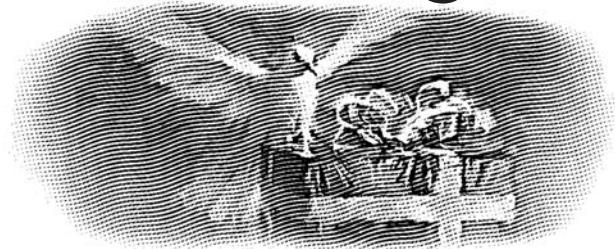


Spiritual Gifts for Evangelism and Witnessing



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *1 Pet. 4:10; John 16:8, 13; 1 Cor. 12:28–31; Acts 2:40–47; 13:4, 5.*

Memory Text: “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (*Ephesians 4:11, 12, NKJV*).

Key Thought: Spiritual gifts are special attributes given to each member to be used for God’s glory and for the saving of souls.

As a church we have rightly emphasized the spiritual gift of prophecy, but we have not always stressed the importance of other spiritual gifts for ministry. Yet, it’s important that we do so. It’s a clear biblical doctrine; thus, as a church, we need to take these gifts seriously in order that members can become comfortable with receiving and exercising those gifts.

It is unfortunate that many church members do not take advantage of the gifts they have been given. There are many reasons for this lack. Sometimes the fault lies with the members themselves. Sometimes, perhaps, more could be done to encourage members to discover their gifts and then use these gifts in ministry and outreach under the direction of the Holy Spirit. What a waste to have a gift and never use it for that which it was intended.

*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, April 21.

Gifted Believers

If you asked the members of your church, many of them would have to think long and hard before they could conclude that they had any spiritual gift that the Bible lists, even though many of these people have probably already been exercising a spiritual gift. They have just not consciously recognized it as such. A number of people who have not formally sought to discover their giftedness do expert ministry in areas to which they feel called, and their church affirms them. Very often a spiritual gifts discovery seminar simply confirms the gifts already manifested in a ministry. It is clearly possible, therefore, that people can exercise a spiritual gift under the leadership of the Holy Spirit without formally discovering and naming that gift. At the other end of the spectrum there are those who find it difficult to become involved anywhere in the church because they don't consider themselves gifted in any way. It is important to encourage them to discover their giftedness and intentionally seek to work within it.

Read 1 Peter 4:10. What does this verse say about everyone who is committed to the Lord having some gift?

We have already seen that every believer has a ministry, so it should come as no surprise that God will equip us to perform it. Therefore, everyone who takes the great gospel commission as a personal evangelistic mandate from God will be equipped by the Spirit to become involved. Regarding the church's soul-saving work, God knows what is needed in what place and at what time.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:11. It reveals that the bestowal of spiritual gifts to believers is a part of the Holy Spirit's work of equipping the saints for every good work (*see Eph. 2:10*). Not only does the Holy Spirit distribute spiritual gifts among believers but, also, as Acts 1:8 reveals, He empowers us to use our gifts.

None of the Bible passages that list spiritual gifts are identical. This suggests that the lists of gifts given are not complete; that is, there might be other gifts as well that could be added to the list.

Think about the word *gift* or *gifts*. What does the word imply? What does it tell you about your responsibility to use that which has been freely given you for the work of the Lord (as opposed to only for some other purpose)?

The Spirit and His Gifts

To a certain extent a person's spiritual gifts define his or her place in the local church. In other words, to discover spiritual gifts is to discover where the Lord wants you to function in the body. Have you ever been asked to be involved in an area for which you just had no passion or interest? Do you know people who have accepted church positions only to resign partway through the church year because they feel that they are the wrong person for the job? Most likely in these situations, people have been asked to undertake, and in some instances have tried to become involved in, a church ministry that they are neither called to nor gifted for. Though this does happen, it doesn't have to be the norm.

Read Acts 13:1–3. What happened here, and what does it tell us about the importance of being called to a ministry?

It is significant that the Holy Spirit is the one who calls us to minister for God. Barnabas and Saul were called and equipped by the same Spirit. Verse 2 gives us some important information. It reveals that Barnabas and Saul were already involved in ministering for the Lord before they were called for a specific ministry. We know that it was a specific ministry because Simeon and Manaen were not called at this time.

Just before Jesus left the earth, He promised that the Holy Spirit would come to be our Helper. Part of the Spirit's work is to equip us to spread the gospel. If, therefore, He gives us gifts to accomplish the evangelistic task, then they are surely important, and we need to exercise them.

What do the following texts reveal about the Spirit's interaction with us? John 16:8, 13; Acts 13:4; Rom. 8:11; Acts 1:8.

When we understand why the Spirit gives spiritual gifts, we see how vital they are to the salvation of those we are to reach for Christ. Through the Holy Spirit's calling and gifting, each believer is involved to varying degrees, and in diverse ways, in the great work of spreading the gospel.

Although we may designate some gifts as important or special, in reality all gifts are crucial to the life and mission of the church. While we sometimes place a gifted evangelist, preacher, or teacher on a pedestal, those with gifts that nurture and disciple are just as crucial.

Discovering Our Gifts

Discovering our gifts is not difficult. You will be able to recognize quickly the gifted ministry areas of your pastor and other key leaders in your church. All you have to do is observe what they are doing and notice how people respond to their ministry. However, it is another matter when it comes to considering what one's own spiritual gifts might be.

The process of discovering an individual's spiritual gifts has sometimes been presented as rather simplistic: fill out an inventory, apply a formula, and your gift is discovered. Many church members have attempted to discover their spiritual gifts through this avenue but have been disappointed when their local church does not place them in positions where they can exercise their gifts within the body.

An appropriate spiritual gifts seminar is perhaps the easiest way to begin to discover your spiritual gifts. However, it is wise to consider the seminar as only the beginning of the search, as, indeed, most prepared seminars point out.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:28–31. What is Paul telling us in these verses about spiritual gifts?

These verses are not directing us all to desire one or two gifts that are commonly thought to be the best. In this passage Paul shows that spiritual gifts are distributed according to the needs of particular situations facing any church in any place at any time. The best gifts would be those that would empower members of the local church.

When seriously considering your possible gifts, don't underestimate what other church members say. When members sit on the nominating committee to choose the various leaders and support teams for the coming church year, they look for people who have already exhibited an interest and ability in certain ministries. Even though the committee may not understand or intentionally consider spiritual gifts, they are in fact looking for people gifted in specific areas of ministry.

When someone shares his or her belief that you would be really effective in a certain ministry position, it may well be a confirmation of your gifts. It would be wise to listen and pray about it.

The results of a spiritual gifts seminar—coupled with the affirmation of fellow believers and the results of a trial period in a particular ministry field—would be a clear indication of what the Lord has called and gifted you for.

What do you think your own gifts are, and why?

Other Gifts

When we think of spiritual gifts and witnessing and evangelism, we tend mostly to focus on the gifts of evangelism, preaching, and teaching. Though not all gifts are overtly evangelistic, if ministered within the church body they will have varying degrees of impact upon the church's evangelistic mission.

Read Acts 6:1–4 again. People were given similar responsibilities to those we would expect of deacons today. What reasons did the disciples give for not wanting to do this work? How are we to understand the principle that is revealed here?

The newly elected deacons were contributing to the overall evangelistic program of the early church by freeing up the disciples to be engaged full time in evangelism and preaching. So while we may not consider the actions of the deacons as gifts that would equip them for the evangelistic front line, they did have evangelistic impact behind the scenes. Of course, it is quite possible that the deacons' ministry of distributing aid to needy widows rendered people more ready to listen to the gospel when it was preached. God alone knows the good these people did in their roles.

For a church to function, leaders and administrators are necessary in the areas of organization, finances, and so forth. Those who serve their Lord in these varied capacities must understand that they are part of a team and that their contribution is essential to the church's overall evangelistic thrust.

Read Acts 2:40–47. What spiritual gifts were being manifested here, and what was the result, not only in witnessing but in discipleship? What important lessons can we take from this for ourselves?

The word *added* in Acts 2:47 is used in the sense of incorporation into a society. While the new converts were certainly added to the church, they were also brought into fellowship and cared for. Therefore, we can conclude that spiritual gifts in the areas of administration, leadership, hospitality, pastoral ministry, and service would be among those present. This is a good example of the exercising of individual spiritual gifts to benefit the whole church through supporting the evangelistic ministry of others.

Think of your own part, your own role, your own ministry in the church. Where does it fit in with the mission of the church as a whole?

Gifts and Christian Responsibility

Spiritual gifts are not discovered just to satisfy our curiosity but rather to indicate that which the Lord would have us do and to show where we fit into the church body. This, of course, brings great responsibility as we seek to fulfill that for which God has especially equipped us.

Compare Romans 12:4, 1 Corinthians 12:12, and Ephesians 4:16.
What do these verses say about spiritual gifts and the body?

It is significant that the three main chapters that list spiritual gifts all do so in the context of the church body. This shows that although an individual may be involved in a witnessing or evangelism event on a personal level, as with Philip and the Ethiopian treasurer (*Acts 8*), we each have the responsibility to exercise our gifts through the church.

As we have seen already, whatever the church does, it must do under the authority and direction of the Holy Spirit. It is our responsibility to seek the will of God and to work in harmony with that which the Spirit reveals. We must not fall into the trap of making plans and then seeking divine approval. Often we ask, "What can our church do for God?" We would do better to discover and get involved with what God is already doing among His people.

What do Matthew 10:19, 20; Acts 13:4, 5; 16:6, 7 tell us about how the disciples were directed by the Holy Spirit?

The disciples allowed the all-knowing Holy Spirit to direct their ministry. Sometimes they tried to enter a field of labor and were prevented by the Holy Spirit. Most probably Paul received a vision in which the Holy Spirit gave him specific instructions as to where the disciples were to work (*see Acts 16:9, 10*).

Spiritual gifts must be used responsibly, and the best way to ensure this is for the receiver of a gift to maintain an open communication channel with the Spirit. We have a responsibility to maintain the unity of the church. If we are Spirit-led, there will be the desired unity. The Spirit directs individuals, and He directs the church. The direction He gives to one member, He gives to the whole church. The Spirit does not lead individuals away from the body.

When we have committed ourselves to the service of Christ, we can expect great things to happen as the Holy Spirit is poured out upon us. The key is for us, as individuals and as a church, to be ready to receive that which the Spirit gives.

Further Study: Discover or Organize Local Training Opportunities

If you have decided upon an area of witnessing and evangelism and have discussed it with your pastor and evangelism leaders, it is time to consider your readiness for the task. You will want the best possible chance of influencing people for Jesus; thus, training is important. Remember, working as a team rather than individually will ensure encouragement, support, and success. The following are this week's key areas of focus:

1. In consultation with your pastor and evangelism leader, discuss what, if any, training events and processes can be undertaken. All training does not have to be at the local church. Explore the possibility of attending regional training or being sponsored to attend some training seminars, if available.
2. Another training option is to request that your pastor or other trainers provide local witnessing and evangelism training. If costs are prohibitive and there are only a few people wishing to be trained at your church, why not advertise regionally and make it a regional training event based at your place?
3. While you are undergoing training for your chosen area of witnessing and evangelism, consider what resources are available. Becoming familiar with resources, and how to use them, forms an important part of preparation for your ministry.
4. Crucial to your outreach and evangelism ministry is personal spiritual preparation. You will become increasingly aware of your personal spiritual needs as you begin to serve God. As you then request and receive a greater infilling of the Holy Spirit, you will be empowered for greater service. Pray for the Holy Spirit to direct and use you.

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ “God has set in the church different gifts. These are precious in their proper places, and all may act a part in the work of preparing a people for Christ’s soon coming.”—Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, p. 481. Consider to what extent spiritual gifts are emphasized in your local church. What can you do to raise their profiles?
- ❷ “All men do not receive the same gifts, but to every servant of the Master some gift of the Spirit is promised.”—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 327. How can we encourage all church members to discover, develop, and use their spiritual gifts? Why is it important that we do so?

The Lesson in Brief

► **Key Text:** Ephesians 4:11, 12

► **The Student Will:**

Know: Recognize what spiritual gifts are and the ways in which his or her gifts fit in with the work of the church.

Feel: Be aware of the dependence of the church on his or her individual spiritual gifts, as well as his or her dependence on the Holy Spirit for the expression of these gifts in the work of the church.

Do: Share his or her gifts generously for the building up of Christ's body.

► **Learning Outline:**

I. Know: Identifying Our Gifts

- Ⓐ How do spiritual gift seminars, previous experiences in ministry, and requests for our services from the church help to inform us regarding the nature of our gifts for ministry?
- Ⓑ How do personal, spiritual ministries fit into the corporate work of the church in the saving of souls?

II. Feel: Made to Help

- Ⓐ Why does the Holy Spirit give gifts?
- Ⓑ In what ways is the work of the church dependent on the gifts that the Holy Spirit has given to us to use in ministry?

III. Do: Sharing Generously

- Ⓐ How would our ministries change if we were to be more generous with the use of our spiritual gifts?
- Ⓑ What steps do we each need to take in order to identify our gifts and incorporate them into the mission of the church?

► **Summary:** The Holy Spirit has given us spiritual gifts to use in both our individual witnessing and the corporate ministries of the church, and He calls us to be generous in the sharing of these gifts.

Learning Cycle

► STEP 1—Motivate

Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: Through the Holy Spirit's giving of spiritual gifts to the church, each believer is equipped to take part with other believers in the great work of spreading the gospel.

Just for Teachers: Use the following meditation about gifts to help class members to appreciate the fact that spiritual gifts are a direct endowment from the Holy Spirit to the body of Christ, and are given in order to equip the church in its work of evangelism and witnessing.

Traveling from the East, the Magi came bearing royal gifts for the newborn Prince of Peace. Gold. Frankincense. Myrrh. Kingly gifts from kingly sages (*Matt. 2:11*).

For 2,000 years, this story has repeated itself in the life of every believer when he or she is born again by grace through faith into God's "royal priesthood" (*1 Pet. 2:9*). Summoned from the darkness of unbelief, these royal priest-kings now minister to the High Priest and sovereign God against whom they once rebelled. As in the original story, there are kings who make a journey—kings who bring gifts in honor of a newborn's life. But this time the gifts are as heavenly and eternal as the Kings who bear them—gifts of mercy, healing, teaching, prophecy, and leadership.

Gold fluctuates in value. Frankincense and myrrh lose potency with time. But the spiritual gifts of the Three wise and eternal Kings of heaven never lose value. Royal gifts from royal Kings, given to equip the royal priesthood of all believers to save souls.

Discuss: What does it mean to belong to a "royal priesthood" of believers? In what way should that influence how we live out our lives? How does it make you feel, knowing that God the Father and the Son, through the Person of the Holy Spirit, come to us at our new birth (just as the wise men of the East came to Jesus at His birth) to bestow the riches of heaven upon us? How should this attitude influence our reverence for God and our appreciation for His spiritual gifts?

► STEP 2—Explore

Just for Teachers: This section provides opportunities to explore examples and instructions from the first Christian believers regarding the ways in which church members can use their spiritual gifts to share the good news about Jesus.

Bible Commentary

I. Allowing God's Generosity to Flow (*Review 1 Peter 4:10, 11 with the class.*)

The Bible tells us that we each have been endowed by the Holy Spirit with spiritual gifts that should be used in the service of God and the gospel, and to minister to the world. First Peter 4:10 urges us to “use them well to serve one another” (*NLT*). This verse is a call to stewardship of our gifts, abilities, and opportunities. This call asks that we seek to identify our gifts, and develop and use them as they are best suited to God’s work. But we must remember that this work is for the glory of God, for it is God’s work and generosity that flow through us.

Consider This: What does it mean for each of us to “manage” the gifts that God gives us?

■ *How is the concept of stewardship helpful in our understanding of how we use God’s gifts?*

II. Sent Out by the Holy Spirit (*Review Acts 13:1–5 with the class.*)

The story in Acts specifically identifies the role of the Holy Spirit in the commissioning of Paul and Barnabas as some of the first international missionaries. The church leaders were praying and fasting when they heard from the Holy Spirit, and while it was these men who laid their hands on Paul and Barnabas, verse 4 specifically says that they were “sent out by the Holy Spirit” (*NKJV*). It seems that these leaders were so connected with the Spirit that their actions were said to be those of the Spirit’s.

Consider This: How do we maintain the right balance between human decisions or planning and the Holy Spirit’s leading?

III. A Body of Gifts (*Review 1 Corinthians 12:27–31 and Ephesians 4:11, 12 with the class.*)

In a number of places in the New Testament the apostles give a list of roles or gifts within the church in order to highlight the variety of these roles. But these listings also portray the unity of purposes amid the diversity of roles. Each member “is a part of it” (*1 Cor. 12:27, NLT*), and the church functions best when we play these many roles together. We should not expect uniformity in the church—we do not all look, think, or act

alike, nor should we. In fact, we should see the many differences as sources of health and strength within the body.

Consider This: How can we learn to better appreciate the differences between the members of the church? How can we recognize these as sources of strength?

■ *What is the significance of these verses in 1 Corinthians 12 as the lead into the “love chapter”—1 Corinthians 13?*

IV. Worshiping, Working, and Growing Together (*Review Acts 2:40–47, 6:1–7 with the class.*)

The early church described in Acts focused on community and mission. The members shared their lives in practical ways and organized their leadership so that they could focus on their areas of giftedness (*see Acts 6:1–7*). This structure supported and built up the newly formed group of believers into a new kind of community that served as an example of a new way to live by faith in God. This community also served as a base for the proclamation of the good news about Jesus, as well as a place where new believers could belong. By worshiping, sharing, and working together, these early believers attracted more believers, and God worked through this community to grow it further.

Consider This: To what degree do the descriptions of the early church in Acts suggest a pattern for how the church should function today?

► STEP 3—Apply

Just for Teachers: **The Bible’s instructions and examples of what it means to be part of a church as a group of believers are focused both on our individual commitments and on the roles we play as part of the larger group. A community is genuinely something greater than the sum of its parts. Together we can make the most advantages of our individual strengths.**

Application Questions:

- ① How important is the variety of spiritual gifts to the life of the church? Why does God not give the same gifts to everyone?
-
-

- ② What is the difference between a spiritual gift and a natural ability? Even though they are given to us upon being reborn, why are spiritual gifts something we need to use or work on in order to improve?
-
-

- ③ Why do gifts sometimes seem to be unequally distributed? Why is it important to be content when we see others who seem to be more gifted than we are?
-
-

- ④ What are some of the ways in which a local church could better recognize, develop, support, and use the individual gifts of its members?
-
-

►STEP 4—Create

Just for Teachers: These activities are intended to connect the specific spiritual gifts of class members with real ideas and opportunities for evangelism.

Suggestions for individual activities: Invite class members to spend time by themselves in order to reflect on things that they know they are good at and enjoy doing, as well as opportunities whereby they might use these gifts to represent God to others with whom they come in contact, especially to the people they committed to pray for (see Lesson 1).

Suggestions for group or team activities: Often when we plan an evangelistic program or event, the evangelistic plan comes first, and then we find people to fill the roles that the plan requires. Perhaps we might be better served to consider the gifts that each member has, and then consider the ways in which those gifts could best be used for an evangelistic plan, event, or program. Ask class members to identify the gifts that they recognize in each other. Make a list of these gifts and consider it as a group. What kind of evangelism could best utilize these gifts in the context of reaching out to your community? Begin to plan an event that seems to fit best with the gifts available, and pray together for the Spirit's leading in the ways in which this might be able to occur.