



*Pentecost 2020*

**“GROWING  
MY GIFTS OF  
THE HOLY  
SPIRIT”**

*WEEK 4 - Answers*



holy Spirit, come and shine  
On our souls with beams divine  
Issuing from your radiance bright.  
Come, O Father of the poor,  
Ever bounteous of your store,  
Come, our hearts' unfailing light.



## **25. HOW ARE CHRISTIANS HINDERED FROM DISCOVERING THEIR SPIRITUAL GIFTS?**

A number of things may hinder a Christian from discovering spiritual gifts:

### **1. Inexperience**

A Christian often discovers that he has a spiritual gift only by using it. If he is not involved in any ministry it will be more difficult to discover his gift. This difficulty is common to new converts, who have little or no experience in ministering. Yet as they begin to function in the roles of the Christian life, they will begin to sense a particular ability in some areas, which may signal a gift. They may also discover gifts by carefully monitoring abilities, desires, interests, and inclinations.

### **2. Disobedience**

Obedience leads to discovery of gifts; disobedience—that is, not taking one's place in service to the church—may hinder discovery. A Christian who is not merciful will not likely discover a gift of mercy. A person who does not give faithfully is not likely to develop the gift of giving.

### **3. Lack of commitment**

A believer who is not committed to using his gift sacrificially should not expect that God will help him to uncover that gift. If a person simply wants to discover his gift *“for kicks,”* he might as well forget it. But the person who is open to what God wants and is committed to using her gifts for the edification of the church can expect God's help.

### **4. An unloving spirit**

Gifts are for ministry to people. Ministries must be carried on in love. Lack of proper motive for ministry will surely negatively affect one's effort to discover gifts. Gifts and ministries without love are worth nothing (1 Cor. 13:1-3). If we seek to discover gifts without the motive of love, our seeking is worthless.

### **5. Lack of prayer**

James reminded early Christians whose desires were not fulfilled, *“You do not have, because you do not ask”* (James 4:2b). God wants us to know and use the gifts he has given us. He also wants us to learn to ask for good things from him (Luke 11:9-11). If we ask in faith, he will not disappoint us.

## **26. HOW DO I DISCOVER A SPIRITUAL GIFT?**

Each of the following eight steps is important in the process of discovering spiritual gifts.

### **1. Understand the gifts.**

You must begin by gaining a basic understanding of spiritual gifts. Get a good definition clearly in mind. Study the main scriptural passages on gifts. Learn about these gifts and the kinds of ministries which they involve.

### **2. Accept that you are gifted.**

The Bible says, *“you are gifted”* (1 Pet. 4: 10). Even if you do not see how this is possible, accept it by faith. ***(Remember, God says so and that settles it.)*** You can give thanks to God for the gift or gifts he has given you even before you know them.

### **3. Pray for guidance.**

Jesus promised that the Father would *“give good things to those who ask him”* (Matt. 7:11). A person who is serious about discovering their spiritual gifts should begin with prayer. They should seek from the Lord insights to unlock the possibilities of future ministries. *“If any lack wisdom,”* says James, *“let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously. . . and it will be given to him”* (James 1:5).

#### **4. Dedicate yourself to ministry.**

Tell God you are willing to use your gifts in any way he asks. Be willing to give him the time and energy needed. Ask him to use you in your congregation, family, and community.

#### **5. Analyze yourself.**

Assume that God is already at work in and through you. Try to discover your gifts by looking at what he is already doing in your life. What have you done well in the past? What are your present interests? What do you get really excited about? What needs are you most aware of in your congregation and community?

#### **6. Seek confirmation from other Christians.**

The counsel of those who know you well can be valuable. Others often see you more accurately than you see yourself. Have others recognized some particular abilities in you?

#### **7. Get involved in ministry.**

You do not have to begin in a large way, but you do have to begin somewhere. You will never know what abilities you have until you begin to act. Volunteer along the lines of your interests and preliminary discoveries. Be open and available when others ask you to become involved,.

#### **8. Evaluate the results.**

If you have been given a gift, you will begin to see results as you exercise it. You will experience blessing, and others will be blessed through you. Do not look for grand-scale results in your initial efforts, however. In the beginning, modest results will tell you what you need to know. If after a prolonged period of time you do not find your service to be effective, you may need to repeat the above process to find your gift elsewhere.

### **27. WHAT SHOULD I DO WITH MY SPIRITUAL GIFTS ONCE I KNOW WHAT THEY ARE?**

If you have discovered your spiritual gifts, you should do two things: (1) dedicate them to God for service and (2) develop them. The fact that you possess a gift is a call to use it for Christ. Muscles are useless unless they are flexed. Spiritual gifts are useless until they are put to work in the service of the King. Within the Christian community they are intended to be instruments for ministry, not ornaments for display.

The appropriate use of gifts begins by dedicating them to the Lord. Dedication is an expressed willingness to serve God with our spiritual capacities. It is saying (and meaning), *“Here I am, Lord; use me and my abilities.”* Paul invites us to *“present our bodies as a living sacrifice”* (Rom. 12:1), and then goes on to speak of using our spiritual gifts.

Dedication of one’s gift to the Lord is followed by development. Development happens with use. That’s Paul’s train of thought in Romans 12:6: *“we are to use our different gifts in accordance with the grace that God has given us.”* Faithful use of a gift increases its effectiveness.

Gifts may also be developed through more formal learning and training opportunities. Helpful books are accessible to everyone.

### **To develop your gifts:**

Begin by studying Scripture. Study passages which relate particularly to your gifts. Study the lives of biblical characters who exercised gifts like yours. Study the roles related to your gifts. Read books and articles which will expand your thinking in the area of your own spiritual gifts. Talk to other Christians who have similar gifts. They may be your best resource in understanding your gifts. Learn what they have done with their gifts, what ministries they have developed, and what resources were helpful to them. Look for conferences, seminars, workshops, and classes which will help you cultivate your gifts. Christians spend many hours in leisure time classes and activities. Why not spend time in formal courses which aid gift development? If you can't get to a seminar because of distance or cost, it may be available online.

Don't be satisfied just to discover your gifts. Grow and mature in your gift-abilities as you grow in spiritual maturity.

### **28. WHAT CAN A SPIRITUALLY GIFTED PERSON DO TO DEVELOP A MINISTRY?**

A person who is freshly aware of spiritual gifts should not wait to be asked to get involved in a ministry. Following are specific ways to discover or develop a ministry:

Pray for guidance and strength. Trying to operate on our own strength is one of our greatest sins. Even in a moment of consecration we may still be guilty of believing we are now going to do something for God and impress him and others with our ability and dedication. This guarantees failure. As you begin to exercise your spiritual gifts, let it be in the spirit of humility which acknowledges what Jesus said: *"Apart from me you can do nothing"* (John 15:5). Ask God for guidance in knowing when, where, and how he wants to use your gifts. Ask for strength to do what he calls you to do.

**Be sensitive to the needs of others.** Pray for eyes to see needs that are both near and real. Look beneath the surface of people's lives to see the hurts that cry for healing. Be prepared to meet the needs you discover. Spiritual gifts are the Holy Spirit's provisions for meeting human needs.

**Focus your efforts in the area of your gifts.** Learn to say no to things that are less important or not in line with your gifts. Get out of unfruitful activities. Establish priorities that will allow you time to develop a ministry. Then begin to use your gifts. Be willing to begin small. If, for example, you think you have the gift of evangelism, begin by seriously using it with just one other person. If you have the gift of teaching, you might begin by sitting in a church school class or observing a master teacher. On-the-job training is helpful also. Work alongside those who have ministries in gifts similar to yours.

**Find a support group.** As you minister, you need other members of the body of Christ to support you with their prayers, words of encouragement, understanding, and interest. You need to be able to share your joys and frustrations with other Christians, since spiritual gifts are given in the context of community and meant to be used in community. Share yourself and your new ministry with your support group, whether it be your family, an action group, or a newly formed supportive fellowship.

**Be yourself.** Remember that you are a unique person with an equally unique gift-mix. Don't try to imitate anyone else. Your way of serving is probably God's best for you.

**Be prepared to give yourself.** Jesus' threefold requisite for discipleship - Deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me - applies also to exercising your gifts. Howard A. Snyder brings this to our attention:

*"Ministry is not determined exclusively by personal desire, but by the cross. As one is crucified with Christ and dies to his own will, the Holy Spirit resurrects within him his significant gift. So the spiritual gift, rightly exercised, is not self-centered; it is self-giving. But we must go further than this and say that a Christian discovers the true meaning of the crucifixion as they really begin to exercise their gift. Faithful ministry of the gift of the Spirit will lead them into depths of self-giving they never dreamed possible - and God planned it that way. This is the way we are created - psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually."* (The Problem of Wineskins, page 136)  
A Christian who would be *"carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease,"* as Isaac Watts put it, will never win the prize and never know the joy of serving the Lord with his spiritual gifts. Nor may he expect to hear a *"Well done, thou good and faithful servant"* at the end of his days.

## **29. WHY ARE GIFTS SO IMPORTANT TO THE CHURCH?**

The church is the body of Christ, where members share a life of mutual interdependence and care for each other, that body is directed in all its activities by Christ, the head, and lives by the Holy Spirit, who permeates all its parts. The body expresses the fullness of Christ, who is all and in all.

The church needs the spiritual gifts to reach its full potential as a life-sharing body. Since it is through gifted members ministering to one another that this life expresses itself, the absence of gifts and interdependent ministries signals the absence of body life.

Snyder emphasizes the need for proper regard in the church for spiritual gifts:

*"The urgent need today is that spiritual gifts be seen and understood in the context of ecclesiology, as in the New Testament. A Biblical understanding of spiritual gifts is absolutely essential for a Biblical conception of the church. When spiritual gifts are misunderstood - through being individualized, denied, divorced from community, or otherwise distorted - it is the church which suffers. The church truly becomes the church only when the Biblical meaning of spiritual gifts is recovered. A church whose life and ministry is not built upon the exercise of spiritual gifts is a Biblical contradiction in terms."* (The Problem of Wineskins, pages 137-138)

## **30. HOW CAN A CHURCH HELP ITS MEMBERS DEVELOP SPIRITUAL GIFTS?**

There are a number of things that a church can do to help its people discover, develop, and use spiritual gifts for ministry:

### **Organize for ministry.**

Take a fresh look at the structures of your church and ask, *"Just how much real ministry is happening within the structures?"* and *"How are the structures helping people to minister?"* Leaders in the churches need to see themselves as servants whose task is to help people develop ministries.

### **Recruit gifted members.**

Unfortunately, many church members serve where they do because they do not dare to say no or because *"somebody has to do it."* A church can help its people develop gifts by assigning its gifted members to appropriate ministries.

## **Equip for ministry.**

*“Equipping the saints for the work of ministry”* (Eph. 4:11) is not simply a matter of theological training or on-the-job instruction. Rather, *“equipping”* should help a person to develop her spiritual gifts in a related ministry.

## **Provide support groups.**

God does not intend for us to minister in isolation. The spiritually gifted church member needs to find support in ministry from other gifted members. By providing a healthy support structure, the church can facilitate gifted ministries.

Be conscious of needs in home, church, and parish.

Since spiritual gifts are given to fill needs, the church which helps its members become more conscious of needs will also encourage the use of gifts. Awareness of needs may also lead to the development of new ministries designed to meet those needs.

## **Affirm spiritual gifts.**

All gifts and gifted members are important. Church leaders who affirm this in words and actions will help members to develop self-esteem and confidence in service.

## **31. HOW WILL THE GIFT-CONSCIOUS CHURCH BENEFIT FROM THIS EMPHASIS?**

**First**, the church will awaken and mobilize. Frozen assets will be thawed. The church’s unemployment problem will be solved. Stagnant congregations will come to life as each member begins to seek his rightful place in the community of Christ. The church will gain in spiritual health and renewal.

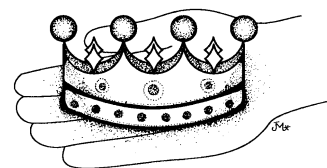
**Second**, the church’s heightened awareness of gifts will bring better leadership. Pastors will be called and assigned on the strength of their gifts, not on their academic credentials. Local congregations will be encouraged to choose office bearers on the basis of spiritual gifts. Leaders, functioning by the Spirit’s power in the ministries for which they are gifted, will do their work well.

**Third**, a new spirit of unity will come to the church. The apostle Paul insists (Eph. 4:11ff.) that unity and Christ like maturity will result as equipped saints carry on the work of ministry. Few members will feel inferior or unnecessary once they realize that in God’s plan every member is indispensable. Members will develop a greater appreciation for one another as they recognize their mutual interdependence. Pursuit of programs, methods, and organizational objectives will become subservient to the pursuit of love.

**Fourth**, churches will be strengthened in their outreach as such outward-directed gifts as evangelism and mercy are developed. Outreach will increase as the whole body becomes the light it was meant to be.



*You shall be a  
crown of beauty  
in the hand of God,*



*and a royal diadem  
in the hand of your God.*

Isaiah 62

### **32. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A CHURCH IGNORES SPIRITUAL GIFTS?**

If a church does not help its people discover, develop, and employ spiritual gifts, it will have to pay the price:

**An inactive, uninvolved membership.** An inactive church member is really a contradiction in terms. Real church membership connotes involvement in the ministries necessary to the life of the body. A church which is not gift-conscious is perpetuating the lie that one can be a member of the church by simply attending and “paying the dues.”

**An overworked minority.** What is the problem in a church where the same people are called on for everything and the same people show up at all church functions? The problem lies in the misconception of the church as a passenger ship in which some are crew (they do the work) and some are passengers (they are along for the ride). The New Testament model is more like a merchant ship, where all are crew and everyone has a job to do. The church which slights the doctrine of spiritual gifts will have to rely on a minority to do its work. That minority, including the pastor, will soon feel overworked, resulting in burnout and neglect of even the most essential tasks.

**An unsatisfying communal life.** Many churches that sing “*Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love*” know little of communal life and love. In such a church, people do not talk about real problems and hurts or “*bear one another’s burdens,*” for few know the real burdens of others. In a way, it is comfortable to be part of such a congregation. But it’s not very satisfying. Without the functioning of gifts there is no communal life.

**A lack of conversion growth.** Without the crucial gifts of evangelism, the church will win few converts. Those few converted through the church’s ministries are not likely to stay in a church which lacks the gift of hospitality. Converts are not likely to grow if discipling gifts are not exercised. Any church indifferent to spiritual gifts will not need to worry about conversion growth.

**Overdependence on program.** If few members have ministries which flow from gifts, the church will need to depend on programs to meet basic needs, and programs become all important. Now, there is nothing wrong with programs in the church; they are a necessary part of the church’s life. The point is that gifts should determine programs, not programs gifts.

### **33. HOW DO GIFTS AFFECT THE CHURCHS STRUCTURE?**

The following changes can occur when a church begins to think seriously about spiritual gifts:

**An annual gift ministries survey** One way to utilize more of God’s people’s gifts is to take an annual gift/ministries survey. Such a survey, if it is actually used in making appointments, will assure the congregation that the leadership is really serious about using spiritual gifts in the body. It will give people opportunity to choose areas of interest or to change from one ministry to another. Those who make appointments in the church should carefully study such a survey.

**Selectivity in ministry assignments.** Most ministries in the church require selectivity. Not everybody should be a greeter, or go calling in the community, or take a turn at leadership. The simple truth is that not everyone can do everything equally well. Thinking seriously about gifts will help the church avoid an “*everyone ought to*” mentality.

**Opportunities for togetherness.** If gifts are to function well, the church needs to provide opportunities for members of the congregation to communicate freely with one another. Members cannot minister to one another or co-ordinate ministries unless they get to know each other. Small groups, one of many structures that encourage informal and free exchange, help facilitate openness. Howard A. Snyder says, *“Without the small group, the Church in urban society simply does not experience one of the most basic essentials of the Gospels - true, rich, deep Christian soul fellowship, or Koinonia,”* (The Problem of Wineskins, page 139)

**Ministry teams.** It is often helpful for a gifted person to develop a ministry with a group of people having related gifts and ministries. The church which provides ministry teams, task forces, or action groups actively encourages the use of gifts for ministry.

### **34. WHAT HINDERS THE INTRODUCTION OF GIFT-THINKING INTO THE CHURCH?**

The effort to re-introduce gift-thinking into the church is likely to meet with some resistance. These are some barriers which will have to be brought down if the church is to be gift-oriented:

#### **1. Confusion and suspicion**

There is great confusion and suspicion regarding spiritual gifts. Some churches associate them with far-out charismatic groups. Sign gifts, highly valued by some, are feared by others. Understanding the connection between gifts and natural talents continues to be a problem. In the face of such confusion some people will feel more comfortable doing nothing.

#### **2. An institutionalized model**

An institution can function after a fashion with human organization, natural aptitudes, and fleshly energies. To the extent the church has learned to depend on its structures, natural abilities, rules, and regulations, she will find it difficult to function as an organism, dependent on the Holy Spirit's ordering of spiritual gifts. To say that the old institutionalized forms are really inadequate amounts to a challenge of the status quo.

#### **3. A consumer mentality**

Many are content to come to church to receive what it has to give. They are consumers—paying their dues and getting their spiritual uplift in small doses. The pastor is the performer and they are spectators. This arrangement must be altered to allow all to function as important contributors to body life.

#### **4. Lack of community**

The church that is merely a collection of individuals and not a true community finds it hard to see that gifts are important. Genuine appreciation of spiritual gifts comes when the church recognizes how essential the gifts are to nurturing its community ministering to and with each other.





### **35. HOW DO SPIRITUAL GIFTS HELP THE LIFE OF THE CHRISTIAN IN THE WORLD?**

The ministries of the church extend not only to those on the membership rolls but also to people and institutions outside - to the whole world. As the presence of Christ is not limited to the sanctuary, so the church - as body of Christ - is out in the work-world Monday through Saturday. In that world the church must live out its life, use its spiritual gifts, and make an impact for Christ.

Persons, groups, and institutions in the world are all objects of God's concern. The world too is called to give account to Jesus Christ as Lord. The world too needs to hear the good news and be re-shaped by this gospel. The church is the body of Christ in the world, the fullness of him who fills all things. She is the bearer of the good news - God's salvation. She is, in herself, evidence that Christ cares for the world. The church in the midst of the world is to be a spiritually gifted, loving, and ministering organism.

### **36. HOW DO I USE MY SPIRITUAL GIFTS IN THE FAMILY?**

The family is not only essential to society but is the basic unit of the church. Hence, the family's involvement in spiritual gifts is important.

First, parents are given the responsibility to educate their children in the fear and knowledge of the Lord. Regarding the law, statutes, and ordinances of God, the Bible commands parents, *"You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise"* (Deut. 6:7). Parents may delegate parts of their task to parent substitutes, such as teachers, but they may never divest themselves of the basic responsibility to teach children about gifts, and to affirm each child as a gifted member of the body of Christ.

Second, parents are in the best position to observe each child's unique abilities - some of which may be related to spiritual gifts. It is important that parents accept and affirm each child in their uniqueness, helping them gradually acknowledge and accept their uniqueness before God.

Third, parents who take seriously the responsibilities mentioned previously will be setting good examples for their children. Their modeling will be particularly important in those areas which are to become gift areas for the child. For example, many parents obedient to Scripture's commands do their best to be hospitable. If God chooses to give the gift of hospitality to one of their children, the child will have had a good model of hospitality. Parents who give generously and regularly will be establishing patterns important for their children who may be given the gift of giving. The motive of love is basic to the functioning of all gifts. Parents who create an atmosphere of love in their home and teach their children by example how important love is in relationships help to prepare them for love-motivated ministries in the future.

