

discipleship essentials

Essentials for Spiritual Leadership Study 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. You will be given guidance in how to identify the spiritual gifts you and others around you possess. The focus of these lessons is unity in the Church while we actively love and serve one another. You will be encouraged to put your spiritual gifts into practice, in fulfillment of God's purposes, by serving each other and worshiping in spirit and in truth.

The Student's Guide is intended for an individual to look deeper into a specific lesson on their own. The lessons can be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials, such as the video and audio productions found on www.discipleshipessentials.org.



SPIRITUAL GIFTS

LESSON 1: WHAT ARE SPIRITUAL GIFTS?

WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

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.

JUST SO YOU KNOW...

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. If you don't know what your spiritual gifts are, that's okay! Throughout this module, pray that God will make it clear to you and that you will be obedient to Him. It is exciting to delve into God's plans for our lives, and His design for the Church!

GETTING STARTED

1. Who do you know who is very gifted at what they do? Why do you say that about them?

2. 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?



STUDY

❖ **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.

- **When do we Receive Gifts?** After Jesus left the earth, the Holy Spirit was given to all believers at Pentecost. Look up Acts 2:1-6 and write down what happened.

- 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. Read the following verses and write down what the Holy Spirit does:

<i>Ezekiel 36:27</i>	
<i>John 14:26</i>	
<i>Galatians 5:22-23</i>	
<i>Acts 1:8</i>	

- **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.

Read 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4:11-12, and write down the purposes of the spiritual gifts:



Spiritual gifts are not for our amusement, elevation of our status, or to bring us applause. They are given so that the Church may be equipped and enriched for its mission of making disciples.

Read 1 Corinthians 1:7 and 1 Corinthians 13. How long will these gifts continue, and what do they point to?

- **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.
 - 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.
 - 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.
 - 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.

- ❖ **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. There is no strict number given to us in Scripture.
 - Read the following passages and write down the gifts that are listed. (We have indicated the number of gifts found in each passage.)

Spiritual Gifts Mentioned in Scripture	
Chapter	Gifts Listed
Romans 12 (7)	
1 Corinthians 12 (12)	
Ephesians 4 (5)	



- **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:
 - **Artistry and Craftsmanship:** Bezalel (Exodus 31:1-5)
 - **Courage and Strength:** Gideon (Judges 7:19-23), Samson (Judges 14:4-6, 15:14)
 - **Interpretation of Dreams:** Daniel (Daniel 2), Joseph (Genesis 37-42)
 - **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. What does 1 Peter 4:10 remind us about these God-powered abilities and evidences of God’s grace?

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- ❖ **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. The following steps can be helpful:
 - **Learn about the Different Gifts:** As we learn about them, we may identify with one or more of them and recognize the way God has gifted us.
 - **Actively Serving:** When we look for opportunities to serve God, we will find opportunities to practise many gifts. 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. 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. 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. Read the following verses and write down what our responsibility is for the use of our gifts!

Romans 12:6-8	
1 Peter 4:10-11	



2 Timothy 1:6-7	
Romans 12:3-8	
1 Corinthians 13	

Our responsibility is to use our gifts lovingly, and to nurture and develop them. Love is the purpose of the gifts and is their greatest expression.

IN SUMMARY

- ❖ Spiritual gifts are given to us by God to enrich and equip the Church in its mission.
- ❖ We receive these gifts when we receive the Holy Spirit, which is at the time of our salvation. Each person receives at least one gift, but we may receive more throughout our Christian life.
- ❖ The spiritual gifts are many, and various lists in Scripture indicate how God gives us grace to use them.
- ❖ We know what our gifts are as we walk with God, serve His people, and practice love within a community of believers.
- ❖ Our responsibility is to lovingly use, nurture and develop our spiritual gifts.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What steps can you take this week to identify your spiritual gifts?

2. 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?