

Spiritual Gifts, Part 1

By Chris Shirley

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

Read Acts 2:42–47. Prepare to share your answers to the following question: What type of ministry gifts among the members would have been necessary to accomplish the activities of the first church?

Assignment Two

Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: Read Acts 6:1–7. How did God use the gift of service in ministering to the church in this passage? Read Acts 2:14–41. What evidence is in this passage to demonstrate that Peter had a gift of teaching?

Assignment Three

Read the comments under **Assignment Three Feedback** in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share with the group the three suggestions in your own words.

Scripture to Memorize

“Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them.” Romans 12:6a

Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will understand the role of spiritual gifts in ministry leadership and evaluate which spiritual gift(s) the Holy Spirit has given them for ministry.

Chris Shirley is associate professor of Adult Ministry at Southwestern Seminary, where he teaches courses in adult discipleship, men's discipleship, and family ministry. Prior to coming to Southwestern, Chris was involved in over twenty years of ministry experience in Christian camping and in local churches as youth minister, minister of education, minister of family life, and associate pastor.

Chris is a frequent conference speaker in family ministry, men's discipleship, adult education, and teacher training. In addition, he has written youth and adult Sunday school curriculum and Bible book studies for LifeWay Christian Resources. His article on comprehensive discipleship in the local church, “It Takes a Church to Make a Disciple,” was published in the *Southwestern Journal of Theology*.

Chris and his wife, Isabel, have been married for over thirty years and have two adult children, Andrew and Haylee, and (so far) one grandchild.

It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

Your DNA molecule determines everything about you as a person. Hair and eye color, skin pigment, height, shape of your face and body, foot size, and everything else outside and inside your body is controlled by this genetic “blueprint.” Your unique DNA is a gift from your mother and father, whose chromosomes combined when you were conceived. In a similar way the Holy Spirit determines everything about you as a Christ follower. Once you become a “new creation” in Christ, the Spirit is put in charge of your spiritual development. What gift has the Holy Spirit given you to do His ministry in the church?

Read Romans 12:6–8 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 6. according to the grace given to us. Before Paul listed some of the spiritual gifts, he reminded the believers that their gifts differed according to the needs of the church. No one has a more important gift than another because all gifts are “according to the grace given to us” rather than human effort or achievement. **prophecy.** Paul then presented a partial list of gifts found in the church. The first gift, “prophecy,” is considered by some to be a gift reserved for specific leaders in the early church who proclaimed God’s revealed word to the congregation. During Paul’s time the only Scripture available was what we know today as the Old Testament. Prior to the development of the New Testament, God delivered His inerrant word through the teaching of human prophets.

Now that we have God’s final Word contained in the Bible, this type of prophecy is no longer needed. Some people, however, believe a form of the gift of prophecy is given to preachers and teachers who proclaim God’s established Word with authority, conviction and passion.

On Your Own

If you are not involved in ministry with the church, what are some roadblocks that keep you from using your gift in ministry? Write your thoughts in the space below.

Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now report on the ministry needs in the early church.

Studying the Passage

The gifts in Romans 12:7–8 are commonly found in disciples of all ages. As you study these gifts in this lesson—as well those in the next lesson—consider how God might be forming one or more of these gifts in your life.

service (table attendant, willing servant) Unlike the gift of helps, which is people centered, the gift of service is task centered. Believers with this gift seek out tasks within the church, normally those that are behind-the-scenes (see Romans 12:7). Those with the service gift can easily identify jobs that need to be done and find the resources needed to accomplish the work. Believers with a gift of service are typically seen setting up chairs or cleaning up at a church event, serving in the food line at the weekly family night supper, or mopping the floor at a

homeless shelter.

teaching (instructor, master, teacher) Those with this spiritual gift can instruct others in the Scripture in an appropriate way to effectively communicate God's Word for understanding and growth. The gifts of knowledge and wisdom are closely related to teaching, although each gift can function independently depending on the ministry and circumstances (see Romans 12:7; 1 Corinthians 12:28). Those gifted in teaching serve as preachers, teachers for Bible studies, leaders in discipleship groups, or presenters at conferences.

Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now report on the evidence of spiritual gifts in Acts 2 and 6.

Studying the Passage

exhortation (calling to one's side) Believers who have the gift of exhortation express this ministry of the Holy Spirit by guiding other members of the church with words of encouragement, comfort, and counsel. Their purpose in the church is to inspire other believers to greater obedience and a more fruitful life in Christ (see Romans 12:8). People with the gift of exhortation may serve in formal leadership roles—such as a pastor, teacher, counselor, discipler—as well as in informal ones, such as those who give godly advice to friends who are struggling with sin or difficult circumstances.

Contributes (to share, impart, bestow) When the apostle Paul referred to the gift of giving, he was referring to sharing financial and material resources. Members with this gift are sensitive to financial needs of the church and individual members and consider it a privilege to give cheerfully with no thought of return (see Romans 12:8). Although all disciples should give cheerfully and generously to the Lord, those with the gift of giving are always seeking ways to bless ministries in the church and people who are in need.

leads (to stand before, maintain, direct) Unlike administration, which is a management gift, leadership is primarily a motivational gift. The leadership gift enables believers to set a vision for the direction of the church and inspire members to be involved in the accomplishment of its goals (see Romans 12:8). Although pastor, church staff, deacons, and others represent official leadership roles in the church, there are many other ways someone with the gift of leadership can serve the church through leading ministry teams, discipleship groups, and mission teams.

mercy (to pity, have compassion) Unlike exhortation, which includes encouragement and comfort with biblical words of guidance, mercy is primarily an emotive gift. Those with the gift of mercy teach the church how to “weep with those who weep” (Romans 12:15) and be sensitive toward those who are suffering physically, mentally, emotionally, or spiritually. Mercy is a “ministry of presence” that may include hugs of sympathy, a listening ear, and other loving actions designed to share the burden of pain, stress, anger, and discouragement (see Romans 12:8).

On Your Own

One way to determine your gift is to participate in some type of ministry. In the space below, describe two ways you could become involved in church ministry in the next month.

Assignment Three Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now report on the following ways to determine one's spiritual gift.

- Spiritual gift tests or inventories, while not to be fully relied upon, can help open eyes concerning our gifting. (Church leaders may be able to provide such instruments).
- Confirmation from others may help reveal our spiritual gifts. Other people who see us serving Jesus can often identify a spiritual gift that we might not see.
- Prayer is vital. The one Person who knows exactly how we are spiritually gifted is the Holy Spirit. We can ask Him to show us how we are gifted so we can use our spiritual gifts for His glory.

Discussion Question

How do you see spiritual gifts being used in your church? Provide some specific examples.

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Prayer

7 minutes

Every disciple will pray aloud, offering praise to Jesus, thanking Him specifically for His gracious acts, making heartfelt confession, committing to actions flowing from the Bible study, praying toward evangelism locally and globally, and interceding for others as prompted by the Holy Spirit.

At Home: Nail It Down

Spiritual gifts are the means by which God accomplishes His ministry in the church. Every believer has a spiritual gift, and the gifts are as varied as the types of ministries within the church. Disciples are not responsible for developing their gift, as this is the job of the Holy Spirit. Disciples are, however, responsible for using the gift freely given to them through God's grace.

In Romans 12:6–8, the apostle Paul identified seven spiritual gifts. This is not a complete list but represents typical ministries within the church. Paul's point in this passage was not to limit the gifts but to urge believers to recognize their gifts and use them to accomplish God's purpose.

In Romans 12:7, Paul described the gifts and the way they should be used. Those who have the gift of service should serve in whatever way is needed. The one with the gift of teaching should express his gift by finding opportunities to teach. Likewise, those who have the gift of exhortation should provide godly encouragement and counsel to the flock.

The next three gifts (Romans 12:8) are described by the attitude with which they are accomplished. Givers should give with liberality or generosity. Paul encouraged those with the gift of leadership to lead with inspiring commitment. Disciples who have the gift of mercy should perform their ministry cheerfully.

Romans 12:6–8 includes a number of important principles concerning spiritual gifts:

1. Spiritual gifts are as diverse as the ministry opportunities within the church.
2. Spiritual gifts are supplied by God's grace and not man's effort.
3. The evidence of a spiritual gift is when ministry is accomplished, with the proper attitude.

The point of studying spiritual gifts is not to limit your options to serve but to challenge you to find and use your gift(s) by getting involved in ministry and experiencing the blessing of discovering the unique ways God is using you to advance His kingdom!

Follow up Question

How does God use spiritual gifts to accomplish His ministry in the church? What can you do this week to begin the process of discovering your gift for ministry?

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.