

# discipleship essentials

Essentials for Spiritual Leadership  
Leader's Guide

## SPIRITUAL GIFTS

### LESSON 4: THE STRENGTHENING 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](http://www.discipleshipessentials.org).

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# SPIRITUAL GIFTS

## LESSON 4: THE STRENGTHENING GIFTS

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this lesson is to explore the spiritual gifts that strengthen the Church. These include encouragement, healing, discernment, knowledge, prophecy and creativity.

### LEADER'S NOTE

Each spiritual gift has a unique place in the Church, and each contributes to accomplishing the mission of making disciples. Just like the other gifts, the strengthening gifts must be used out of love rather than selfish ambition. These gifts strengthen the Church and include powerful abilities, such as healing (or other miracles) and prophecy. It is true some communities experience more of these gifts than others; however, as the needs differ, the Spirit of God "apportions to each one individually as he wills" (1 Corinthians 12:11). God in His wisdom has ordained that most of His blessings be given through others so that we lean on one another in community. God desires that we contribute to the unity of the Church, and strengthen it as we work alongside one another.

## INTRODUCTION

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

- ❖ To review, what does 1 Corinthians 13 tell us about how our spiritual gifts should be used?
- ❖ How can the words we speak to one another strengthen the unity of the Church? Do you know anyone whose words encourage or speak wisdom?
- ❖ In what ways have the creative arts strengthened your community of Christians? (Consider music, visual arts, drama and writing).
- ❖ What is your experience with prophecy in the Church today? Do you believe people are still appointed to be prophets? Have you ever had someone speak particularly powerful, life-changing words you felt had come from God?

## STUDY

*Instruct the participants on the following points*

### TEACH

- ❖ **The Strengthening Gifts:** God's love is experienced through others in the context of relationships, and the Church is made up of individual members who express God's love to one



another. For that reason, a Church is strengthened when her relationships are full of grace and love. Strengthening gifts build faith, enhance our love for God, and are reminders of God's constant grace to us. They may not be used on a daily basis like shepherding and serving gifts, but they demonstrate the Spirit's supernatural power in unique situations.

- **Why they are Needed:** The strengthening gifts allow people to be built up in their faith and therefore make the Church stronger. They also display God's extraordinary power to do supernatural things through the lives of ordinary people.
  - Each of us can become discouraged and in need of encouragement and wisdom.
  - The Church sometimes lacks direction, and benefits from specific messages from God delivered through individuals with gifts of prophecy or wisdom. Creative arts deepen our understanding of our spiritual state and enhance our ability to worship God in spirit and in truth.
  - False teachers can destroy a church, and individuals with discernment can guard against false teaching and spiritual deception.
  
- **When Used Lovingly:** People will be sensitive to the Spirit's urging and seek to bring life-changing truth to others. When strengthening gifts are used in love, people with these gifts will:
  - have a Spirit-driven capacity to boldly speak the truth.
  - love seeing people increase in their faith and knowledge of God's grace.
  - have a genuine love for the community they have strengthened.
  - allow the Spirit to powerfully work through them in miraculous ways.
  - clearly see right from wrong, and truth from falsehood.
  
- **When Used Selfishly:** When a person with these gifts is not acting out of love, they do not build up the Church. This can result in:
  - coming across harshly and critically even when speaking the truth.
  - limiting the Holy Spirit's power, and reducing the scope of the miraculous.
  - strained or broken relationships, isolating oneself and diminishing unity among believers.
  - exhibiting pride and thinking they are superior to others.
  - inability to distinguish truth from falsehood.

❖ **A List of the Gifts:** The following is a list of some of the strengthening gifts that are found in the Bible.

### TASK:

*You may choose to provide these charts for your participants. Find a way to present this material creatively. Some possibilities include:*

- *use of visuals or technology*
- *storytelling focused on the Biblical examples of these gifts*
- *dividing your participants into smaller groups to study, then describe for the group an individual who possesses this gift*



<b>THE GIFT OF ENCOURAGEMENT</b>	
What it Is	This is the gift that enables an individual to verbally express belief in others, knowing what and when to say it. This encouragement recognizes God's gifts in others and motivates them to use their gifts. It energizes the hesitant, gives confidence and strength to the fearful, and builds faith in all.
Core Motivation	<i>To See God's People Encouraged in order to Continue in Good Works</i>
You Might Say	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I love to write notes to encourage those who are serving God.</li> <li>• I often let people know when I see a gift in them and encourage them.</li> <li>• My words often bring comfort, consolation and counsel to others.</li> <li>• I see those who are discouraged and look for practical ways to let them know they are loved and prayed for.</li> <li>• I can confront or challenge someone who is not living as they should and encourage right living.</li> <li>• People like to be around me, and I enjoy many friendships.</li> <li>• People are changed after spending time with me.</li> </ul>
Some Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I must guard against being overly optimistic or simplistic.</li> <li>• I sometimes avoid being confrontational when it is needed.</li> </ul>
Uses in the Church	Youth or children's ministry, counselling, visitation, small group leader
Biblical References	<i>Hebrews 10:24-25, 1 Thessalonians 2:11-12, Acts 15:30-32, Romans 12:8</i>
Biblical Examples	Barnabas ( <i>Acts 4:36, Acts 11:22-24, Acts 14:21-22</i> )

<b>THE GIFT OF DISCERNMENT</b>	
What it Is	This is the gift that allows an individual to see what is true and right, and distinguish it from deception and error. They may identify false teachers, recognizing when someone is being deceitful, discerning whether a spirit is good or evil, and protecting others in spiritual warfare.
Core Motivation	<i>To See People Know Truth from Error and Protect The People of God</i>
You Might Say	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I know when someone isn't telling me the truth, or only a half-truth.</li> <li>• When I hear someone preach or teach I can identify errors, inconsistency or false teaching quickly.</li> <li>• I have a deep understanding of what is right and wrong.</li> <li>• I can see a person's true motivations even when they are not aware.</li> <li>• I sense when someone is acting according to God's will.</li> <li>• People come to me with questions of what is right and wrong.</li> <li>• I have a heightened sense of God's presence and spiritual activity.</li> <li>• I can see spiritual gifts in others and encourage use of them.</li> <li>• I know when someone describes a spiritual experience whether it is authentically from God or not.</li> <li>• I have been effective and accurate in my perceptions.</li> <li>• I sometimes sense the presence of evil in a place or people.</li> </ul>
Some Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I must not be harsh when confronting others, but must speak in love.</li> <li>• I sometimes struggle to communicate what I perceive.</li> </ul>
Uses in the Church	Elder, prayer ministry, counselling, small group leader, mentor
Biblical References	<i>Romans 12:2, 1 Corinthians 12:10, 1 John 4:1-6, Matthew 16:21-23, Hosea 14:9</i>
Biblical Examples	Bereans ( <i>Acts 17:11</i> ), Jesus ( <i>Matthew 16:23</i> ), Paul ( <i>Acts 16:16-18</i> )



THE GIFT OF CREATIVE COMMUNICATION	
What it Is	This is the gift that enables an individual to communicate truth effectively and draw people to a deeper understanding of God through various forms of art. These art forms include musical composition or performance, visual art, writing or storytelling, drama, or other creative outlets which result in the edification, conviction, blessing and guidance of the audience. They contribute to and enhance corporate worship in the Church.
Core Motivation	<i>To See People Know the Truths of God in a New Way</i>
You Might Say	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have a passion for the arts, and it brings me joy.</li> <li>• When I practise my art, I feel like I am fulfilling God's purposes.</li> <li>• I have been given great skill with words, music or visual media.</li> <li>• I know that beauty is important to God, and beautiful art honours Him.</li> <li>• People tell me my work helps them to know God's truth in new ways.</li> <li>• I know I can use my musical abilities to inspire worship of God.</li> <li>• I know that story, song or images can often teach truths in a way that a sermon is unable to.</li> <li>• I am asked to use my gift during worship gatherings.</li> </ul>
Some Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I must guard against the temptation to impress people with my gift.</li> <li>• I can find constructive criticism of my work difficult to accept.</li> <li>• I can be impatient with those who don't understand my gift.</li> </ul>
Uses in the Church	Worship leader, musician, building design, artist, writer, playwright, drama ministry, song writer, journalist, design of worship space
Biblical References	<i>Psalm 50:2, Psalm 33:3, 1 Chronicles 16:29, Colossians 3:16, Exodus 26:1</i>
Biblical Examples	Bezalel ( <i>Exodus 35:30-35</i> ), King David ( <i>1 Samuel 16:18, 23</i> )

THE GIFTS OF KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM	
What it Is	These gifts enable an individual to express supernatural wisdom and knowledge of God's Word and His ways. They are able to easily understand His Word, recall and apply truths, and have the ability to present this insight to others. It is the God-given ability to speak to situations or problems with wisdom and the application of Biblical admonition.
Core Motivation	<i>To Know God's Truth and Make it Known</i>
You Might Say	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have a deep love for the Bible and digging deeper into truth.</li> <li>• I love to learn new ideas and facts.</li> <li>• I spend a great deal of my time reading, especially God's Word.</li> <li>• I have an ability to easily recall what I have learned in the past.</li> <li>• I can apply Biblical truth to everyday situations.</li> <li>• I see situations from God's perspective.</li> <li>• I know how to find information and organize it effectively.</li> <li>• I often 'know' something without knowing how I know it.</li> <li>• I sometimes have knowledge about a problem or situation that I could not have known apart from God's Holy Spirit.</li> <li>• I can see the consequences of actions and know what to do next.</li> <li>• I am passionate about disciples growing in knowledge of God.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I can usually see the spiritual cause and solution to a problem.</li> </ul>
Some Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I must be careful not to look down on others without this gift.</li> <li>I sometimes need to know when to listen instead of speak.</li> <li>I must continue to carefully study the Bible as the source of truth.</li> </ul>
Uses in the Church	counselling, conflict resolution, director of discipleship, small group leader, teacher, elder, writer, mentor, pastor, church librarian
Biblical References	<i>James 1:5, 1 Corinthians 1:18-31, 1 Corinthians 1:4-7, Proverbs 1:7, 1 Corinthians 8:1, 1 Corinthians 3:18-19, Colossians 1:9</i>
Biblical Examples	Solomon ( <i>1 Kings 3:9-13</i> ), Daniel ( <i>Daniel 2:23</i> )

<b>THE GIFTS OF HEALING AND MIRACLES</b>	
What it Is	These gifts enable people to accomplish supernatural healing or other miracles worked by the Holy Spirit through their prayer or actions. The power to heal or work a miracle is from God alone, and is not within the person themselves – they are merely an intermediary. These gifts may take the form of physical or spiritual healing, and may include other miracles also.
Core Motivation	<i>To See God's Power Displayed in Miraculous Ways</i>
You Might Say	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I have seen people healed of illness when I prayed for them.</li> <li>I sometimes know that someone is sick without needing to be told.</li> <li>I feel urged to pray for those who are sick, suffering or in distress.</li> <li>I have a deep compassion for the broken and want God to restore them.</li> <li>I feel prompted to ask God to heal someone when I see them suffering, and will pray for them with great zeal.</li> <li>I have seen God work miracles in response to my prayers.</li> <li>People regularly ask me to pray for their needs, and we see God answer those prayers together.</li> <li>I have faith that God can heal in miraculous ways or through the use of conventional medicine as He desires.</li> </ul>
Some Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I must always remember that it is God who heals, not I.</li> <li>I can feel doubt and discouragement when God does not heal someone.</li> </ul>
Uses in the Church	Prayer ministry, visitation, elder or pastor, medical ministry
Biblical References	<i>Acts 3:1-10, Acts 5:12-16, 1 Corinthians 12:9,28</i>
Biblical Examples	<i>Peter and John (Acts 4:5-22)</i>



<b>THE GIFT OF PROPHECY</b>	
What it Is	This is the gift that enables an individual to receive and communicate an immediate message from God, or to receive a special truth and proclaim it in a relevant manner for the building up of the Church. This may take the form of public speech or private words between people, but it will never contradict or add to the Bible. Because it is delivered by a human who is prone to error and confusion, prophecy does not have the same authority as teaching from God's Word and will be confirmed by mature believers if it is true.
Core Motivation	<i>To Proclaim the Truth Given By God to See Lives Changed</i>
You Might Say	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I do not hesitate to speak God's truth and convince people of sin.</li> <li>• I sometimes receive special knowledge about a person or situation that I must share in order to convey God's message.</li> <li>• I sometimes receive warnings from God to share with others.</li> <li>• I get urges to do or say things that are divinely prompted.</li> <li>• People say my words often have greater meaning to them than I realize and have, as a result, changed their behaviour or outlook.</li> <li>• My words are often confirmed by mature Christians.</li> <li>• I sometimes have knowledge about a person's past, present or future that I could not have known apart from God's Holy Spirit.</li> <li>• I am sometimes given an interpretation of a dream.</li> <li>• I have a deep hatred for sin and will name it when I see it.</li> <li>• I rely on the Bible to validate my messages and admonitions.</li> <li>• People have asked me, "How did you know exactly what I needed to hear?", or, "How did you know that about me?"</li> <li>• I am willing to show my own brokenness and failure in order that others might have a greater understanding of the truth.</li> </ul>
Some Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I must guard closely against living hypocritically or in disobedience.</li> <li>• I must guard against putting too much authority in my words – as I may be in error. True prophecies will be confirmed by others.</li> </ul>
Uses in the Church	evangelist, teacher or speaker, elder, pastor, writer, counsellor
Biblical References	<i>2 Peter 1:20-21, 1 Corinthians 12:29-31, Luke 7:26, Romans 12:6</i>
Biblical Examples	Agabus ( <i>Acts 11:28, Acts 21:10-14</i> ), Peter ( <i>Matthew 16:15-16, 2 Peter 1:16-21</i> )

- ❖ **Conclusion:** There are many gifts given to the Church, but the Strengthening gifts encourage it and give new vision for carrying out its mission. It is important that all these gifts be utilized in a loving way, and alongside others within the Church community. These gifts can be complex or misunderstood at times, but they are of great value to the Kingdom of God!

### **TASK:**

*As a group, identify several individuals who exhibit the strengthening gifts and pray for them. Pray specifically for areas of weakness outlined in the teaching charts above, and write letters of encouragement to those serving in different ministries in your Church or community.*



## DISCUSSION

- ❖ Where do you see people using the strengthening gifts in your community?
- ❖ What does Paul mean in 1 Corinthians 12:30-31 when he says, “earnestly desire the higher gifts”? Which gifts might be higher gifts?
- ❖ How are gifts like healing and miracles (which rely on God using us as a channel of His grace) different from gifts that we choose to utilize, such as encouragement or teaching?
- ❖ What happens when a person receives a gift but chooses not to use it?
- ❖ *If there are musicians in your group, request ahead of time that they prepare to lead the group in the singing of spiritual songs or hymns. Ask God to strengthen and encourage the Church through your participants, and especially as they utilize their spiritual gifts.*

## PRAYER

*Close the lesson in prayer. Thank God for the Church, that we belong to Him, and enjoy community with one another. Pray that the Church would be strengthened and unified as we encourage each other to use our gifts. Pray that those with prophetic messages and words of Wisdom would boldly declare the words given to them, that those with artistic skill would be motivated to create and share beauty and truth, and that those with the gifts of encouragement and discernment would use them to build strong relationships within the body of Christ.*