

To help believers to discover the gifts that God has given them, let them compare themselves to Bible characters who modelled God's Gifts. Help them to identify a Bible character whose abilities or virtues they strongly desire to imitate. Tell the stories about them to the believers, and ask them with which persons they most readily identify, and why. Here are some examples:

Bible Models

Serve, as those did who rallied to repair the wall around Jerusalem in Nehemiah chapter 3 and 6:15-16. (Do you identify strongly with them?)

Give, as Abigail did, generously, to David's needy men, 1 Samuel 25. (Find guidelines on giving in 1 Corinthians chapter 9)

Encourage (exhort), as Paul did the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:17-38.

Show mercy, as the Good Samaritan did in Luke 10:30-35. (Find guidelines to use this gift in Matthew 25:31-46 and Acts 6:1-7.)

Prophecy, as Jeremiah did with stirring messages, calling God's people back to Him, Jeremiah Chapter 1. (Find the purpose of this gift in the New Testament at 1 Corinthians 14:3-4.)

Teach, as Ezra explained God's Law to the people in Nehemiah chapter 8. For the true purpose of teaching see Ephesians 4:11-16.

Lead (servant leadership) as Moses did to help others minister, and Joshua with his troops: Exodus 18:13-26 and Joshua 4-6.

Counsel with **wisdom**, as Solomon did in 1 Kings 3.

Knowledge, act on facts as Nehemiah did after examining the walls, or the Bereans with the Word, Nehemiah 1:11-20 and Acts 17:10-12.

Help, as Aquila and Priscilla did for Paul and Apollos (Acts 18:1-5, 24-28).

Go, as an **Apostle** ('sent one' or missionary), as Jonah was after his underwater training, likewise Paul and Barnabas (Acts chapters 13-14). Find Paul's main, guiding, missionary principles in Romans 5:20-21.

Understand Better God's Spiritual Gifts

Basic guidelines for using spiritual gifts are explained in Paul-Timothy Leader Training booklet #85, 'Serving with God-Given Spiritual Gifts.' If you have not yet read that study, then please do so now.

1. Examine Bible Passages that Describe Spiritual Gifts

The New Testament letters reveal that God gives to all Christian believers special abilities to serve one another. God also sends some such persons as gifts to the churches.

Find in **1 Peter 4:10 & 11** two basic kinds of gifts that God gives to believers:

"Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. To him belong the glory and the power forever and ever."

[Answer: The two basic gift functions mentioned by Peter are:

Speaking (telling God's truth to others).

Serving (showing God's love to others).]

Ephesians 4:10-12 reveals that God also gives people to churches to equip believers for various ministries. Find in **Ephesians 4:11** five kinds of gifted people:

"He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ."

[Answer: These five kinds of people are:

1. Apostles (who plant congregations).

2. Prophets (who strengthen God's people).

3. *Evangelists (who announce the Good News).*
4. *Pastors (who shepherd congregations).*
5. *Teachers (who help others to obey the Lord's commands).]*

Romans chapter 12 teaches that believers have spiritual gifts with which to serve others with right attitudes. Find in **Romans 12:6-8** seven examples of spiritual gifts that some believers have:

“Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.”

[Answer: The seven kinds of gifts are:

1. *Prophecy (to speak God's truth one to another as in 1 Corinthians 14: 3 & 24).*
2. *Serving (called 'helps' in 1 Corinthians 12:28).*
3. *Teaching (to equip believers to serve one another).*
4. *Exhortation (to encourage and correct).*
5. *Generous giving.*
6. *Diligent leading (to start or oversee flocks or ministries, and to keep believers working together in harmony).*
7. *Acts of mercy done cheerfully.]*

1 Corinthians chapter 12 shows how to use the different gifts in harmony as a body. Find in **1 Corinthians 12:8-10 & 28** more gifts that are not listed above:

“For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of

Prophecy. Prophecy, although spoken, is also a sign to believers (1 Corinthians 12:22).

B. Each kind of gifted person has work to do.

Speaking persons

Prophets. Prophets proclaim messages that build up people.

Evangelists. Evangelists announce the Good News about Jesus.

Teachers. Teachers provide instruction in how to obey Jesus' orders.

Serving persons

Apostles. Apostles are sent to other places to form new congregations and to train their leaders.

Shepherds. Shepherds lead and edify congregations and cells.

C. Leaders are to help every believer to use their gifts.

As people serve one another in small groups, their spiritual gift will become apparent, and others will recognize it. Let new believers serve in some way.

Provide opportunities for all believers to use their spiritual gifts in serving one another. This is best done in small groups. Do not limit the work of the Holy Spirit by only listening to talented people.

Continually remind believers that they must have love for people when they use their spiritual gifts. When a believer is angry or unloving, his gift can harm people.

Let people take responsibilities, offices and ministries in congregations and cell groups, according to their spiritual gifts. Do not assign jobs to people for which they are not gifted.

Elders should have a speaking gift, and deacons should have a serving gift.

Small groups and ministry teams should have members with different gifts that the Holy Spirit can harmonize. Avoid simply grouping persons who have the same gift.

3. Seek to fulfil the specific purposes of the various spiritual gifts.

God gives spiritual gifts to all believers. It is not always necessary for believers to know what their spiritual gifts are, but it is necessary for all believers to serve one another in love (Romans 12:10). Some believers become trainers in congregations. Some speak the Word of God effectively, while others serve the practical needs of people, and yet others do miracles.

A. Each kind of gift has its purpose.

Speaking gifts (“prophecy”) for speaking God’s truth to help people believe and obey:

Teaching. Teachers explain to people how to obey the Word of God.

Exhortation. Exhorters encourage, strengthen and build up people.

Faith. People with this gift inspire others to believe and have a vision of what God will help their congregation to do, moving people forward.

Serving gifts (“ministry”) for showing kindness to people, with God’s strength:

Giving liberally. Givers meet material needs of others.

Leading and administration. Leaders help people to work together.

Showing mercy. Merciful persons meet the needs of others in a practical way.

Sign gifts (Miracles) for showing God’s power to people to help them to believe.

Discerning of spirits. Discerners distinguish truth and error.

Healings. Healers bring people to physical or emotional health.

Tongues and interpretation of tongues. Some people speak or pray in a language unknown to them. And, if they speak to a group of people, others are to interpret their message into a language known to them.

tongues. ... And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.”

[Answer: Other spiritual, prophetic gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 are:

8. Words of wisdom (*helping others to apply God’s truth*)

9. Words of knowledge (*helping others to understand God’s truth*)

10. Tongues (*praying, singing or prophesying in an unknown language*)

11. Interpretation of tongues (*explaining what someone’s tongues meant*)

Other spiritual, serving gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 include:

12. Faith (*strong belief that God will keep His promises*)

13. Healings (*praying for God to heal sick folks*)

14. Miracles (*praying that God will provide what someone urgently needs*)

15. Discerning spirits (*recognizing bad spirits and the deceptive spiritual attitudes that they produce*)

16. Administration (*managing projects and coordinating details*)]

Some of the speaking and serving gifts are unusual and sometimes serve as signs of God’s power, to help people to believe. Such sign gifts may include tongues (1 Corinthians 14:22), interpretation of tongues, healings and various miracles.

Although they are not explicitly identified as spiritual gifts in the New Testament, some teachers consider the following also to be gifts:

17. *Celibacy* (chastity and abstinence from marriage, Matt. 19:10).

18. *Marriage* (1 Corinthians 7:7).

19. *Hospitality* (Romans 12:13).

20. *Martyrdom* (grace to be killed for the sake of the Good News, Revelation 20:4).

In conclusion, we can classify God’s spiritual gifts in three **general categories**:

- Gifts that help believers to speak the Word of God.
- Gifts that help believers to serve with strength from God.
- ‘Sign’ gifts that reveal God’s miraculous power to help people to believe.

Test: To which of the above three categories do the following gifts normally correspond?

- 1) Teaching
- 2) Showing mercy
- 3) Helps
- 4) Exhortation
- 5) Tongues
- 6) Hospitality

[Answers: 1=speaking. 2=serving. 3=serving. 4=speaking. 5=sign (1 Corinthians 14:22). 6=serving.]

In addition to the spiritual gifts that are mentioned in His Word, God may give other gifts that are not mentioned, when unique circumstances create special needs.



Some congregations appoint as deaconesses women gifted for good works.

2. Prepare to answer common questions about spiritual gifts.

Please find the **answers to these questions** in your Bible, unless you already know them:

Common questions & misunderstandings	Find answers in
1) Does every believer have a spiritual gift from God?	Romans 12:6
2) Can a believer have more than one spiritual gift?	Acts 6:3, 8 & 10
3) How does God decide which gifts to give to a believer?	1 Cor 12:11
4) Did the apostle Paul, who wrote to the Corinthians, expect every believer to speak in tongues?	1 Cor 12:30
5) Which of the gifts or virtues do elders need?	1 Timothy 3:2
6) Which gift would deacons most likely have, if they fulfil their biblical responsibility?	Acts 6:1-6
7) Should we seek the greater spiritual gifts?	1 Cor 12:31
8) Which of the ‘greater’ spiritual gifts did Paul urge the Corinthian believers to use?	1 Cor 14: 1-4
9) What is the three-fold purpose of prophesying in the New Testament?	1 Cor 14:3
10) What is more important than any of the spiritual gifts?	1 Cor chapter 13

[Answers: 7=yes. 8=prophecy, provided it is used to edify, exhort or console. 9=to edify, exhort and console. 10=love.]

1=yes. 2=yes. 3=through His Holy Spirit. 4=no. 5=hospitality and teaching. 6=serving or helps.