

session 9 study guide

finding your gifts

starter

YOUR WONDERFUL LIFE: Gather together with three or four other people (if possible, find people who you know). Imagine what your youth group or church would be like if each member in your small group were not a part of your group. Discuss the following questions:

1. What skills, talents or abilities does each person in your group contribute to your youth group or church?

2. How would your youth group or church be different if the people in your group didn't participate?

3. How do the contributions of each member make your youth group or church unique?

message

What exactly is a “spiritual gift”? How does it differ from any other natural talent or ability that God has given to us? Well, in many ways, spiritual gifts are unique because God gives them to us to empower us to serve Him in the Body of Christ. In several places in the Bible, we read descriptions of these specific gifts. We will look at some of these passages in this section and determine how we can best apply these gifts in our lives to bring glory and honor to God.

spiritual gifts

God gives spiritual gifts to those who belong to Him, and it is His intention that we understand them and use them to serve Him. Read the following Scriptures, and then underline the specific gifts that are mentioned.

We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully (Romans 12:6-8).

To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. . . . And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:8-10,28).

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ (1 Peter 4:10-11).

1. Why do you think there are so many different kinds of gifts?

2. Do you think God only gives one of these gifts to an individual, or can a person have more than one?

3. Do these verses state that God gives gifts to special members of the Church or to each person who belongs to Christ? What statements prove this?

4. What do these verses say about why God wants His people to use their spiritual gifts?

using our gifts

Of course, having spiritual gifts doesn't do us or others any good if we don't use them. In Matthew 25:14-10, Jesus told a parable often called the Parable of the Talents. In this parable, Jesus describes where spiritual gifts—as well as our natural talents and abilities—come from and how God wants us to handle them.

Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. "Master," he said, "you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more."

His master replied, "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!"

The man with the two talents also came. "Master," he said, "you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more."

His master replied, "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!"

Then the man who had received the one talent came. "Master," he said, "I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you."

His master replied, "You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

1. What happened to the two servants who were given five talents and two talents? What was the result of their faithful service?

2. What happened to the servant who had been given one talent? What was the result his unfaithful service?

3. How would you describe the character of the servant who buried the one talent that had been entrusted to him?

4. What does this story tell us about God's intention for giving us spiritual gifts and natural abilities?

dig

There are important reasons why God gives spiritual gifts to His children—and there are important attitudes He wants us to exhibit when we use them. In Colossians 3:17, Paul states, “Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” In 1 Co-rinthians 12:4-7, he states, “There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.” These verses give us insight into how God wants us to work out what He puts in us.

1. How do these verses relate to using the gifts, talents and abilities that God has given us?

2. For what reasons does God give gifts to His people?

3. What happens when we use a gift for God's purposes?

4. Why do people sometimes “bury” their gifts?

5. What does a person miss out on when he or she does this?

6. Is the concept that God gives each believer at least one spiritual gift a difficult one to grasp? Why or why not?

7. Is one gift more important than another? If so, which ones?

8. If all believers used the same few gifts and the rest were ignored, what would the Church look like?

9. Why do you think God only gives the supernatural use of these gifts to believers?

apply

At this point, take a brief inventory of the types of gifts that God has given to you. Read the following list of 27 spiritual gifts as compiled from Scripture by C. Peter Wagner in *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow*.¹ As you read the description of each gift, write down one of the following responses:

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| Yes | I have this gift. |
| Maybe | It's quite possible I have this gift or will have it in the future. |
| No | I really don't think I have this gift. |
| Unsure | I'm not even sure I know what the gift is or what it's all about. |

Spiritual Gifts Inventory

- _____ 1. **Prophecy:** A special ability God gives to certain people to receive and express a direct message from Him.
- _____ 2. **Service:** An ability to identify unmet needs and to make use of available resources to meet those needs and help accomplish the desired goals.
- _____ 3. **Teaching:** An ability to communicate information relevant to the health and ministry of others in such a way that they will learn from it.
- _____ 4. **Exhortation:** An ability to give words of comfort, consolation, encouragement and counsel to others in a way that they feel helped and healed.
- _____ 5. **Giving:** An ability to contribute material resources to the work of the Lord with generosity and with cheerfulness.
- _____ 6. **Leadership:** An ability to set goals in accordance with God's purpose for the future and communicate those goals to others in such a way that they voluntarily work together to accomplish those goals.
- _____ 7. **Mercy:** An ability to feel empathy and compassion for others who are suffering and to translate that compassion into deeds that reflect Christ's love and alleviate the suffering.
- _____ 8. **Wisdom:** An ability to know the mind of the Holy Spirit and have insight into how certain information may best be applied to specific needs arising among others.
- _____ 9. **Knowledge:** An ability to discover, accumulate, analyze and clarify information and ideas that are pertinent to the growth and wellbeing of others.
- _____ 10. **Faith:** An ability to discern the will and purposes of God for the future of His work.
- _____ 11. **Healing:** An ability to serve as a human intermediary through whom God cures illnesses and restores health to others.
- _____ 12. **Miracles:** An ability to serve as human intermediaries through whom God performs powerful acts that are perceived by others to have altered the ordinary course of nature.

- _____ 13. **Discerning of spirits:** An ability to know whether certain behavior believed to be of God is in reality divine, human or satanic.
- _____ 14. **Tongues:** An ability to speak to God in a language the person has never learned and/or receive and communicate a message from God through a divinely anointed utterance in a language he or she has never learned.
- _____ 15. **Interpretation of tongues:** An ability to interpret the message of one who speaks in tongues.
- _____ 16. **Apostle:** An ability to exercise leadership over a number of churches in spiritual matters that is spontaneously recognized and appreciated by those churches.
- _____ 17. **Helps:** An ability to invest the talents the person has in the life and ministry of other Christians, thus enabling the person helped to increase the effectiveness of his or her spiritual gifts.
- _____ 18. **Administration:** An ability to understand immediate and long-range goals and devise and execute effective plans for accomplishing those goals.
- _____ 19. **Evangelist:** An ability to share the gospel with unbelievers in such a way that they are compelled to become Jesus' disciples.
- _____ 20. **Pastor:** An ability to assume long-term personal responsibility for the spiritual welfare of a group of believers.
- _____ 21. **Celibacy:** An ability to remain single and enjoy it—to be single and not suffer undue sexual temptations.
- _____ 22. **Voluntary poverty:** An ability to renounce material comforts and adopt a lifestyle equivalent to those living at the poverty level in order to serve God more effectively.
- _____ 23. **Martyrdom:** An ability to undergo suffering for the faith (even to death) while displaying a joyous and victorious attitude that brings glory to God.
- _____ 24. **Hospitality:** An ability to provide an open house for those in need of food and lodging.
- _____ 25. **Missionary:** An ability to minister one's spiritual gifts in a second culture.
- _____ 26. **Intercession:** An ability to pray for extended periods of time on a regular basis and see frequent and specific answers to those prayers.
- _____ 27. **Deliverance (exorcism):** An ability to cast out demons and evil spirits.

Now identify what you believe to be the top five spiritual gifts that you use the most in your life.

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____

Why do you believe that you have these particular gifts?

If you are still unsure about what spiritual gifts you possess, ask God to reveal these to you. Talk with your group leader or someone who has been a Christian for a length of time and ask him or her to help you identify your spiritual gifts.

reflect

Each of us is unique in the combination of gifts, talents and abilities that God has given to us. In addition, each of us has different opportunities and challenges in using those gifts in our interactions with others. None of our lives are exactly alike—yet God can still use all of us for His purposes.

1. List the jobs or roles needed in your youth group or church. Now list who in the group you think God has gifted to do those jobs.

Jobs/Roles	Who Is Gifted to Do This

2. Are you taking on any jobs or roles that someone would be more gifted at doing? If so, which ones? Why do you think that person would be better gifted for it?

3. Are you avoiding any jobs or roles that you are gifted at doing? If so, why? What will you do to change this?

4. God has given each of us a certain amount of energy, a certain amount of resources, a certain amount of talents and abilities, and a certain amount of spiritual gifts. We can't always exercise our gifts the way we would like. Given this, what would be an effective way that you could put at least one of your spiritual gifts into action this week?

5. Knowing that God calls us to obediently serve Him in *all* things (see Colossians 3:17), should you only serve God in the area in which you feel you are gifted? Why or why not?

6. How can your role as a gifted Christian challenge other believers to use their own gifts and abilities?

7. How can it be harmful to your faith to wish you had someone else's spiritual gifts?

8. In the past, what (if anything) has hindered you from using your gifts?

As you conclude this session, take a moment to pray privately and confess anything that has hindered you from using your spiritual gifts. Ask God to open new doors of opportunity so you can better use your gifts for His glory.

meditation



For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace.

2 TIMOTHY 1:6-9

Note

1. C. Peter Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1994), pp. 229-233. Used by permission.