

Discussion Leader Guide: Spiritual Gifts

Purpose:

- ? Guide conversation
- ? Encourage discovery
- ? Keep focus on Christ
- ? Help participants speak more than the leader

Day 1 Afternoon

Day Theme: Discovering Your Spiritual Superpower

One memorable sentence: What happens when the church treats spiritual gifts like a talent contest?

Poll: Why do you think God gives people spiritual gifts? A. To reward faithful believers. B. To prove who is the most spiritual. C. To give everyone a specific job in the church. D. To perform spectacular miracles. E. To build up and serve others.

Opening Engagement: Imagine a church full of incredibly gifted, highly talented people, but instead of thriving, it is completely falling apart with division and chaos. That was the church in ancient Corinth. They had turned God's gifts into a spiritual talent show.

Read the Text: (Ask someone to read 1 Corinthians 12:4-7, NKJV) "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal."

What Do You Notice? (Observation Only)

- ? A repeated contrast: "diversities" (or differences) vs. "the same" (Spirit, Lord, God).
- ? The source of the gifts is the Triune God.
- ? The recipient of the gifts: "every man" (everyone).
- ? The purpose of the gifts: "to profit withal" (for the common good).

Guided Discussion:

- ? Why do you think Paul emphasizes that different gifts come from the same Spirit? (Allow discussion)
- ? What does it mean that the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every person? (Invite multiple responses)
- ? If our abilities are given "to profit withal," how should that change the way we view our personal talents?
- ? How does knowing that your gift comes directly from God affect your spiritual pride? (Ask follow-up: Have you ever used a God-given ability just to get noticed?)

Discovery Insight: The Holy Spirit empowers every single believer with a unique gift. These gifts are never given to show off or to prove spiritual superiority, but strictly to benefit and build up the rest of the church family.

Christ Connection: Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, distributes His own diverse ministries among us so that the church can collectively continue His healing, teaching, and saving work on earth.

Life Response: Take a moment in prayer this week to ask God to reveal or clarify the specific spiritual gift He has entrusted to you.

Encouragement Bridge: Want to find your spiritual superpower? It's time to stop looking at yourself and start looking at the body.

Day 2

Day Theme: The Giver of the Gifts

One memorable sentence: You don't get to choose your spiritual gift, but that is actually good news!

Poll: How do most people feel about their own abilities in the church? A. I wish I had someone else's talent. B. I don't think I have any real gifts. C. I'm proud of what I can do. D. I feel overwhelmed by what is expected of me. E. I am perfectly content using what God gave me.

Opening Engagement: We live in a culture that tells us we can be anything we want if we just try hard enough. But in the church, our spiritual roles are hand-picked by someone else.

Read the Text: (Ask someone to read 1 Corinthians 12:11, NKJV) "But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."

What Do You Notice? (Observation Only)

- ? The active agent: "that one and the selfsame Spirit."
- ? The action: "dividing to every man severally" (distributing individually).
- ? The deciding factor: "as he will."

Guided Discussion:

- ? What does it mean practically that the Spirit divides the gifts "as he will"? (Allow discussion)
- ? Why might it actually be dangerous for the church if we got to pick and choose our own spiritual gifts? (Invite multiple responses)
- ? How does this verse offer comfort to someone who feels like their role in the church is small or unglamorous?
- ? Have you ever been jealous of someone else's spiritual gift? (Ask follow-up: How does trusting the Holy Spirit's wisdom cure that jealousy?)

Discovery Insight: We do not earn, invent, or select our spiritual gifts. The Holy Spirit sovereignly distributes them exactly as He knows the church needs them, meaning you have precisely the gift God wants you to have.

Christ Connection: Jesus knows exactly what His church needs to succeed against the forces of darkness, and He provides the perfect tools at the perfect time.

Life Response: Thank God today for the specific abilities He has given you, deliberately choosing to be content with how He has wired you to serve.

Encouragement Bridge: Imagine a church full of gifted people that is completely falling apart. To fix the chaos, we must remember who gave us the gifts in the first place.

Day 3

Day Theme: Unity Through Diversity

One memorable sentence: A body made entirely of eyeballs would be a monster!

Poll: What happens when everyone in a group tries to do the exact same job? A. Nothing gets done. B. There is constant arguing and division. C. The loudest person wins. D. The quiet people just leave. E. It turns into a fierce competition.

Opening Engagement: The Corinthians were fiercely competing for the most spectacular, front-and-center gifts. Paul uses a brilliant and slightly humorous metaphor to show them how absurd this uniform approach to spirituality really is.

Read the Text: (Ask someone to read 1 Corinthians 12:14, 17-18, NKJV) "For the body is not one member, but many... If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him."

What Do You Notice? (Observation Only)

- ? A foundational truth: "the body is not one member, but many."
- ? Two rhetorical questions about absurd bodies: "whole body were an eye... whole were hearing."
- ? The divine arrangement: "God set the members... as it hath pleased him."

Guided Discussion:

- ? Why is the human body such a perfect illustration for how a healthy church should function? (Allow discussion)
- ? What would happen to the mission of a church if everyone only wanted the highly visible roles, like teaching or preaching? (Invite multiple responses)
- ? How does the body metaphor change the way we view the "behind-the-scenes" workers in our congregation?
- ? Where do you see yourself fitting into the "body" of your local church right now? (Ask follow-up: Are you currently functioning in your place, or are you disconnected?)

Discovery Insight: God intentionally designed the church to have beautiful, functioning diversity. If everyone had the same gift, the church would be a monster. We are completely interdependent; the eye absolutely needs the hand.
Christ Connection: Jesus is the Head of the body, intricately coordinating all our different, diverse parts into one unified, living expression of His love to the world.

Life Response: Write a note of appreciation or send a text to someone in your church who serves faithfully in a quiet, uncelebrated role.

Encouragement Bridge: Are you the hands, the feet, or the ears of your church? Your unique contribution is absolutely vital to the body's survival.

Day 4

Day Theme: The Ultimate Ingredient

One memorable sentence: Without this one ingredient, your spiritual gifts are just annoying noise.

Poll: What makes a highly talented person difficult to work with? A. They are incredibly arrogant. B. They refuse to listen to anyone else. C. They care more about the task than the people. D. They belittle those with less talent. E. They constantly demand recognition.

Opening Engagement: You can have the most powerful spiritual gift in the world, but if your heart is wrong, your gift is completely useless. Paul interrupts his teaching on gifts to give the Corinthians the ultimate reality check.

Read the Text: (Ask someone to read 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, NKJV) "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor... and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."

(Note: Point out that "charity" in the NKJV translates to "love" in modern English).

What Do You Notice? (Observation Only)

- ? A list of spectacular gifts: tongues, prophecy, knowledge, mountain-moving faith, extreme generosity.
- ? The repeated missing element: "and have not charity [love]."
- ? The devastating results: "sounding brass," "I am nothing," "profiteth me nothing."

Guided Discussion:

- ? Why do you think Paul compares spiritual gifts without love to a banging piece of brass or a clashing cymbal? (Allow discussion)
- ? How is it possible to have enough faith to move a mountain, but still be considered "nothing" in God's eyes? (Invite multiple responses)
- ? What is the difference between doing a good deed out of duty versus doing it out of love?
- ? How can we evaluate our own motives to ensure our spiritual service isn't just "noise"? (Ask follow-up: Who are you serving right now that requires you to actively choose love over frustration?)

Discovery Insight: Love is not just another spiritual gift; it is the operating system for all of them. Without self-sacrificing love, our greatest spiritual abilities and most generous sacrifices are completely bankrupt.

Christ Connection: Jesus didn't just perform miracles to show off His divine power; every single act of His ministry was driven by a deep, unwavering love for broken people.

Life Response: Evaluate your current areas of service in the church: if you find you are doing them out of pride or obligation, ask God to renew a spirit of genuine love in your heart today.

Encouragement Bridge: You can speak in the tongues of angels, but without love, it profits you nothing. Let's make love our highest goal.

Day 5

Day Theme: Ending the Spiritual Talent Show

One memorable sentence: God is a God of peace, not of confusion.

Poll: What is the main purpose of a church worship service? A. To have a powerful emotional experience. B. To learn deep theological truths. C. To build up and encourage one another. D. To showcase musical and speaking talents. E. To fulfill a weekly religious duty.

Opening Engagement: In ancient Corinth, worship services had turned into chaotic free-for-alls. Members were talking over each other and showing off ecstatic speech, mixing Christian gifts with the wild practices of the pagan temples around them. Paul had to establish a firm boundary.

Read the Text: (Ask someone to read 1 Corinthians 14:26, 33, NKJV) "How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying... For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints."

What Do You Notice? (Observation Only)

- ? The variety in the gathering: psalms, doctrines, tongues, revelations, interpretations.
- ? The ultimate rule: "Let all things be done unto edifying."
- ? The character of God: "not the author of confusion, but of peace."

Guided Discussion:

- ? What does the word "edifying" (building up) mean in the context of a church service? (Allow discussion)
- ? Why is it dangerous when believers view public worship as a place to seek a personal, private spiritual thrill rather than a place to serve others? (Invite multiple responses)
- ? If "God is not the author of confusion," how should that reality shape the way a local church plans and conducts its gatherings?

? How can you personally contribute to the "peace" and "edification" of your church this coming weekend? (Ask follow-up: What does a truly edifying conversation look like in the church lobby?)

Discovery Insight: Spiritual gifts are meant for the public good, not private display. If a spiritual practice causes chaos, promotes self, or fails to build up the church, it is not being used according to the Holy Spirit's design.

Christ Connection: Wherever Jesus went, He brought peace, clarity, and healing to chaotic situations, demonstrating that God's power restores order rather than creating confusion.

Life Response: Next time you gather with believers, intentionally look for one specific way to build someone else up rather than just seeking a blessing for yourself.

Encouragement Bridge: Worship is not a competition; it is about building each other up. If it causes chaos, it isn't from the Holy Spirit.

Day 6

Day Theme: Speaking God's Word to the Moment

One memorable sentence: Why did Paul prefer clear prophecy over spectacular, unknown tongues?

Poll: When you are going through a severe trial, what helps you the most? A. A clear, understandable teaching from the Bible. B. A mysterious, awe-inspiring sign. C. A comforting word from a mature believer. D. A strong challenge to change my ways. E. A reminder of God's past faithfulness.

Opening Engagement: Paul told the Corinthians to earnestly desire spiritual gifts, but he had a clear favorite for public worship. He didn't want them chasing after the most mysterious or flashy gifts; he wanted them pursuing the most helpful ones.

Read the Text: (Ask someone to read 1 Corinthians 14:1, 3, NKJV) "Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that ye may prophesy... But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort."

What Do You Notice? (Observation Only)

? Two commands: "Follow after charity [love]" and "desire spiritual gifts."

? A specific preference: "especially that ye may prophesy."

? The three outcomes of prophecy: "edification, and exhortation, and comfort."

Guided Discussion:

? In the context of the New Testament, prophecy involves speaking an inspired message from God. Why would Paul prefer this over speaking in an unknown, uninterpreted tongue? (Allow discussion)

? Look at the three results: edification (building up), exhortation (encouraging/challenging), and comfort. How does a church desperately need all three of these today? (Invite multiple responses)

? How does this definition of prophecy change our modern assumption that prophecy is only about predicting the future?

? How can we be open to the Holy Spirit using us to speak a word of edification, exhortation, or comfort to someone exactly when they need it?

(Ask follow-up: Have you ever been the recipient of a perfectly timed word of comfort?)

Discovery Insight: Paul preferred the gift of prophecy because it communicates a clear, intelligible message that directly strengthens, encourages, and comforts the church. The value of a spiritual gift is measured by how much it helps others understand and experience God.

Christ Connection: Jesus is the ultimate Word of God, speaking clearly into our dark and chaotic lives to bring us the ultimate edification, exhortation, and comfort.

Life Response: Ask the Holy Spirit to give you a specific word of encouragement or comfort to share with someone who is struggling today, and then boldly deliver that message.

Encouragement Bridge: Are you using your spiritual gifts to build up the church? Let's step out in faith and use what God has given us today!

Day 7 Summary

5 Weekly Takeaways:

? The Source of Gifts: Every single believer is empowered with a unique spiritual gift by the Holy Spirit. You are not empty-handed!

? Sovereign Distribution: We don't get to choose our gifts. God distributes them exactly as He sees fit for the health of the church.

? Unity in Diversity: The church is a body. We cannot all be the same part; our vast differences are exactly what make us interdependent and unified.

? The Necessity of Love: Without self-sacrificing love, even the most spectacular spiritual gifts are just empty, annoying noise.

? Order and Edification: God is a God of peace, not confusion. The ultimate test of how we use our gifts is whether they build up the church and bring order to the body.

Final Reflection Question: Considering the beautiful diversity of the body of Christ, what is one specific way you can use the unique abilities God has given you to build up, encourage, or comfort your local church family this week? (Pause for responses)

Closing Appeal: We've discovered this week that spiritual gifts are not badges of spiritual superiority; they are tools of service. The Holy Spirit equips us not for our own glory, but for the mission of Jesus. As we go forward, let us stop looking at ourselves and start looking at the body. Let's pursue love above all else, eagerly desiring to be used by God to bring peace, comfort, and unity to a broken world.