

Spiritual Gifts Discovery

Introduction

What are “Spiritual Gifts?” Why do we need to know about them? How will discovering my gifts help me? How will discovering my gifts help my church? Isn’t my Pastor supposed to take care of the needs of the church? What is the “Body of Christ?”

Over the next two sessions you will explore these questions and prepare yourselves to complete JCUMC’s annual Time and Talent Survey.

What are Spiritual Gifts?

Spiritual Gifts are special abilities given to every Christian, by the grace of God through the Holy Spirit, to be used to serve and strengthen one another, and to glorify God.

Who needs to know about Spiritual Gifts?

You need to know about spiritual gifts if:

- You are a Christian;
- You believe that Jesus is your Lord and you want to love Him and follow Him in the best possible way; and,
- You want your church to be a healthy, winsome, growing group of people showing forth God’s love in your community.

Why do we need to know about Spiritual Gifts?

* **An awareness and understanding of spiritual gifts will clarify how God means the church to work, and our role within it.** The apostle Paul wrote in his letter to the church at Corinth: “Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant.” (1 Corinthians 12:1). God’s plan is for all believers to use their spiritual gifts to serve one another in love thereby making a difference for His kingdom.

* **We are expected to use our gifts.** Paul wrote to Timothy, who was ministering to the church in Ephesus, “Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you ...” (1 Timothy 4:14). The New Testament describes the church as the “body of Christ.”

* **We will be held accountable for the use of our gifts.** Peter wrote to all believers, “Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.” (1 Peter 4:10) Our spiritual gifts are not given for us to keep them to ourselves, but to use in ministry to others, bearing

fruit for God's Kingdom. The best illustration of this is the story Jesus told in Matthew 24:14-30 (known as the parable of the talents). Read that parable now, even if you are familiar with it.

What are the benefits of knowing about and using our spiritual gifts?

Personal Benefits

- * You will have a better understanding of God's intended pathway for your life. God gives each of us unique gifts to use in service to others as disciples of Jesus Christ.
- * Your relationship with God will grow and mature. As you minister to others, and see the difference God makes in their lives through you, your relationship with God deepens.
- * Your ministry will be more effective and fulfilling. If you have a passion for children, and the gift of teaching, you will probably be a very effective children's Sunday school teacher, and doing it will energize you!

Church Benefits

- * Churches that teach and develop gifts-based ministries are more effective in the ministries they provide. Churches with gifts-based ministries have people with the gift of leadership leading, people with the gift of helps helping, people with the gift of intercession praying for others, and so on.
- * There is visible spiritual growth in churches that teach and develop gift-based ministries. The Holy Spirit empowers us to use our spiritual gifts, and when we use our gifts in service to others, we see God at work through us, changing lives, and changing the world – one person at a time.

Kingdom Benefit

- * God is glorified and people are edified (built up) in the church that teaches and develops gift-based ministries.

How does serving glorify God and edify others?

- * Serving one another in love is a reflection of God's love for us. Reflecting God's love on others is worship and worship glorifies God.

"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 4:11)

* The definition of edify is “to build up” or “to strengthen and encourage spiritually.” By serving, we minister to others, building them up spiritually and ourselves spiritually.

“It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be build up.” (Ephesians 4:11-12)

At this point, take a moment to review and pick out points that stand out for you in the previous pages. Take time to discuss them if you are in a group setting

Redefining the word “Minister”

Most of the time, when we hear the word “minister,” we think of a professionally trained person, serving in a paid staff position in our church. Rarely do we think of members of the church as “ministers.” However, this is not an accurate reflection of the way the word was used in the New Testament. *Ministry is not an office, but an act of service.*

The word “minister” comes to us from the translation of the Greek word “diakonia,” which means, “act of service.” The word “deacon” traces its beginnings to the word “diakonos,” which means “one who serves.” Sometimes the word “deacon” is used in the New Testament to refer to special servants who meet certain qualifications specified in Acts 6:1-6 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13. But the word is also used in a more universal way to refer to all Christians in other passages. For example, in Ephesians 4:12, Paul speaks of God’s people being “prepared for works of service or ministry (diakonia).” *Every believer is a minister.*

“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.” (1 Peter 2:9)

Spiritual Gifts Discovery Class Objective

To help God’s children find a way to be fruitful and fulfilled in a meaningful way within the ministries of JCUMC.

Paul wrote: “You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.” (Galatians 5:13)

Sometimes we find ourselves serving in a position that just is not “right” for us. We are very active, but not very effective. We serve wherever we see a need, but we

don't make the kind of difference we hoped for. We feel frustrated, inadequate, and drained. We aren't becoming stronger, and we're not growing in our faith.

We aren't doing anything wrong; we just aren't doing *what God designed us to do*. God made each of us a unique person, designed with specific gifts. When we put all the gifts together and serve according to our passions, spiritual gifts, and personal style we are able to make a recognizable difference in the church. We are motivated and energized by our efforts.

Think about your own experiences and what happened when you matched your talents to your work. If you are in a group setting discuss these experiences together.

Our Unique "God-Design"

God designed each of us to be as unique as a fingerprint; we all have a distinct mix of passions, spiritual gifts and personal style. God made us unique individuals because He has a desire for each of us to use our gifts in different ways to advance the Kingdom. Our passions, spiritual gifts and personal style are not of our choosing; they are God breathed, God given.

"All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines." (1 Corinthians 12:11)

"But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be." (1 Corinthians 12:18)

The Body of Christ

Open your Bible and read Romans 12: 3-21 before moving on to this next section. Ask yourself what you believe Paul was trying to communicate to the church in Rome. If you are in a group setting discuss your thoughts.

The Body of Christ is the church, and every believer has a role to play. God's plan for the church is for us to serve Him as one body.

"...So in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others." (Romans 12:5)

"Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it." (1 Corinthians 12:27)

There is a Peanuts cartoon strip where we see Snoopy running a marathon race. All of a sudden the ears start complaining, "We're too cold." The stomach begins to growl "What about me? If it wasn't for me to remind you that you need fuel to keep going, you'd quit." And then the feet start in "What about us? We're the really important body part here. If it weren't for the feet, where would you be? Nowhere!"

"If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body." (1 Corinthians 12:17-20)

No part of the body can function by itself. But when all parts work together, their unique contributions enable life to continue. In the same way, when each of us exercises our spiritual gifts, the ministry and message of Christ continue. Together, we can accomplish great things for Him.

United We Stand

We are all unique, but we are called to serve in **unity**. Unity doesn't equal sameness. Unity equals togetherness in spite of our unique differences.

"As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you!' ...So that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it." (1 Corinthians 12:20-21a, 25-26)

This diversity is a reflection of God. He is the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. There are different expressions of Him, but He has one purpose.

<u>Different</u>	←	→	<u>Same</u>
Gift	←	→	Spirit
Service	←	→	Lord
Workings	←	→	God

God didn't design us to be identical to one another. He does want us to be unified by having the same purpose: **to glorify God, edify others and make disciples.**

"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 the gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophesy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another

speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues.” (1 Corinthians 12:8-10)

“Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.” (Romans 12:4-5)

“If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ...then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.” (Philippians 2:1-2)

“Now you are Christ’s body, and all individual members of it.” (1 Corinthians 12:25)

From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.” (Ephesians 4:16)

How Are We to Serve?

Why we are to serve can be easier to understand than how we are to serve. Our Passions, Spiritual Gifts, and Personal Style are key pieces of the puzzle.

As you proceed, consider how these pieces come together.

Passion

Passion is a God-given desire that compels us to make a difference in a particular ministry area.

Your passion indicates **where** you are to serve. You may be passionate about working with youth, feeding the hungry, ministering to those who are hurting, or teaching others to be good financial stewards, among many other things. When you serve in your area of passion, you’ll be more motivated.

Three General Areas of Passion:

1. People – may include groups such as children, the blind, the homeless, single people.
2. Roles – may include guiding people in their faith, administrating projects, gardening.
3. Cause – may include world hunger, human rights, reaching the lost, financial stewardship.

****This is not an all-inclusive list. Your passion may not fall into one of these categories. Passion is a very personal element of our unique design. Feel free to state your passion in your own terms.**

Spiritual Gifts

We've already defined spiritual gifts and we know that God gives spiritual gifts to **every** person. Some of us may have multiple gifts, but everyone has at least one.

Spiritual Gifts indicate **what** you will do when you serve. When you serve according to your Spiritual Gifts you will be more effective.

Personal Style

Your personal style relates to your preference for working directly with people or doing tasks behind the scenes and whether you prefer a structured environment with clear goals and deadlines, or a more unstructured spontaneous environment.

Personal Style indicates **how** you will serve. When you serve in a way that's consistent with your God-given personal style, you will feel more confident.

Available Time

Your life is a journey and there are seasons in life that may impact the amount of time that can be devoted to using spiritual gifts. Available time is **when** you will serve. There is a time for everything under heaven.

Putting the pieces together:

- *Spiritual gifts = What*
- *Personal Style = How*
- *Available time = When*

As you have time, review the following scripture on your own time and consider each question. If you are in a group, setting skim the scripture and questions and move on to "Defining Spiritual Gifts".

Biblical Foundation

1. Romans 12:1-8

- Who gives spiritual gifts?
- Who receives spiritual gifts?

- How are the gifts to be used?
- Which gifts are mentioned in this passage?

2. 1 Corinthians 12:1, 4-11

- Who gives spiritual gifts?
- Who receives spiritual gifts?
- How are the gifts to be used?
- Which gifts are mentioned in this passage?

3. Ephesians 4:7-8, 11-12, 16

- Who gives spiritual gifts?
- Who receives spiritual gifts?
- How are the gifts to be used?
- Which gifts are mentioned in this passage?

4. 1 Peter 4:10-11

- Who gives spiritual gifts?
- Who receives spiritual gifts?
- How are the gifts to be used?
- Which gifts are mentioned in this passage?

The Greatest Gift

1. 1 Corinthians 12:12-20

- How does the analogy of the body apply to our church?
- How does it apply to the universal Church?

2. 1 Corinthians 12:21-31

- Which parts of the body does Paul say are indispensable?
- What is the alternate translation for verse 31 (NIV)?
- Why did Paul write this passage to the church at Corinth?

3. 1 Corinthians 13

- What does Paul say is the essential ingredient in the use of Spiritual Gifts?
- How does this passage apply to our lives as Christians today?

The Parable of the Talents

4. Matthew 25:14-30

- Why did the third servant bury his talent in the ground?
- Why was the master angry?
- What are some fears that may keep us from using our gifts in the world today?
- How can we overcome these fears?

Defining Spiritual Gifts

Spiritual gifts are special abilities given to every Christian by the grace of God through the Holy Spirit, to be used to serve and strengthen one another and to glorify God.

Let's take a closer look:

Spiritual gifts may feel like natural abilities...They are divine breathed abilities – not necessarily abilities we have gained through training or experience.

There is no Christian without a spiritual gift. Every believer has at least one.

We receive our gifts, according to God's grace, when we accept Christ. The Holy Spirit empowers us to develop and use these gifts in ministry to others.

They are to be used to serve and strengthen one another and to glorify God. Our spiritual gifts enable us to meet a specific need in other individuals and the church as a whole. Each of us can make a difference for God's kingdom.

What are the spiritual gifts?

There are several passages in the Bible that mention spiritual gifts, including 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, Ephesians 4, and 1 Peter 4. Our list is drawn from these and other passages.

This is by no means an exhaustive list. We have intentionally left out certain gifts that are usually self-evident (meaning if you have them, you know it), for instance: speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues, and miracles. By the same token, we have included some gifts that are not specifically identified as Spiritual Gifts in the New Testament, but their use is mentioned in the Bible. They are used to glorify God and edify the body. Examples are hospitality, intercession, creative communication and craftsmanship.

Here is a list of the Spiritual Gifts we will be talking about in this class and a short definition of each (we've included Biblical references where these gifts are mentioned specifically, or where there are examples of the gift being used):

Administration: the gift that enables the believer to understand the functions and goals of a segment of the body and to devise and implement effective plans to accomplish these goals.

Biblical References: 1 Corinthians 12:28, Luke 14:28-30, Acts 6:1-7, Titus 1:5

Apostleship/Missionary: the gift to minister cross-culturally, starting new churches or ministries that impact multiple churches.

Biblical References: Acts 8:4, Acts 13:2-3, Acts 14:21-25, 1 Corinthians 9:19-23

Craftsmanship: the gift that enables a believer to creatively design or construct items to be used for ministry.

Biblical References: Exodus 28:3-4, Exodus 30:1-6, Exodus 31:3-5

Creative Communication: the passion to communicate God's truth through a variety of art forms, i.e., music, writing, art.

Biblical References: Psalm 33:1-5, Psalm 96:1-9, Psalm 100:1-2, Psalm 149:1-3, 1 Samuel 16:14-23, 1 John 2:1-6, 12-14, Jude 3, 1 Timothy 3:14-15

Discernment: the ability to recognize whether certain people, ministries, or things are of God, or not of God, i.e., differentiating between good and evil.

Biblical References: Acts 5:1-11, Acts 16:16-18, Matthew 16:21-23, 1 John 4:1-6, 1 Corinthians 12:10

Encouragement/Exhortation: the desire that enables you as a believer to reach out and reassure, strengthen, affirm, and urge to action those who are discouraged or faltering in their faith.

Biblical References: Acts 14:21-22, Romans 12:8, Hebrews 10:25, 2 Timothy 1:16-18

Evangelism: the desire to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ to those who don't know Him, in a way that makes them respond in faith and discipleship.

Biblical References: Acts 8:5-6, Acts 8:26-40, Ephesians 4:11-13, 2 Timothy 4:5

Faith: the gift to recognize what God wants accomplished as well as to sustain a steadfast belief that God will see it done despite what others perceive as barriers.

Biblical References: Hebrews 11, 1 Corinthians 12:9, Romans 4:18-21, Mark 5:25-34, Acts 27:21-25

Giving: the desire to give of material wealth freely and liberally, with great joy, to further God's causes.

Biblical References: Mark 12:41-44, 2 Corinthians 9:2-8, 2 Corinthians 8:1-7, Romans 12:8

Healing/Counseling: the gift to be God's means for restoring people to wholeness, physically, mentally or spiritually.

Biblical References: Luke 9:1-2, Acts 28:7-10, Acts 9:32-35, Acts 5:12-16, 1 Corinthians 12:9, 28

Helping/Serving: the desire to work alongside others, attaching spiritual value to practical, often behind the scenes tasks that sustain the body of Christ.

Biblical References: Romans 16:1-2, Mark 15:40-41, Acts 9:36, 1 Corinthians 12:28

Hospitality: the desire to provide a warm welcome for people that demonstrates God's love by providing food, shelter, or fellowship.

Biblical References: 1 Peter 4:9, Romans 12:13, Hebrews 13:1-3, Acts 16:14-15

Intercession: the gift that enables a believer to pray for others, sometimes for extended periods of time, with the certainty that prayer is heard and when requests are made, answers will come.

Biblical References: Colossians 4:12-13, 1 Thessalonians 3:10-13, James 5:14-18, Colossians 1:9-12

Knowledge: the gift that drives a person to learn, analyze and uncover new insights, from either natural sources or the Holy Spirit directly, for the advancement of God's purposes.

Biblical References: Colossians 2:2-3, 1 Corinthians 12:8, 2 Corinthians 11:6, Romans 12:2

Leadership: the gift that enables the believer to cast a vision, to motivate, direct and inspire God's people in such a way that they voluntarily and harmoniously work together to accomplish the purposes of God.

Biblical References: Romans 12:8, John 21:15-17, Acts 15:7-11, Hebrews 13:7, 1 Timothy 5:17, Acts 7:10

Mercy/Compassion: the gift to perceive the suffering of others, both believers and unbelievers, and comfort and minister effectively with love, empathy, and compassion.

Biblical References: Luke 10:30-37, Romans 12:8, Acts 11:28-30, Matthew 25:34-40, Matthew 20:29-34

Shepherding/Pastor: the ability to guide and care for other Christians as they experience spiritual growth.

Biblical References: 1 Peter 5:1-3, John 10:1-18, 1 Timothy 3:1-7, 2 Timothy 4:1-2

Teaching: the ability to understand and communicate God's truths to others effectively, in ways that lead to applications in their lives.

Biblical References: 1 Corinthians 12:28, Ephesians 4:11-14, Romans 12:7, Acts 18:24-28, Acts 20:20-21

Wisdom: the gift that allows the believer to sort through opinions, facts and thoughts in order to determine what solution would be best for the individual believer or the community of believers.

Biblical References: James 1:5-6, James 3:13-17, 1 Corinthians 12:8, Acts 6:3, 1 Corinthians 2:6-13

Consider each point of confusion. If you are in a group setting, discuss these points

Confusion about Spiritual Gifts

We have been focusing on what Spiritual Gifts are, but we also need to be careful not to confuse Spiritual Gifts with other terms and important concepts.

Don't Confuse Spiritual Gifts with Natural Talents

Natural talents are an expression of God's common grace to all that have life. Every person born in this world has some natural talent. Spiritual Gifts are God's specific gifts given to those who have received new life through Jesus Christ.

- Natural talents are given at physical birth.
- Natural talents may be transformed by the Holy Spirit and empowered as Spiritual Gifts

- Both natural talents and Spiritual Gifts can vary in degree and kind.
- Both natural talents and Spiritual Gifts are God given, but Spiritual Gifts are also God-devoted.

Don't Confuse Spiritual Gifts with Fruits of the Spirit

Fruits of the Spirit are inward characteristics of the believer's heart, revealed in his or her actions and attitudes as that person grows in the faith. The Fruits of the Spirit indicate what we should *be*.

Spiritual Gifts are task-oriented functions or roles that God has called and equipped each believer to perform. Spiritual Gifts indicate what we should *do*.

- Fruits of the Spirit are attitudes. Spiritual Gifts are aptitudes.
- Fruits of the Spirit are natural by-products of an abiding and obedient relationship with Jesus Christ.
- Spiritual Gifts are endowments of the Holy Spirit.

Both the Fruits of the Spirit and Spiritual Gifts are important. God is less concerned with what we do than with the spirit in which we serve. If we use our Spiritual Gifts to the fullest but don't use them out of love, it does not please God or make a difference for God's Kingdom (1 Corinthians 13:1-3).

Don't Confuse Spiritual Gifts with Spiritual Disciplines

Each of us should be developing habits that help us remain true to our faith and close to God. Spiritual disciplines are activities practiced by committed Christians.

- Spiritual Disciplines strengthen the individual; Spiritual Gifts strengthen others.
- Spiritual Disciplines develop devotion; Spiritual Gifts express devotion.

Some examples of spiritual disciplines are abstinence, silence, Bible study, worship, and fasting.

Don't Confuse Spiritual Gifts with Ministry Positions

There can be a relationship between gifts and ministry positions, but there is not necessarily a one-to-one correlation.

- Ministry titles indicate general roles; Spiritual Gifts indicate specific functions.
- Ministry titles indicate organizational positions; Spiritual Gifts indicate ministry contributions.

Managing Our Gifts

What will we say when the Lord asks us, “How did you use the gift(s) that I loaned you?” Whatever Spiritual Gifts you may have received are to be used faithfully, productively, and responsibly to build up the body of Christ, and to glorify God. We are not “owners” of our gifts – only “stewards” or “managers.”

To Christians, Peter wrote: *“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.”*
(1 Peter 4:10)

And now for the fun part:

- *Complete and tally the 95 questions on the Spiritual Gifts Inventory. Follow the directions by documenting your first 3 Highest Talent scores as instructed.*
- *Take time to read the more detailed Spiritual Gifts Descriptions that follow the completion of the Spiritual Gifts Inventory exercise.*
- *You are now ready to select the areas of service that best reflect your spiritual gifts on the Time and Talent Survey and submit your survey to the church.*