fulfil God's purposes in the church.
- o The specific purpose of spiritual gifts is the ongoing work of the Church. They are not to be used for personal gain, status, or ambition.

❖ **What are These Gifts?** God’s Word is full of examples of people being given gifts of the Spirit to accomplish God’s work. The New Testament epistles specifically list some of the spiritual gifts in several different passages (1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 1 Corinthians 12:28, Ephesians 4:11-16, Romans 12:6-8, 1 Peter 4:8-11). There are no strict categories provided in Scripture other than the two broad ones given in 1 Peter 4:8-11 – serving and speaking.

How Many Are There? There is no definitive number given to us in Scripture. There are lists, but because they vary and are not presented as exhaustive, we assume not every gift is listed. Some of the gifts are very specific (like teaching), while others may take countless forms (like serving or faith). The Holy Spirit equips God’s people with spiritual gifts to carry out His divine plan through the local church. There is no set number of gifts. In these lessons we will look at those which are named specifically in Scripture.

Spiritual Gifts Mentioned in Scripture		
Chapter	Gifts Listed	
Romans 12	prophecy teaching giving mercy	servicing exhortation leadership
1 Corinthians 12	Apostle prophecy teaching administration discernment healing knowledge tongues interpretation	faith helps miracles wisdom
Ephesians 4	apostle pastor teaching	evangelism prophecy

➤ **Other Spiritual Gifts:** In other places in Scripture we read about individuals who were given gifts by the Holy Spirit specifically to accomplish God’s purposes and strengthen or save His people. While these occurred before Pentecost, they were given by the same Spirit for the same purposes, and can therefore be considered spiritual gifts. The



gift of prophesy is seen frequently in the Old Testament, but so are other gifts. Some examples are:

- o **Artistry and Craftsmanship:** Bezalel ([Exodus 31:1-5](#))
 - o **Courage and Strength:** Gideon ([Judges 7:19-23](#)), Samson ([Judges 14:4-6, 15:14](#))
 - o **Interpretation of Dreams:** Daniel ([Daniel 2](#)), Joseph ([Genesis 37-42](#))
 - o **Composition and Music:** Psalmists David and Asaph ([2 Chronicles 29:30](#))
- **Varied Grace, One Body:** It is not necessary to have a numerated list of all the possible gifts – these passages are merely examples of God's graces to us. In [1 Peter 4:10](#), we are reminded that "as each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace". These different forms of grace are God-powered abilities meant to build up and unify the Church.
- ❖ **How do we Know Our Gifts?** We are urged to use our gifts ([Romans 12:6](#)). When we do, we will be fruitful in our service for Christ and feel fulfilled in our life. Sometimes we are unsure of what our gifts are. Taking a spiritual gift 'questionnaire' or 'test' may help identify them. These tests can reveal how we could best serve God, but we also need our Christian community to help us identify and use our gifts. The following steps can be helpful:
- **Learn about the Different Gifts:** The subsequent lessons in this module explore different types of spiritual gifts mentioned in God's Word, along with examples of their use. As we learn about them, we may identify with one or more of them.
 - **Actively Serving:** When we look for opportunities to serve God, we will find opportunities to practise many gifts. While we may be called to some activities, such as teaching, evangelism and faith, we may discover that we are particularly fruitful in one specific area. For example, our evangelism efforts might be much more effective than others. Some things are only learned by doing them.
 - **Walking in the Spirit:** When we are faithful in prayer and seeking the guidance of God's Spirit, we will notice Him prompting us to particular activities. We may feel urged to give money, speak a word of encouragement, or warn a fellow believer. Our gifts will be revealed as we ask God to lead us in this area and use opportunities that arise in order to serve Him.
 - **Confirmed by Others:** Gifts in the church are always confirmed by others. For example, if you have the gift of teaching, people will regularly ask you to teach; or if you have the gift of prayer, they will ask you to pray for them. Church leadership should be diligent to observe the gifts in their congregation and allow people to use them. You can ask others who know you to help identify your giftedness.
- ❖ **What is our Responsibility?** We might wonder how we ought to respond after our gifts have been identified. We must heed the following responsibilities:
- **Use Them:** We are exhorted to use the gifts given to us. This means identifying and putting into regular practice our gifts as much as possible ([Romans 12:6-8](#)). A gift is given to equip us for a specific function or appointment, and when that appointment



arises we must not neglect it. We are told to be good stewards of the gifts we possess, and to use the measure of strength and ability God gives us (1 Peter 4:10-11). A gift kept hidden or unused will not please God, and selfishly withholding our gift weakens the church.

- **Nurture Them:** We are also instructed to 'fan into flame' the gifts of God (2 Timothy 1:6-7), which suggests our nurturing of them. When urged to use it, we must not shy away. We must walk in the Spirit, and remain close to God through spiritual disciplines. We should use our gift with joy and with all we have (1 Peter 4:11) as an act of worship to God.
- **Love with Them:** We are told to use our gifts to serve one another (1 Peter 4:10). As the parts of our physical bodies have specific functions, so our spiritual gifts are varied and fulfill different needs (Romans 12:3-8). We are told that even if we use our gifts, they are useless without genuine love (1 Corinthians 13).

DISCUSSION

- ❖ Consider some of the gifts mentioned in this lesson. How could they be used 'with love'? What would it look like to use them without love?
- ❖ In what ways does your local church nurture the gifts of the Christians who meet there? How can you be involved in the identification and nurturing of others' spiritual gifts?
- ❖ How is the life of your church enriched by the gifts of members there? What gifts is your church very 'rich' with?
- ❖ We may all be at different stages in using our gifts. Do you know what your gifts are? What steps do you need to take to discover, confirm, or nurture your own spiritual gifts?

PRAYER

Close the lesson in prayer. Praise God for the Holy Spirit who equips the saints for service and empowers the church to accomplish its mission in the world. Pray that each participant would see clearly God's calling on their life. Pray that they will identify, nurture, and utilize their gifts and support the gifts of others, for the unity of the church and the glory of Jesus' name.