

SERVICE

Session 1

Discerning Your Gifts

This is the first session on service. Determining your gifts can be both an internal and external process. What you see in yourself is not always the same as what others see in you. Discernment is not a simple knowing, or awareness. It requires placing personal awareness within the context of life experience in relationship with others and with God. Discernment is complex, challenging, and hugely rewarding ongoing life task. Discernment, however, is necessary for the ongoing and future life of the church. In this session we will spend some time discerning what our spiritual gifts are by having all members of the group help with the process of identifying these gifts in each other. This process may help you not only figure out how to serve in your church and community, it may open the doors for discovering your vocation. A vocation is that which you are passionate about doing and what the world needs done. When you combine these two, you have discovered what your vocation in life is.

Opening Activities



Centering Moment

Light a candle and observe 30 seconds of silence as a reminder of God's presence among us.



1 Corinthians 12:4-6

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone



Reflect

What's been one of the most fulfilling jobs or things you've done in your life? Do you continue to do it? Why or why not?



Opening Prayer:

Spirit of the living God, We only want to hear Your voice, we want to know You more and more. Come and speak to us, oh Lord. Amen.



Music (optional)

Sing or listen to "Christ Be Our Light"



Share

Share with one another any thoughts from last weeks' exercises or session.



Watch: Service - Discerning Your Gifts



Discuss

- Pastor Chad points out in the video that “Christianity isn’t a spectator sport.” How often do you think Christians tend to leave their faith solely in the realm of spiritual belief and don’t put that belief/faith into action?



Group Exercise - Discerning Your Gifts

We are going to begin to name the gifts that you have observed in each person in your small group throughout these past several weeks. Take a card for each person and write the name of a group member on the top of each card.

1. Think about each person’s unique contribution as a group member since the beginning of your time together.
2. Recall what he/she has communicated during the past several sessions about things they’ve enjoyed, their dreams, and potentials for love latent in wounds and weakness.
3. Record your insights and affirmations in your journal.
4. When you have gathered your affirmations and insights about each person, read over the list of New Testament gifts (list and definitions at the end of this chapter). Interpret these gifts broadly and creatively, and if you see gifts not listed, feel free to write them down, too (though try to find one of the suggested gifts from scripture if at all possible).
5. Take your card for each person and write down the gifts you clearly see in each person. Beside or beneath each gift add a few words describing how and where you have seen these gifts.
6. Now write down the gifts you see as potentials in each person. Describe briefly how or where you have seen these potentials.
7. When finished with each person, gather together to share with one another your insights.
8. Keep responses brief - you’ll spend more time talking about these gifts next week after you’ve had time to digest them.



Closing Prayer

Choose a prayer style that you have learned about to close.



Exercises To Do At Home

Read 1 Corinthians 12:1-31

Meditate on the mystery of our relationship in Christ and our dependence on one another for building up the full ministry of Christ. In light of Paul's encouragement to consider your own call, reflect on your own gifts that the group highlighted in your time together. What gifts confirmed what you knew, which ones surprised you? Which ones challenge you? In your journal, sketch out a picture of a body. Where would you locate yourself and your gifts on that body? (ie: Teacher might be the head; Healer might be hands, etc)

Read Ephesians 4:7-13

Meditate on the hope of growing together "to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ." Consider the gifts you identified in the others in your group and what it would mean for each of them to grow to maturity. Pray for their maturity in using the gifts God has given them, and to be able to speak in truth about their gifts so they may see them more clearly.

Read Romans 12:1-8

Meditate on Paul's counsel that we think about our gifts with "sober judgment." Identify attitudes that might limit your ability to appreciate the gifts of others or value your own gifts. Offer these attitudes to God and ask to appreciate both your own gifts and the gifts of your group.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:11

Reflect on people who have kindled your gifts and helped you build them up. What qualities in them helped you to be yourself? Pray for the grace to be likewise to your group members.

List of Spiritual Gifts

Administration: the gift of organizing human and material resources for the work of Christ, including the ability to plan and work with people to delegate responsibilities, track progress, and evaluate the effectiveness of procedures. Administrators attend to details, communicate effectively, and take as much pleasure in working behind the scenes as they do in standing in the spotlight.

Apostleship/Evangelism: the gift of spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ to those who have not heard, whether at home or in other cultures and foreign lands. This is the missionary zeal that moves us from the familiar into uncharted territory. Apostles embrace opportunities to learn foreign languages, visit other cultures, and go where people are who have not heard the Christian message (Note: this no longer means going across the ocean or even into another country. The language you may need to learn to speak is possibly a generational language. Your mission field might be right outside your door.) This usually calls for you to enter into a personal relationship with someone that requires sharing your personal faith and a call for a response to faith.

Compassion: the gift of exceptional empathy that moves us to action. More than just concern, compassion demands that we share the suffering of others in order to connect the gospel truth with other realities of life. Compassion moves us beyond our comfort zones to offer practical, tangible aid to all God's children, regardless of the perceived worthiness of the recipients or the response we receive.

Discernment: the gift of separating truth from erroneous teachings and to rely on spiritual intuition to know what God is calling us to do. Discernment allows us to focus on what is truly important and to ignore that which deflects us from faithful obedience to God. Discernment aids us in knowing whom to listen to and whom to avoid.

Exhortation: This is the gift of exceptional encouragement. Exhorters see the silver lining in every cloud, offer deep and inspiring hope to the fellowship, and look for and commend the best in everyone. Exhorters empower the community of faith to feel good about itself and to feel hopeful for the future. Exhorters are not concerned by appearances; they hold fast to what they know to be true and right and good.

Giving: Beyond the regular response of gratitude to God that all believers make, giving as a gift is the ability to use the resource of money to support the work of the body of Christ. Giving is the ability to manage money to the honor and glory of God. Givers can discern the best ways to put money to work, can understand the validity and practicality of appeals for funds, and can guide in the most faithful methods for managing the congregation's financial concerns.

Healing: the gift of channeling God's healing powers into the lives of God's people. Physical, emotional, spiritual, and psychological healing are all ways that healers manifest this gift. Healers are prayerful and they help people understand that healing is in the hands of God, that healing is often more than just erasing negative symptoms. Some of the most powerful healers display some of the most heartbreaking afflictions.

Helping: This is the gift of making sure that everything is ready for the work of Christ to occur. Helpers assist others to accomplish the mission and ministry of the church. These "unsung heroes" work behind the scenes and attend to details that others would rather not be bothered with. Helpers function faithfully, regardless of the credit or attention they receive. Helpers provide the framework upon which the ministry of the church is built.

Interpretation of Tongues: This gift has two very different understandings: 1) the ability to interpret foreign languages without the necessity of formal study to communicate with those who have not heard the Christian message or 2) the ability to interpret the gift of tongues as a secret prayer language that communicates with God at a deep spiritual level. Both understandings are communal in nature: the first extends the good news into the world; the second strengthens the faith within the fellowship.

Knowledge: This is the gift of knowing the truth through faithful study of scripture and the human situation. Knowledge provides the information necessary for the transformation of the world and formation of the body of Christ. Those possessing this gift challenge the fellowship to improve itself through study, scripture, discussions, and prayer.

Leadership: this is the gift of orchestrating the gifts and resources of others to achieve the mission and ministry of the church. Leaders move the community of faith toward a God-given vision of service, and they enable others to use their gifts to the very best of the abilities. Leaders are capable of creating synergy, whereby the community of faith accomplishes much more than its individual members could achieve on their own.

Prophecy: This is the gift of speaking God's word clearly and faithfully. Prophets allow God to speak through them to communicate the message the people most need to hear. While often unpopular, prophets are able to say what needs to be said because of the spiritual empowerment they receive. Prophets do not foretell the future, but proclaim God's future by revealing God's perspective on our current reality.

Servanthood: This is the gift of serving the spiritual and material needs of other people. Servants understand their place in the body of Christ as giving comfort and aid to all who are in need. Servants look to the needs of others rather than focus on their own needs. To serve is to put faith into action; it is to treat others as if they were indeed Jesus Christ himself. The gift of service extends our Christian love into the world.

Teaching: this is the gift of bringing scriptural and spiritual truths to others. More than just teaching church school, teachers witness to the truth of Jesus Christ in a variety of ways and they help others to understand the complex realities of the Christian faith. Teachers are revealers. They shine the light of understanding into the darkness of doubt and ignorance. They open people to new truths, and they challenge people to be more in the future than they have been in the past.

Tongues: this gift has two popular interpretations: 1) the ability to communicate the gospel to other people in a foreign language without the benefit of having studied said language (see Acts 2:4) or 2) the ability to speak to God in a secret, unknown prayer language that can only be understood by a person possessing the gift of interpretation. The gift of speaking in the language of another culture makes the gift of tongues valuable for spreading the gospel throughout the world, while the gift of speaking a secret prayer language offers the opportunity to build faithfulness within a community of faith.

Wisdom: this is the gift of translating life experience into spiritual truth and of seeing the application of scriptural truth to daily living. The wise in our fellowships offer balance and understanding that transcend reason. Wisdom applies a God-given common sense to our understanding of God's plan for the church. Wisdom helps the community of faith remain focused on the important work of the church and it enables younger, less mature Christian to benefit from those who have been blessed by God to share deep truths.