

Spring Bible Study

W•F WOMEN OF FAITH

Gifted by Grace

Discovering How God Works Through Us

Spiritual gifts are one of the ways God shapes ordinary people to participate in His extraordinary work of loving and serving others.

Structure of this study

Pre-work

Each week we will have about an hour's worth of pre-work. Because of the nature of the different aspects of the pre-work, you could choose to linger a good bit longer on some parts, but that will be up to you. I'll say this now and probably repeat it again in some form, the pre-work is not homework and I'm surely not going to check your "performance." I hope you won't do that to yourself, either. No grading. No quizzes. It is preparation for discernment.

Wednesday mornings

When we gather on Wednesday mornings, we will explore four subtopics related to how God works through us to restore His creation to His original design.

Week 1 Preview

In our first week—starting with the pre-work and continuing through our time together—we will consider how spiritual gifts are grace-given ways the Holy Spirit works through believers to serve others and build the body of Christ. Understanding that broad spectrum of these Spirit-of-God given abilities can bring us both a great sense of gratitude and hope. For some of us, we will experience a new kind of belonging as we see how we fit with God's intentional, beautiful design. The goal of the week is not to create a comprehensive master list of named gifts for us to use like a catalog.

Week 2 Preview

As we move through week two, we will celebrate the ways spiritual gifts are given to build up the church and equip believers for participation in God's mission. Knowing WHY gifts are given will help us to identify our gift mix (and that of others in our community of faith) and discern our best ministry fit. We will also see how gifts can be used selfishly, ultimately bringing harm.

Week 3 Preview

When we get to week three, we will be well-equipped to dive into some case studies including three from Scripture and some from within our community. This is a week when we will do a lot of reflecting on our own stories, our own experiences of being used by God, to see how the Spirit in and through us has worked already. God shapes ministry through personality, story, experiences, and gifting over time.

Week 4 Preview

It seems fair to say that every good thing from God—everything God created, every promise God has made—can be corrupted. Misused. This is surely true of the gifts given to us by the Spirit. In our final week together, we will consider how using these gifts for our own good or in ways that dehumanize others is dishonoring the One who created, gifted, and calls us. Our primary focus will not be on the reality of our misuse of gifts, however. Scripture provides clear instruction for us, declaring that the ultimate measure of spiritual gifting is love. Our focus will be on the goodness of God's design and the grace of his provision of love as the measure of our alignment with him.

Week 1	What are Spiritual Gifts	Romans 12 1 Corinthians 12
Week 2	Why God Gives Gifts	Ephesians 4 1 Peter 4
Week 3	How God Shapes a Person for Ministry	Ephesians 2:10 Psalm 139 1 Corinthians 12 Exodus 3-4 Luke 5:1-11 or John 21:15-19 Acts 9:1-19
Week 4	Discernment and Faithful Stewardship	1 Corinthians 13-14

1 — What Are Spiritual Gifts?

Pre-work for SESSION 1 (before April 15)

Scripture Study

As we begin this journey together, we will let our hearts and minds marinate a bit in three passages of Scripture (though two of the passages are adjacent in Paul's letter to the church in Corinth). Read these through slowly. As you go, underline repeated words (significant ones). Sometimes common words become significant in their repetition. After the Scripture texts, I've included a few study questions and some reflection questions followed by one writing prompt. If you want to spend more time in these passages this week, you could do more observing of the text. You started that process when you underlined repeated words.

Here are some simple instructions for OBSERVATION.

Ask the Holy Spirit to give you eyes to see and ears to hear what the Lord has prepared for you in this Scripture today.

Read slowly. What you do in this observation exercise will not be judged as "right" or "wrong." This is an opportunity for you to observe.

Look closely at the passage in front of you and gather the facts by marking what you see. Be like a curious investigator.

Note characters, relationships, locations, time, actions, repeated words, comparisons, contrasts, cause and effect. Make sections and label them.

*If you have colored pencils or pens, you may want to assign meaning to certain colors – like using **RED** to mark anything about the **Holy Spirit**.*

Romans 12:3–8

3 Because of the privilege and authority God has given me, I give each of you this warning: Don't think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us. 4 Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, 5 so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other.

6 In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. 7 If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. 8 If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.

1 Corinthians 12:4–11

4 There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all. 5 There are different kinds of service, but we serve the same Lord. 6 God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us.

7 A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other. 8 To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice; to another the same Spirit gives a message of special knowledge. 9 The same Spirit gives great faith to another, and to someone else the one Spirit gives the gift of healing. 10 He gives one person the power to perform miracles, and another the ability to prophesy. He gives someone else the ability to discern whether a message is from the Spirit of God or from another spirit. Still another person is given the ability to speak in unknown languages, while another is given the ability to interpret what is being said. 11 It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have.

1 Corinthians 12:12–26

12 The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ. 13 Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit.

14 Yes, the body has many different parts, not just one part. 15 If the foot says, “I am not a part of the body because I am not a hand,” that does not make it any less a part of the body.

16 And if the ear says, “I am not part of the body because I am not an eye,” would that make it any less a part of the body? 17 If the whole body were an eye, how would you hear? Or if your whole body were an ear, how would you smell anything?

18 But our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it. 19 How strange a body would be if it had only one part! 20 Yes, there are many parts, but only one body. 21 The eye can never say to the hand, “I don’t need you.” The head can’t say to the feet, “I don’t need you.”

22 In fact, some parts of the body that seem weakest and least important are actually the most necessary. 23 And the parts we regard as less honorable are those we clothe with the greatest care. So we carefully protect those parts that should not be seen, 24 while the more honorable parts do not require this special care. So God has put the body together such that extra honor and care are given to those parts that have less dignity. 25 This makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other. 26 If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored, all the parts are glad.

Study Questions

1. In Romans 12, how does Paul connect humility with spiritual gifts?
2. What phrases in 1 Corinthians 12 emphasize unity?
3. What surprises you about the variety of gifts listed?
4. Where do you see grace emphasized in these passages?

Personal Reflection

1. When have you felt most alive serving others? (Don't limit your scope to things connected to religious service or church activities.)
2. Describe a time when someone has affirmed something in you spiritually?
3. Where do you tend to compare yourself to others?
4. In what kinds of situations might you feel unnecessary?