



Discovering and using your spiritual gifts

A spiritual gift is an ability, skill or talent given through the activity of the Holy Spirit working in the life of each individual Christian. Collectively, the spiritual gifts possessed by the members of a local congregation enable that congregation as the body of Christ to perform the mission and ministry to which it has been called by God.

In 25 years of ministry I have been privileged to talk with all types of people about faith, discipleship and personal ministry. As a congregational educator and as a divinity school professor, I have felt a special sense of delight when church members or students have talked with me about their calling. Over the years I have counseled many youth and college students who desired to understand God's will for their lives. I have also talked with many adults who were eager to understand how they could be involved in "hands on" ministry in the name of Christ. In our conversations these folks asked, "How do I understand God's will? How do I claim my calling? Where do I begin?"

Of course, there is no one right answer to these important questions. However, my experience, both personally and vocationally, has led me to identify at least one place to begin to address these questions: an exploration of the biblical concept of spiritual gifts.

Helping people discover and use their spiritual gifts has been the most exciting and rewarding aspect of my ministry. I have been delighted to see how the joy of discovering and using spiritual gifts has enriched and impassioned the lives of so many people and

congregations. I have seen how that as individuals come to understand their own giftedness, calling becomes clearer and ministry finds practice expression.

Following are suggestions for discovering and using your spiritual gifts:

Read and study about giftedness.

Examine the New Testament passages that describe spiritual gifts: Romans 12:1-13, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4:1-15 and 1 Peter 4:10-11. Take note of common themes, images and words. Form general impressions and ideas about giftedness. Repeat this process. List the spiritual gifts included in each passage, and then write your own definition of a spiritual gift. Continue your study by reading other materials on spiritual gifts.

Participate in a small group study.

Options may include a church class setting on Sunday morning or Wednesday evening, a retreat, a home study, a leadership training or deacon training program.

Take a spiritual gifts inventory. After developing a basic understanding of biblical giftedness, identify your own specific gifts for ministry and service through various inventories/checklists.

Talk to another person about your gifts. After participating in one or more of the activities above, talk with someone who knows you well (ex: family member, friend, fellow church member, minister) about what you are learning about spiritual gifts, your own giftedness and how you plan to use your spiritual gifts.

Use your gifts! Experiment. Be creative and open to new opportunities. If you are not currently active in the ministries of your congregation, volunteer to serve in an "official position" or a new ministry or to develop a personal ministry focused in your workplace, home or community. **BT**

Resources

A Spiritual Gifts Profile: Personality, Spiritual Gifts and Talents/Interest Survey (Uniquely You Ministries). An inventory that integrates a spiritual gifts profile with the DISC Personality profile, an assessment piece often used in business, administration and leadership development.

Klesis: God's Call and the Journey of Faith (Cooperative Baptist Fellowship). A study to increase the understanding of call, spiritual giftedness and being the presence of Christ in the world. Includes self-assessed identity and personality inventories.

LIFESEARCH – Spiritual Gifts by Kent Millard (Abingdon Press). A six-session study for small groups that focuses on relating faith to life.

Rediscovering Our Spiritual Gifts by Charles V. Bryant (Upper Room Ministries). The story of personal and congregational renewal told by a mid-career minister who "rediscovered" the concept of spiritual gifts. Includes an inventory of talents, skills and abilities in addition to the 20 spiritual gifts identified in the scriptures.

Rediscovering Our Spiritual Gifts: A Workbook by John I. Penn (Upper Room Ministries). A six-session companion resource to Charles Bryant's *Rediscovering Our Spiritual Gifts*.

The Equipping Church by Sue Mallory (Zondervan). Chronicles one church's transition from a "program-driven" church to a missional congregation through focusing on discovering and using spiritual gifts.

THE RESOURCE PAGE is provided by the Congregational Life office of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship in partnership with *Baptists Today* and for those dedicated lay leaders working in the educational ministries of local churches. This month's page was written by Timothy W. Brock, assistant professor of Christian education at Campbell Divinity School in Buies Creek, N.C. You can learn more about spiritual gifts at Brock's website, www.christianeducationnetwork.org.