

# Discovering Your Spiritual Gifts

God has prepared you for His purposes to bring honor to Him. The Bible says to use the spiritual gifts God gave you to serve others. According to 1 Peter 4:10, the goal of all God's gifts is service to others. "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms."

The acrostic **S.E.R.V.E.** is an outline for how God has prepared you for His purposes:

- **Spiritual gifts**—Those gifts God gives through His Holy Spirit to empower you for service
- **Experiences**—Those events God allows that mold you into a servant leader
- **Relational style**—Behavioral traits God uses to give you a leadership style
- **Vocational skills**—Abilities you have gained through training and experience that you can use in service to God
- **Enthusiasm**—That passion God has put in your heart for a certain ministry to others

**On the self-evaluation page of this booklet, list the spiritual gifts you have begun to discover in your life.**

Your relationship with Christ as well as those five areas—spiritual gifts, experiences, relational style, vocational skills, and enthusiasm—become the raw materials God uses to mold you into a servant leader. If you are interested in a web site with a spiritual gifts test, the following is a good one with results: <https://gifts.churchgrowth.org/spiritual-gifts-survey>

Leaders know how God has gifted them for service in the body of Christ, the church. Leaders serve out of their spiritual giftedness. They seek to lead from their God-given place in the body of Christ. The church works best when its members know how God has gifted them spiritually and when all members, empowered by their spiritual gifts, are in places of service.

A spiritual gift is a "manifestation of the Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:7). It is not a special ability that you develop on your own; that is a skill or talent. You do not seek a spiritual gift. Even so, you should prayerfully seek to understand how God already has gifted you for His purposes. "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good" (1 Cor. 12:7). Ephesians 4:12 further describes this purpose: "To prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up." The Bible says that "God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be" (1 Cor. 12:18).

For this study, we will use this definition: "A spiritual gift is an expression of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers that empowers them to serve the body of Christ, the church." The Bible contains lists of gifts and roles that God has given to the church.

## Check two or three gifts that seem to fit how God has made you:

- **Leadership**—Leadership aids the body by leading and directing members to accomplish the goals and purposes of the church. Leadership motivates people to work together in unity toward common goals (Rom. 12:8).
- **Administration**—Persons with the gift of administration lead the body by steering others to remain on task. Administration enables the body to organize according to God-given purposes and long term goals (1 Cor. 12:28).
- **Teaching**—Teaching is instructing people in the truths and doctrines of God's Word for the purposes of building up, unifying, and maturing the body (1 Cor. 12:28; Rom. 12:7; Eph. 4:11).
- **Knowledge**—The gift of knowledge manifests itself in teaching and training in discipleship. It is the God-given ability to learn, know, and explain the precious truths of God's Word. A word of knowledge is a Spirit-revealed truth (1 Cor. 12:28).
- **Wisdom**—Wisdom is the gift that discerns the work of the Holy Spirit in the body and applies His teachings and actions to the needs of the body (1 Cor. 12:28).
- **Prophecy**—The gift of prophecy is that of proclaiming the Word of God boldly. It builds up the body and leads to conviction of sin. Prophecy manifests itself in preaching and teaching (1 Cor. 12:10; Rom. 12:6).
- **Discernment**—Discernment aids the body by recognizing the true intentions of those within or related to the body. Discernment tests the message and actions of others for the protection and wellbeing of the body (1 Cor. 12:10).
- **Exhortation** (Encouragement)—Possessors of this gift encourage members to be involved in, and enthusiastic about, the work of the Lord. Members with this gift are good counselors and motivate others to service. Exhortation exhibits itself in preaching, teaching, and ministry (Rom. 12:8).
- **Shepherding** (Mentoring)—The gift of shepherding is manifested in persons who look out for the spiritual welfare of others. Although pastors, like shepherds, do care for members of the church, this gift is not limited to a pastor or staff member (Eph. 4:11).
- **Faith**—Faith trusts God to work beyond the human capabilities of the people. Believers with this gift encourage others to trust in God in the face of apparently insurmountable odds (1 Cor. 12:9).
- **Evangelism**—God gifts his church with evangelists to lead others to Christ effectively and enthusiastically. This gift builds up the body by adding new members to its fellowship (Eph. 4:11).
- **Apostleship**—The church sends “Apostles” (messengers of the gospel) from the body to plant churches or be missionaries. These motivate the body to look beyond its walls to carry out the Great Commission (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11).

- **Service and Helps**—Those with the gift of service and helps recognize practical needs in the body and joyfully give assistance to meeting those needs. Christians with this gift do not mind working behind the scenes (1 Cor. 12:28; Rom. 12:7).
- **Mercy**—Cheerful acts of compassion characterize those with the gift of mercy. Persons with this gift aid the body by empathizing with hurting members. They keep the body healthy and unified by keeping others aware of the needs within the church (Rom. 12:8).
- **Giving**—Members with the gift of giving give freely and joyfully to the work and mission of the body. Cheerfulness and liberality are characteristics of individuals with this gift (Rom. 12:8).
- **Hospitality**—Those with this gift have the ability to make visitors, guests, and strangers feel at ease. They sometimes use their homes to entertain guests. Persons with this gift integrate new members into the body (1 Pet. 4:9).

God has gifted you for service in Christ's body, the church (1 Cor. 12:7). His goal is for you to prepare others for service in the church (Eph. 4:12). As a servant leader, you are to use your spiritual gifts for the common good of the body. God gifted you for His glory, not your gain. God gifted you to build up His church, not your ego.

## EXPERIENCES

God can mold & make you into a tool of His grace. God can break into your life to make you a new creation for His purposes. Henry Blackaby calls events like Paul's conversion "spiritual markers." He says that a spiritual marker "identifies a time of transition, decision, or direction when I clearly know that God has guided me."

You have events in your life when God has made His will clear to you. God broke into history, and you know God spoke to you. He may have confirmed a decision you made. He may have revealed something new about who He is. Take a moment to describe briefly on the last page of the book some of your most important encounters with God. Start with your salvation experience. Don't worry if you do not have a dramatic story. God works in everyday events to shape you into His likeness. Spiritual markers can be any life experience, from a burning bush to a child's gentle touch.

## RELATIONAL STYLE

Every person has a natural style of how he or she relates to others. Every style has its strengths and weaknesses. God can use any relational style that is submitted to His will to serve His purposes. How you relate to others is basic to how you serve as a leader.

Because leadership involves influencing others for the common good, knowing how God has molded your temperament is key to knowing your leadership style. Knowing the style of others allows you to meet their relational needs. Moreover, understanding the relational needs of other people helps you to communicate with them and to lead them more effectively.

## **VOCATIONAL SKILL**

Our English word vocation comes from the Latin word vocare, which means "to call." A vocation, then, is what one feels called to do with his or her life. In previous generations, a sense of divine calling was part of a person's place in the world. A vocation was part of God's plan for a person's life. God called and you responded by gaining the skills necessary to live out that calling.

Vocation has come to mean any profession or occupation. A vocational skill is any ability you have learned that enhances your calling in life. In today's secular world, people often prefer to use the word career. A career is your choice. Instead of looking for God's plan, the world teaches you to choose what you want to do.

Whatever your vocation, your calling is to live worthy of the salvation God gives you in Christ Jesus. In Colossians, Paul wrote, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men. . . It is the Lord Christ you are serving" (Col. 3:23-24). Whatever you do, God calls you to live as a child of God and to bring honor to God through your actions. It matters less what you do in life than it does what you do with your life.

For the sake of this study, let us define vocation as what you do to provide for your needs in society, recognizing God's work in your life to lead you to that choice. Vocational skills are those skills you have acquired to do your career or hobbies.

Make an inventory of your skills; go to the back page to create your skill inventory: God enabled Paul to use his vocational skills for his life's calling. God can do the same for you. Take time to imagine how God can use the skills you listed on the back page for His work of spreading the Gospel. Write them on the back page.

## **ENTHUSIASM**

The Bible is clear that God's Holy Spirit is the source of passion for God's mission within the believer. Paul declared it is "Christ in you" that is "the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). We do not generate hope on our own. God energizes us with His living Holy Spirit. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit will be the Counselor and "guide you into all truth" (John 16:7,13).

He is our counselor and guide as we follow the Lord. Passion and enthusiasm for ministry come from God. Scripture tells about people who were enthusiastic about what they did. That is not a self-generated thrill. Enthusiasm is a God-given desire to serve Him by meeting the needs of others. Servant leaders have a God-given passion to serve.

What has God burned in your heart to do for His mission on earth? (Take a moment to consider what that may be. Prayerfully write your responses to the following statements.)

The one thing I do for God that makes my heart beat fast is

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If I could do one thing for God, it would be to

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