

discipleship essentials

Essentials for Spiritual Leadership Study 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. 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 Study 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 4: THE STRENGTHENING GIFTS

WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

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

JUST SO YOU KNOW...

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.

GETTING STARTED

1. 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?

2. In what ways have the creative arts strengthened your community of Christians? (Consider music, visual arts, drama and writing).



STUDY

- ❖ **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.

In the early Church, what was the result of messages delivered to many groups of Christians (or churches)? Read [Acts 16:4-6](#).

In many ways, all the gifts are given to build up and strengthen the Church, but the purpose of the ones in this lesson is specifically to strengthen it. In what ways is the Church strengthened by spiritual gifts? Read [Ephesians 4:11-16](#) and write down what you learn.

- **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:
 - o coming across harshly and critically even when speaking the truth.
 - o limiting the Holy Spirit’s power, and reducing the scope of the miraculous.
 - o strained or broken relationships, isolating oneself and diminishing unity among believers.
 - o exhibiting pride and thinking they are superior to others.
 - o inability to distinguish truth from falsehood.

We may try to strengthen others with a selfish motive rather than with love. What would it look like if a person was trying to use their gift selfishly rather than with love? What might they do or say? What could their motivations be?

❖ **DESCRIPTIONS OF THE STRENGTHENING GIFTS:** There are many ways that people are equipped to strengthen the people of God. The following chart lists a few mentioned in Scripture. For each gift, read through the brief description, and then look up the verses that follow. Write down what you learn about how each gift should be used, and then what you learn from the Biblical example of someone using this gift.

THE GIFT OF ENCOURAGEMENT	
What it Is	This gift enables a person 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"> I often let people know when I see a gift in them and encourage them. I see those who are discouraged and look for practical ways to let them know they are loved and prayed for. I can confront or challenge someone who is not living as they should and encourage right living.
Uses in the Church	Youth or children’s ministry, counselling, visitation, small group leader
Write Down What You Learn About Encouragement and Encouragers	
Hebrews 10:24-25	
1 Thessalonians 2:11-12	



Acts 15:30-32	
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THE GIFT OF DISCERNMENT

What it Is	This gift enables a person to see what is true and right, and distinguish it from deception and error. They may identify false teachers, recognize when someone is being deceitful, discern whether a spirit is good or evil, and protect 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"> • When I hear someone preach or teach I can identify errors, inconsistency or false teaching quickly. • I can see a person's true motivations even when they are not aware. • I have a heightened sense of God's presence and spiritual activity. • I have a deep understanding of what is right and wrong.
Uses in the Church	Elder, deacon, prayer ministry, counselling, small group leader, mentor, teacher

Write Down What You Learn About Discernment and Discerners

1 Corinthians 12:10	
1 John 4:1-6	
Matthew 16:21-23	

THE GIFT OF CREATIVE COMMUNICATION

What it Is	This gift enables a person 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 corporate worship.
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"> • I have been given great skill with words, music or visual media. • People tell me my work helps them to know God's truth in new ways. • When I practise my art, I feel like I am fulfilling God's purposes.
Uses in the Church	Worship leader, musician, building design, artist, writer, playwright, drama ministry, song writer, journalist, design of worship space

Write Down What You Learn About Creative Communication and Artists

Psalms 33:3	
Colossians 3:16	



Exodus 35:30-35	
THE GIFTS OF KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM	
What it Is	These gifts enable a person 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"> • I have a deep love for the Bible and digging deeper into truth. • I have an ability to easily recall what I have learned in the past. • I sometimes have knowledge about a problem or situation that I could not have known apart from God's Holy Spirit. • I can apply Biblical truth to everyday situations.
Uses in the Church	counselling, conflict resolution, director of discipleship, small group leader, teacher, elder, writer, mentor, pastor, church librarian
Write Down What You Learn About Knowledge and Wisdom	
1 Corinthians 1:18-31	
1 Corinthians 8:1	
Colossians 1:9	

THE GIFTS OF HEALING AND MIRACLES	
What it Is	These gifts enable a person 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"> • I have seen people healed of illness when I prayed for them. • I have a deep compassion for the broken and want God to restore them. • People regularly ask me to pray for their needs, and we see God answer those prayers together. • I have faith that God can heal in miraculous ways or through the use of conventional medicine as He desires.
Uses in the Church	Prayer ministry, visitation, elder or pastor, medical ministry
Write Down What You Learn About Healing and Miracles	



Acts 3:1-10	
Acts 4:5-22	
Acts 5:12-16	

THE GIFT OF PROPHECY	
What it Is	This gift enables a person 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"> I do not hesitate to speak God’s truth and convince people of sin. I sometimes receive special knowledge about a person or situation that I must share in order to convey God’s message. People have asked me, “How did you know exactly what I needed to hear?”, or, “How did you know that about me?” I am sometimes given an interpretation of a dream.
Uses in the Church	evangelist, teacher or speaker, elder, pastor, writer, counsellor

Write Down What You Learn About Prophecy and Prophets

2 Peter 1:20-21	
1 Corinthians 12:29-31	
2 Peter 1:16-21	



❖ **ADVICE TO THOSE WHO STRENGTHEN:** In order to successfully strengthen the Church, we must focus on the individual people within the Church. We must keep our eyes open to what is weak: Is there a lack of faith? A lack of passion for the Gospel? Disunity based on misunderstanding? A lack of understanding, wisdom or truth? Strengthening gifts address different weaknesses in individuals as well as within the group, which is why these gifts need to be functioning and not kept hidden. It is of no use to keep knowledge or discernment or prophecies to oneself. If we have an artistic gift, that gift in time must be shared in order to fulfill its purpose. What do the following verses say about strengthening and equipping the Church, and where the strength comes from?

2 Corinthians 13:11	
Ephesians 2:11-22	
1 Corinthians 1:10-31	

❖ **CONCLUSION:** There are many gifts given to the Church, but the strengthening gifts are of special value because they equip the Church with what is needed, and strengthen the heart, mind and soul of individual believers. The ability to distinguish truth from error and clearly hear from God in a moment of confusion will help the Church complete her mission. Truth, coming through timely gifts of God, communicated through teaching, the creative arts or a word of prophecy or encouragement, will help those who are fearful or feel apprehensive to move forward with faith. Never underestimate the power of a message of truth from God delivered with humility!

IN SUMMARY

- God equips His Church with spiritual gifts that strengthen, encourage, and deliver truth.
- The strengthening gifts are used to strengthen individuals and the Church as a whole. They only fulfil their purpose when they are shared, rather than kept to oneself.
- Some of the strengthening gifts are encouragement, discernment, creative communication, healing, knowledge and prophecy.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. 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?

2. What happens when a person receives a gift but chooses not to use it?

3. Where do you see people using the strengthening gifts in your Church community?