



Bible Study

Gifts and Grace: Discover and Use Your Spiritual Gifts

Expanded study to complement Equip Women to Teach the Word manual, Lesson 2, pp 86-94

Greeting

We've prepared this study with you in mind—one seeking to learn more about the gifts God has given his Church through you. This is a brief but vital overview in preparation for the ministry adventure that lies ahead. You might even say it's a spiritual checklist before you launch into the lessons of this module.

Our service as believers is a result of God at work in us through his Holy Spirit, using the means he has established, Word and sacrament (John 15:5). God's grace is evident in our earthly journey all the way to our heavenly home. He provides and equips us with wonderful gifts so that we can use the gift of ministry to be gracious and to meet the needs of others. Essential to keep in mind is that this is all about our life of sanctification. We're already saved by Jesus' life and sacrifice. Now we see our life as a huge thank you card! How can my gifts be used in response to God's greatest gift?

Please note that service "in the Church" is broad. Our gifts are used when we are in our homes, in our local congregation and in the workplace. We are sent out bearing Christ's name wherever we are whether it is witnessing to a co-worker, leading a women's Bible study, caring for a parent or child, planning at the kitchen table or at the boardroom table. God simply calls us (our callings or vocation) to be faithful as he determines the time and place and circumstances.

Review this study with your pastor, or use one that he is already using as he equips the saints in your congregation.

Purpose of this Bible Study

As were the believers in Paul's day, so are we in need of instruction about spiritual gifts. Please look at what the Apostle tells us in 1 Corinthians 12:1, Colossians 1:9-11.

Through this study you will understand **what** is meant by spiritual gifts, **why** they are given and **how** they are to be used. You'll see **examples from Scripture, expectations, challenges and blessings.**

Please have your Bible open to look up and take to heart the Scripture references throughout. Join Jeremiah in his zeal to dig in: "when your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight!" (Jeremiah 15:16). See pp. 86-87 of the "Equip" manual for a list of foundational Scripture used frequently throughout this study (Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:7-11, 27-31; 1 Peter 4:10-11)

Prayer (adapted from Colossians 1:10-12)

Heavenly Father, I come to you in order that I may live a life worthy of you and may please you in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of you, being strengthened with all power according to your glorious might so that I may have great endurance and patience, joyfully giving thanks to you, who has qualified me to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. Amen.

1. Spiritual Gifts—What are they?

a. Clarify Terms (from *Gifted to Serve*, David J. Valleskey © 1988, WELS Board for Parish Services)

- Spiritual gifts are different from the *gift* of the Spirit.
 - The *gift* of the Spirit brings one into the Body of Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:3)
 - *Gifts* of the Spirit equip one for service within the Body.
- Spiritual gifts are different from the *fruit* of the Spirit.
 - The *fruit* of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, etc.) is produced in all Christians and has to do with *character*.” (cf. Galatians 5:22, 23)
 - The *gifts* of the Spirit are distributed in *differing* amounts and combinations and have to do with *service*.
- Spiritual gifts are different from our Christian *responsibilities*.
 - All Christians have the *responsibility* to serve (Galatians 5:13), exhort (Hebrews 10:25), teach (Colossians 3:16), give (1 Corinthians 16:2), witness (Acts 1:8), show mercy (James 2:15, 16), grow in knowledge and wisdom (2 Peter 3:18; James 1:5).
 - But to some the Holy Spirit gives a special aptitude, or gift (*charisma*), for doing the above.
- Spiritual gifts are different from *natural talents*.
 - *Natural talents* are given to Christians and non-Christians alike.
 - *Spiritual gifts* are bestowed only upon Christians.
- Spiritual Gifts—Definition: Spiritual gifts are divine endowments of special abilities for service given to members of the body of Christ.

b. Spiritual Gifts as listed in Scripture give a general picture of what these gifts may be, but are by no means exhaustive of the many and varied gifts given in all times and in all places

Prophesy, Evangelist, Pastor-Teacher/Shepherd, Teaching, Exhortation/Encouraging, Word of Wisdom & Knowledge, Serving, Giving, Leadership, Administration, Helping others/showing mercy, Faith

Today’s list may include: web designer, preschool director, deaconess, greeter, host

c. Given by grace, as noted above (also 2 Timothy 1:9)

- d. **Given by one Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:4-11)**
- e. **Given to each one, each believer as God determines**
 - As God determines (1 Corinthians 12:11)
 - As God appoints (1 Corinthians 12: 28)
 - No one is lacking (1 Corinthians 1:4-7, 12:11; Ephesians 4:7-8)
 - Each one is equipped and prepared by God to be stewards/administrators of God's grace, of all he gives us—talents, possessions, opportunities (1 Peter 4:10).
- f. **Ministry/service/use of gifts is a gift!**
 - The whole service of the priesthood in the Old Testament, the bearing of offenses, performing of duties, the caring of the Tent of Meeting – all of it was a gift and privilege (Numbers 18:7b).
 - As noted in the New Testament as well, all in the body of Christ are chosen, precious and part of the holy priesthood of all believers. (1 Peter 2:4-5)

DISCUSSION

- Scripture gives us an idea of some of the gifts given to believers. Can you identify one or several that seem most fitting to you personally at this point? Have you been involved in the use of any of these gifts already? What new ones do you feel you'd like to try?
- What does it mean to you that God determines and appoints what gifts are given to whom?
- As you go through this study and learn about using your gifts, picture whatever that spiritual gift may be as something carefully chosen, wrapped and given right to you from God himself. How does that make a difference in your service?
- How often do you think of yourself as part of God's holy priesthood? What else are you according to this section of Scripture (1 Peter 2:4-5)?

2. Spiritual Gifts—Why are they given?

- a. In light of God's mercy
 - See the "Therefore" in Romans 12:1, which refers back to most all of Romans 1 – 11 – we're sinners deserving separation from God, but instead God continues to restore our relationship with him through his Son Jesus
 - Read Romans 4:25 and 8:1-3 as well as 1 Peter 2:10
- b. Christ's love compels us (2 Corinthians 5:14)
- c. For the common good (1 Corinthians 12:7)
- d. To serve others (1 Peter 4:10; Titus 2:4-5; Romans 15:1; 2 Corinthians 6:1 – not to receive God's grace in vain, living only for ourselves)
- e. For the building up of the Church; body of Christ (1 Corinthians 14:12; Ephesians 4:11-12)
- f. For God's praise (1 Peter 4:11)
- g. To the Father's glory (John 15:8)

- h. To be used (1 Peter 4:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20)

DISCUSSION

- Look again at c, d & e—what common theme is emphasized? What is the point? What does it look like if we fail to take this to heart?
- In today's world, what gifts do you think are especially needed for "the building up of the church?" In your personal life? In your local congregation?

3. Spiritual Gifts—How are they to be used?

- a. With Christ-centered motivation - repentance and absolution (Jeremiah 15:19; Acts 3:19-20; 2 Corinthians 7:10)
- b. By recalling the blessings of our baptism (see list after the closing prayer of this study)*
- c. By being still to let God speak and lead (Psalm 46:10)
- d. With a foundation of love (1 Corinthians 13:1-13; 1 Peter 4:8, Philippians 1:9-11)
- e. As one body, belonging to each other (Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 12:27, Ephesians 4:16)
- f. In harmony/unity (Ephesians 4:3; Romans 15:5-6; Philippians 2:1-2)
- g. With honor for each others' gifts (Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6, 21-23a; Philippians 2:3-4)
- h. With humility and grace toward others (Romans 12:3, Ephesians 4:2)
- i. With God's strength (1 Peter 4:11b; Philippians 4:13, 19)
- j. With confidence and no false modesty (Matthew 5:14-16; 2 Timothy 1:7)
- k. Distinguishing between personal (see "1. e." above) and public ministry (1 Corinthians 14:40 – orderly way). See last bullet point in the discussion below.
- l. For all stages of life (1 Timothy 4:12; Psalm 92:14-15; Psalm 138:8, Jeremiah 29:11, Philippians 3:14-16; Colossians 2:6-7); all in preparation for next stage (Ephesians 4:13)
- m. Serve as servants (Colossians 3:12-15)

DISCUSSION

- Which of the blessings of baptism* is especially meaningful to you at this time? Explain why that is. How does this help as you seek to serve?

- What do you learn about love as the foundation from the references in “d” above? List the blessings that come from that foundation as we use our gifts and serve together.
- How important is it that we belong to each other (see “e” above) as we use our gifts? Explain.
- We often hear that each stage of life is a preparation for the next. Have you found that in your life? Give an example. (Moses spent about 40 years in Pharaoh’s household and another 40 tending sheep before being called to tend to his people in Egypt). How important is patience and trust in God in our service to him? Explain. How would Moses’ previous service be preparation for his later calling?
- Guilt is not a motivator—certainly, not a godly one. Yet, how often do we fall into that trap or try to get others to serve from that prompt? This kind of response may sound familiar: “Ok, I’ll do it, since no one else will”; “I haven’t done much lately so I guess it’s my turn”; “it won’t go over very well if I don’t agree to help.” Give examples of what a gospel response sounds like.
- Consider this: “A spiritual gift enables us to do something in Christ’s Church; spiritual maturity enables us to do it well.”
- Explain how the unity in Romans 15:5-6 (see “f” above) leads to God’s glory. What does it mean for you to have the same attitude toward each other that Christ had, in terms of 1) what it takes to be successful in today’s marketplace among unbelievers; 2) in coordinating a ministry team with a strong-willed member who has trouble listening to others; 3) raising your children as confident Christians in a pagan world.
- It’s important to distinguish between personal and public ministry. Personal ministry is what we all do as individuals out of Christian love toward our neighbor. Whenever we act on behalf of other believers, then we are engaged in public ministry. This ministry is not self-determined but conferred on us through the body calling us to go out in service to individuals or groups. Give examples of each, personal and public callings.

4. Examples of Spiritual Gifts in Scripture

- a. Paul: Read about Paul’s early life in Acts 7:59 – 8:1 (Saul), 9:1-22; and then read 13:42 – 48; 14:1; 19:8-12.
 - How might Paul’s background have hindered him in his service? What helped him put that behind him? (See Acts 9:4-6, 13:46-47)
 - Paul experienced direct revelation from God. What does God say about the powerful resource he’s given us? (See story of Rich Man and Poor Lazarus in Luke 16:27-31)
- b. Abigail: Read the story about God’s faithful servant, Abigail, in 1 Samuel 25.
 - What gifts are evident in Abigail as this story unfolds (see 1 Samuel 25:14-19, 23-31)?

- What is especially amazing about *how* Abigail uses the gifts God has given her? Review the points in the previous section, #3.
 - How has Abigail reached this level of spiritual maturity even in her difficult circumstances? Tell of a challenging situation at work tackling a project involving various personalities, or when planning an event in your congregation. How would this story help you and also those working with you to further the kingdom and give glory to God?
- c. Mary and Martha: The account of these two sisters, Mary and Martha, in Luke 10:38-42 provides a contrast. We see Mary listening at the feet of her Lord. Martha, on the other hand, was consumed with what she needed to do to serve.
- What happens when we put service before sitting and savoring our Savior?
 - Rewrite the outcome if both Mary and Martha had been fed first and then motivated to serve. Can you think of a personal situation from your life that could use a similar “rewrite?”

5. Expectations and Challenges

- a. As we use the spiritual gifts God gives, what can we expect?
- The world has its own priority of gifts that stands in stark contrast to the mind and will of God (1 Corinthians 3:19). List gifts that would be most highly prized in the society around us today (power? money?) What happens when we treasure these gifts above the spiritual gifts of God?
 - Jesus cautioned his disciples that they would meet strong opposition when they went out into the world and put God’s gifts into practice (John 15:18-19). What forms might that opposition take today? No matter what hardship or difficulty we might face, what assurance does the believing child of God carry with herself everywhere and under every circumstance of life (Hebrews 11:38-40; James 2:5; John 16:33)?
 - We can expect to fail. Take a moment to recall or read through the liturgy from your recent worship service, noting especially the confession and absolution. Why is this a necessary accompaniment to the proper use of God’s gifts? How can we incorporate it better into our living the life of faith? See also Lamentations 3:22-23.
- b. What else can we expect when called to serve, whether as an individual or called by the congregation of believers?
- Expect to be changed by the love of God in Christ
 - Expect the gospel to work among God’s people
 - Expect there to be joy
 - Find Scripture from those noted already and add others.

6. Blessings

- a. "Counted worthy" to participate in God's kingdom work for the sake of the gospel (Acts 5:41)
- b. The experience of partnership in using gifts with others; serve and be served with focus on others (Philippians 1:3-6, 12-14)
- c. The 72 returned (Luke 10:17)
- d. We get to use our gifts knowing it's all about Jesus (1 Corinthians 2:2)
- e. Add others!

Closing prayer (*Hebrews 13:20-21*)

May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

***BLESSINGS OF BAPTISM**

What a marvelous multiplicity of pictures the Lord uses to describe the gracious miracle of renewal that he has accomplished in each of his baptized children! He has...

- washed away our sins ACTS 2:38, 22:16, EPHESIANS 5:25-27, TITUS 3:3-5
- clothed us with Christ's righteousness GALATIANS 3:27, ISAIAH 61:10
- justified and sanctified us 1 CORINTHIANS 6:9-11
- incorporated us into the Body of Christ 1 CORINTHIANS 12:13, EPHESIANS 4:4-5
- made us his disciples by turning our hearts to faith MATTHEW 28:19
- given us a new birth JOHN 3:5, TITUS 3:5
- set his seal upon us 1 CORINTHIANS 1:21-22
- anointed us with his Holy Spirit ACTS 2:38
- given us the certainty of eternal life ROMANS 6:3, 5, 1 PETER 3:21
- filled us with all the fullness of Christ; made us complete in Christ COLOSSIANS 2:9-10, 12
- renewed, restored us as a new person 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

"Spiritual Renewal—Back to the Basics and Forward to Maturity" by David J. Valleskey. PNW District Convention. June 1988.