

Gifted for Ministry

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AS WE RECOGNIZE MORE CLEARLY God’s call to be a part of the work and ministry He is already doing in the world, we will also recognize a strong and growing interest by many Christians to “figure out” their gifts in order to participate in His purposes. This interest is being driven by a God-given sense of longing for community and a desire to impact the world around us. How then, as women in the church, do we respond to this desire of our people? How do we mobilize them for their God-ordained service so that the body of the church may be edified?

Suggested Use:

The following chapter is designed to be used either as a personal study or as a guideline for group study on spiritual gifts and ministry. There are four Bible studies of the major gifting/ministry passages including sample outlines for teaching. There is also a section for personal application which provides descriptions of some spiritual gifts; an exercise on experiences and passions, as well as, a sample personality assessment. This can be used as a class or study to aid those with whom you minister, to affirm or expand their areas of ministry—to help those who are struggling to fit in, and for those who are new to the faith to find their place in the body and have a deeper understanding of their calling to serve God through ministry to His body. Please feel free to mold this curriculum to fit your

specific ministry participants and needs.

Scriptures for Study

Many assessments and much literature have been written on the gifts. But more important than all these works is that we study and prayerfully try to understand what the Bible tells us about spiritual gifts and our philosophy of ministry. There are four major texts in the New Testament that refer to the gifts. Those passages are: **I Corinthians 12-14; Romans 12:1-8; Ephesians 4:1-16 and I Peter 4:7-11**. The following is an overview of each of these texts that teaches us about gifts and ministry. This is not intended to be exhaustive and each one of us should come to these texts and study them for an increasing knowledge of what God desires for His Body, the church.

I. I Corinthians 12-14

At the time this letter was written (spring of 55 AD), Corinth may have been the wealthiest city in Greece. It was a major multicultural urban center and housed temples of Poseidon, Isis and Asclepius. The vast majority of the Christian community came from a Gentile pagan background. Paul planted the church at Corinth on his Second Missionary Journey so he had a deep interest in their well-being.

Paul received an oral report from the church (I Corinthians 1:11a) and learned distressing information about division within their fellowship. He also received a letter from the church asking about specific issues which were dividing the congregation (I Corinthians 1:11b-12, 7:1) The church had a number of problems, one of which was its immersion in the surrounding pagan culture and Greek philosophy which empathized with either asceticism or hedonism. Part of the problem may have been their over emphasis on the “spiritual” at the expense of understanding the Christian life here and now.

This passage addresses the overemphasis of speaking in tongues – divine utterances which are not a known human language. It seems a prevailing feeling of the congregation was that to express their spirituality, everyone should speak in tongues. These unintelligible utterances may have been the main emphasis in the church at the expense of intelligible understanding. They were looking for conformity in the manifestation of

the Holy Spirit. This portion of 1 Corinthians is a corrective passage for the church. So the text should be understood within the context of fixing a problem in that church.

The background given in this passage (I Corinthians 12: 1-2) reveals that prior to their Christian lives, these believers had been involved in pagan religious activities, many of which probably had ecstatic utterances. This would have been a well-known religious practice not far removed from their pagan pasts. Therefore, Paul frames the discussion (I Corinthians 12: 3) to explain that those things which proclaim Christ and edify the body of believers are from God. Those expressions of faith and belief that do not proclaim Christ and encourage the body are not from God.

Paul counters the Corinthian pressures of uniformity with an illustration of diversity (I Corinthians 12:4). We should not understand his gift list to be complete. He is creating an ad hoc grouping to show the Corinthians the diversity of manifestations of the Holy Spirit. While later on he says that speaking in tongues is desirable, he wants the Corinthians to look to the expression of gifts that build up the church for the here and now. It is one God, not one gift that is important to unity.

In I Corinthians 12:7, Paul says that spiritual gifts are given to “each one” so that every person who proclaims Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior has a gift from the Holy Spirit. People are given different gifts, but because they are from one God they should work together. I Corinthians 12:11 states that the Spirit distributes the gifts to each person as He sees fit. We read in I Corinthians 12: 4-11 that spiritual gifts and manifestations come from one God. Therefore, the expression of the gifts serves to reflect the glory of God. Note throughout this passage, the gifts are not intended to profit individuals but to build up the Body. Again in I Corinthians 12: 7, Paul says that the gifts are given for the common good. He illustrates this in his metaphor of the body of Christ.

In I Corinthians 12: 13, Paul says that in the Spirit, ethnic, social and economic differences lose their importance and that it is our unity and commonality of the Spirit that binds us together. He goes on to illustrate the absurdity of the Corinthians wanting to all be the same body part. He compares a healthy body with a monstrosity of a giant eye or ear. Equally absurd would be division in the body; with one part trying to go its own way and proclaim independence from the body. A hand cannot go

its own way independent from the rest of the body. **The healthy body needs each part.** Paul extends his analogy to say that one part cannot say, “I don’t need you” to another part. Every part is needed for the church.

Paul’s “body” analogy is all the more remarkable with what we now know about integrative medicine: how one disease in one part affects another part. When one part suffers the whole body suffers. Just think about stubbing or breaking a toe. It is so painful! That one little body part can throw off your ability to walk. In a healthy community we all hurt when one part hurts or is functioning improperly. Conversely, he also says when one part rejoices the whole body rejoices.

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Paul includes a second gift list. The numbering of the gifts should not be understood as hierarchical importance because that would undermine his entire argument of unity and the importance of what are perceived as lesser gifts. Perhaps this is a chronological order. First come the apostles who are the church planters or missionaries. They start the church - out of which flows the teachers who help people in the new church to grow in their faith – out of which flows the gifts which are part of a mature reproducing community of faith. So perhaps what we see here is a natural progression of the gifts in a given community.

His statement about desiring the greater gifts is not perfectly clear. Some have suggested in keeping with the context and Paul’s theme of unity, that this verse refers to those gifts which people would see as less honorable but Paul says they should be given greater honor. (I Corinthians 12: 23, 24) These are less visible gifts such as service and giving, mercy, etc. Paul encourages them to desire the gifts that do not receive acclaim from people but from God. Or, there is some exegetical debate that perhaps it should be translated “but you are desiring the greater gifts.” In that case perhaps it is a rebuke to call the Corinthians out on what they perceive they were doing by trying to look more spiritual. The last option is that they are to desire gifts that edify the body. That means gifts that are intelligible to other people. This would mean he desires

them to deemphasize the gift of tongues which was widespread in the congregation and focus on gifts such as prophecy which can be understood by all. Paul expands on this position in I Corinthians 14.

I Corinthians 13 sits as the climax of the extended passage of chapters 12 – 14. In this chapter, Paul says that the gifts cannot even be understood outside of the context of love. Gifts are for the here and now, but their use is governed by our love for one another. The gifts will pass away, but love remains eternal.

In I Corinthians 14, Paul deals with the issue of tongues in the Corinthian church in more detail. Paul explains while many in the church were speaking in tongues—a sign that they thought made them more spiritual—without someone in the congregation to interpret, it is worthless for corporate edification and may even turn away an unbeliever who witnesses the event. There must be an interpreter for the good of the congregation and so that those who are visiting or unfamiliar with the faith can understand and come to faith.

Prophecy is more important because it is discernable and available to the entire congregation. Paul does not forbid tongues, but limits and qualifies their corporate use with an interpreter. Because the gift is between the speaker and God, it doesn't edify the church. It should probably be kept as a private prayer language especially when lacking interpretation. This has become a hot topic in many church circles in recent decades. Churches have left denominations and churches have split over this issue. Being dogmatic over tongues is contrary to the teaching of this entire passage. Paul spoke in tongues, the Corinthian church spoke in tongues, but clearly, then as well as now, this is a sensitive issue.

The intelligible should be far preferred over the unintelligible. Paul encourages prophecy over tongues because it brings intelligible words from God that can convict unbelievers of their sin and bring them to faith. It also instructs believers and grows them in their faith. It builds up the body and is to be preferred. While the gift of tongues is the focus of this passage, the application is much larger and can extend to any gift. The church is to be homogeneous in purpose and heterogeneous in the expression of the Spirit in ministry.

See teaching outline for this passage at the end of the chapter.

II. Romans 12.1-8

This section of Romans has much to teach about worship and ministry in action. Paul was probably on his third missionary journey in 57 AD and writing from Corinth. At this point, Paul had been preaching, planting churches and pasturing for almost 25 years. He had faced non-Christian opposition, debates, and conflicts between believers. He was an experienced pastor who had been in the trenches for a long time. This letter was written during a transition time in his ministry and hammered out what he believed about God and the Christian faith and why.

Many believe the Roman church was founded by Jews from Rome who witnessed the pouring out of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. They took their new found faith back to Rome. There was a large Jewish population in Rome at the time. There was also a large number of Gentiles who were known as “god-fearers”. These were people who attended the synagogue and followed Judaism but who were not full Jews because they were not circumcised. In 49 AD, Emperor Claudius issued an edict that required all Jews to leave Rome. He was tired of arguing among the Jews about Christ. This was probably the argument about Jesus’ claim to be in Christ. This edict affected all Jews including Jewish Christians such as Priscilla and Aquila. Virtually, overnight, the church became 100% Gentile and the ethnic and social makeup changed radically.

By the time Paul wrote Romans, it was several years later and the Jews were allowed to return to Rome. But they returned to a very different church than when they left. There were severe social tensions between the Gentiles who had now been running the show for years and the Jews who, for the first time in the church found themselves to be in the minority. This letter was written to both groups. The tension between these groups is evident in this passage. These verses open Paul’s section on the transforming power of the Gospel. Romans 12 and following is the faith described in Romans 1- 11 in practice.

When Paul wrote, “brothers and sisters,” he dropped the distinction between Jew and Gentile which was clearly evident in the previous 11 chapters. He promoted unity and community in the believers by not solely addressing Gentiles or Jews as he had done previously. God’s mercy is the Gospel message he argued so eloquently for in Romans 1:11. Romans is a worldview letter. Our worldview expresses itself in action. Therefore,

if we understand with our minds God's grace and mercy in our lives, it requires an active response (ministry) on our part.

The imagery in this verse is steeped in 1st century religious practice; pagan, Gentile god-fearers and Jewish converts alike would have understood the concept of temple sacrifice of slaughtering animals. This imagery is then somewhat jarring for the original reader. What would it mean to offer one's own body as a sacrifice? He goes on to say that this is

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what real true worship is. It takes place not in the temple, but in the marketplace and in the home. Instead of the blemish-free animal sacrifice, the believer becomes that perfect offering to God. Holistically giving our lives over to God is that sacrifice. Paul says that this is true worship. There is no concept of worship only taking place in the church on Sunday mornings. **Giving our whole lives, all our time, our relationships, and our activities to God for His use and glory is true worship.** True worship engages and transforms our thought patterns. It causes our minds to grow and mature in the faith. Giving God our lives and engaging our minds as worship is what allows us to discern and understand the will of God for our lives and His body.

When we pray to accept Jesus as our Savior and Lord we tend to use a lot of heart language. "Jesus comes into my heart" we say. When we pray at conversion we are filled with the Holy Spirit. But we also come into our new faith life with all the baggage of our past. Offering our bodies, our whole selves to him is what allows us to be transformed into His likeness. It doesn't happen overnight. The tense in the Greek text here is such that Paul intends for this to be an ongoing constant transformation of our minds through engaging in worship. We come to know God's will more perfectly as we are transformed. As we journey in our faith and are actively transformed, we see the world around us more clearly through the eyes of God.

What does this mean for us in the context of understanding spiritual gifts and ministry calling? God desires for us to examine and think about our lives. When we dedicate our lives to Him, we are forced to examine our priorities, our relationships, and our activities. How do you use your time? Is it how God would want you to use it? How do you interact in your relationships with your husband, or child, or friend or co-worker? Is it how God would have you communicate and love that person? Are you

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involved with activities that prevent you from engaging in meaningful ministry? Do you avoid engaging in meaningful Christian relationships because you are too busy? Or are you scared to give your whole self to him because you don't know what that may mean. What if He calls you to Africa or Brazil or the inner city or to take in a foster child or adopt an orphan? What could it mean in your life, your ministry to open yourself up to all the possibilities God has for you? What are the things in your life which may prevent you from giving your whole self to God? Pray and give these things over to Him. This may take a while, but take a commitment to working through the issues which are blocking you from engaging in a closer relationship with Jesus and which may prevent you from effectively expressing the gifts God has placed in you for His people. The goal here is spiritual maturity. **What does maturity look like?** Paul lays it out in the following verses.

Undertones of the social tension in the church at Rome are evidenced in Romans 12: 3 and following. Paul says that it is only because he himself has received grace from God that he has authority to appeal to them. In these verses, he deals with arrogance in the church – people thinking they were better or more spiritual or mature than their fellow believers. They may have thought they were blessing God instead of God blessing them. This echoes the problem of 1 Corinthians where those who

spoke in tongues perceived themselves as more spiritual. Paul appeals back to the Gospel message, the faith. We are all brothers and sisters and all saved by Christ alone. There is no longer Jew or Gentile.

Paul again here invites the read to examine their bodies as a metaphor for the diversity within the unity of Christ's church. The human body has hundreds, if not thousands, of parts. None have the same function. There should be no arrogance as a member of the body, because it is God, not the believer or church leaders who determines our part. We should be humble because it is only by God's mercy that we are even a member of the body. We were without any merit of our own. Paul could easily have stated the other side of this coin as well—people should not have too low an estimation of themselves and their worth in Christ to the body. That is equally an error in perception.

We are each different and have our own vital role in the body. There is no one else who has your exact role or place in the body. If you are absent as a member of the body, there is not another person who can step in and take your place. God has created you for a unique role. Paul says as member of the community of believers, as brothers and sisters, we belong to one another. What damages me, hurts someone else. If I neglect to be involved in ministry, the body is neglected. Likewise if I exercise my gifts, and renew my mind and live a life of worship; that is like lifting weights, and taking vitamins. I become strong in the power of God and can assist other members and contribute to the health of the body.

As in Corinthians, Paul says we all have different gifts and lists several of them, but unlike Corinthians, he does not include any of the miraculous gifts of tongues, interpretations, healing and miracles. Paul lists 2 classes of gifts, speaking gifts and service gifts. We see this classification in I Peter as well. Again, Paul is trying to make a point about the diversity of gifts in an ad hoc list, not as a comprehensive listing. The basic gist is, **whatever your gift, practice it with excellence in a worship-filled, transformed life. Do it with gusto.** Be the best, strongest arm, or finger or leg or foot possible. The gifts in this list are further explored below.

See teaching outline for this passage at the end of the chapter.

III. Ephesians 4:1-16

During this imprisonment in Rome around 60 AD, Paul wrote several let-

ters including Ephesians. Ephesians was most likely not written explicitly to the church at Ephesus, but was written as a letter to be shared and circulated among the churches in the region of Ephesus in southwestern modern Turkey. Ephesians is an extraordinary letter which, along with Romans, can wholly shape our Christian worldview. As in Romans, the first portion of the letter is deeply doctrinal and theological and the second half is ethical and practical though not without theology. These chapters are Paul's exhortation on how believers are to act in light of their salvation and as the body of Christ.

This passage is an important lens through which to view spiritual

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gifts. It shows us that the Christian life is an important lens through which to view spiritual gifts. It shows that **the Christian life is not about us**. We belong to something incomprehensibly bigger than ourselves. We are part of the church. God in His eternal wisdom has brought us together to be the church and has placed specific people in specific places to do ministry. When we begin to understand the weight of that concept, we have no choice but to stand in awe that the God of the universe loves us so much that He shapes history so that we may be part of bringing him glory through ministry.

In Ephesians 4:1-6, Paul explains why and how the church can be the unified body. Paul reminds the readers that even as he is writing to them he is in chains for the sake of the Gospel message in which he is instructing them. Paul challenges them, "I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received," What does that statement mean for your own life, your ministry? The calling you have is the salvation you have received, the grace and mercy God has bestowed on you. **Are you living a worthy life?** As in Romans, we are again moved to dig deep into our hearts and look at our motivations. This is a charge to the church as a community. What would our ministries look like if we asked this question as an ethical framework for our decision making? The God who created the universe has chosen you for eternal life. Do our decisions and actions

reflect that knowledge?

In Ephesians 4:2, Paul instructs the readers on how to keep the unity. Christians are to be humble, putting others first and not exalting themselves. Believers are to be gentle, not harsh or angry and short with one another. Gentleness and longsuffering should mark our conversations and relationships with one another. We are to be patient with one another as we make mistakes and learn and grow in the Lord. Being a body is a process and as a church we need to allow room for mistakes.

The last phrase in Ephesians 4:2 literally means putting up with one another in love. We hopefully understand the concept of putting up with one another within the circle of our family life, but do we do it at church? Church shopping and hopping can be epidemic with some believers as they move on to a new church anytime there is disagreement or tension in a congregation or between believers. There are all kinds of fractured relationships and conflict and discord in the church because we are fallen men and women. Putting up with one another, bearing with one another doesn't mean we have to be best friends with everyone. It does mean we love them as a brother or sister. Do we put up with our fellow Christians in love? Do we treat them and give them the same patience and forbearances as we would our own spouse, parent, child or teenager? Take some time to reflect and pray on your church relationships. **Pray that God will help you to put up with, and be put up with, in love.**

“Make very effort to keep the unity through the Spirit through the bond of peace.” Sadly, American church history has numerous examples of division within churches and denominations. Even so, Paul doesn't say keep the unity through false pretenses and fake serenity. He doesn't say to never have opposition or conflict in the church. He never says that by our sheer will as humans we should desire to be in unity. He says of the Spirit, God is one, and He empowers us to be one. We have the bond of peace through Christ. Each Christian has Christ as their peace and He is the peace of the church. We are all walking in the same direction, toward the same goal, empowered by the same God. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.' Are we willing to divide with our brothers and sisters over worship styles? Over spiritual gifts? Over allowing women to

take the offering or to give communion or to preach? Are we elevating our differences above our calling which is our salvation? Our God is one and we should be one.

Similar to the two-fold goal of unity and diversity, we have studied to uphold the diversity of Corinthians and Romans, Paul again turns slightly from unity to uphold the diversity of the body. Ephesians 4: 7 says as Christians, as members of Christ's Body, we have all received the gift of grace from Christ as He determined. Our Lord is the giver of gifts. Note here the turn of phrase from Paul's use of 'one...one...one' in the beginning of the passage to communicate unity; to the use of 'each one' to address the individual members that make up the unified body. In Ephesians 4: 8 – 10, Paul appeals to scripture for support of his argument that Christ gives gifts. This is a reference to Psalm 68.18. Paul then gives a parenthetical explanation of the citation in 9 and 10.

In Ephesians. 4:11, the definite article ('the') appears before each term. This means he is not here talking about a gift itself given by the Spirit, but the person in the role given to the church. That is, Christ gave the apostles, not the gift of apostleship. Christ has placed specific people in leadership roles in the church for the equipping of the people. All these different leaders are given to equip God's people for ministry so that the church is built up into unity and knowledge of Christ. The purpose is to produce maturity of the body so that we more fully understand and experience our salvation and the reign of Christ in our lives. Explanation of the specific roles mentioned can be found below.

Part of Paul's concern for the maturity of the body of believers is that immature believers who lack knowledge about their faith are in danger of being led astray or believing less than orthodox teachings about the Gospel. When we are mature, we are better shielded from the waves of deviant world views and deception by Satan. Paul likens new believers to infants or children who are at the whim of whatever they are told because they do not know any better. Believers are called to be a witness to Truth in our communities. We are to bring that Truth to our brothers and sisters who may wander from the faith. When we know someone is sinning, when we are concerned about non-Christian patterns of behavior in their lives, we are to speak or act on truth to our brother or sister, to help them live a life worthy of their calling; to help bring them and the community to maturity.

Paul writes ‘we need to grow into Christ as our head.’ Anyone who has held an infant knows babies have disproportionately large heads to the size of their bodies. It is only as an infant grows to be a child, to a gangly adolescent, who matures into an adult that body and the head become proportionate to one another. It is Christ who is the source of the grace that

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makes us His body. The body is held together by Christ who has given the leaders to be a support structure for the body. The teachers and pastors and prophets and evangelists educate and bring maturity through knowledge. This is how the body grows. It practices humility and gentleness and patience. It puts up with one another in love in community. It learns and loves and builds up and matures and becomes the beautiful mature adult church. This is the life we are called to as the Body of Christ.

See teaching outline for this passage at the end of the chapter.

IV. I Peter 4: 7-11

We don't know as much about the circumstances surrounding I Peter as we do about the Pauline texts. It is probable that this letter was written by Peter while in prison in Rome perhaps between 62-64 AD. Church tradition tells us that Peter was in Rome at the time a great local persecution broke out under Nero between 64-68 AD. He was likely martyred around 64 AD. Peter wrote this letter to a number of churches in northwestern Asia Minor or northwestern modern day Turkey. This area was a backwater of the Roman Empire; there were no major Roman outposts or cities. These were frontier areas and the churches were probably very small. These areas may have been experiencing local persecution at the time. I Peter is a letter to a persecuted church on how to live life together. The section of text of interest for spiritual gifts (I Peter 4: 7-11) falls within Peter's exhortation to the local church on how to relate to one another in

light of persecution and the second coming of Christ.

This passage was written within an eschatological framework. Eschatology is the study of end times, so this means that everything in the passage should be interpreted understanding that history may come to an end at anytime. This text was most likely written within 30 years of Christ's resurrection. There were still people living who were eye-witnesses to Jesus in His resurrected state. The resurrection of Jesus ushered in the beginning of the church age and many first century believers fully expected to see His return in their lifetime. But Jesus warns in Matthew 24 against selling dates and trying to guess when He will ultimately come back. All that is known for sure is Jesus is coming again at an unknown date and time so believers must live with a sense of this imminence and urgency in their faith and ministry. "The end is near" Peter says.

Do you have a sense of urgency in your ministry?

Do you make decisions on how to spend your time in light of the end times, or eternal perspective?

This end-times perspective adds another lens or filter by which to screen activities and choices and create free time to engage in your ministry calling. Take some time to think about and reflect on these questions.

Peter's next exhortation for the church is in light of the end-times, 'be clear-minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.' Peter here is calling for intelligent reasonable, thoughtful prayers. When we are focused on God and His will for us and the church we can better understand the issues we are praying for and have more effective prayers. When we more clearly see the world through God's eyes as mature Christians we are better able to pray as God would have us pray.

"Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins." The placement of this verse in light of the gifting verses which follows brings to mind 1 Corinthians 13, Paul's love chapter. Love is of foremost importance in ministry and church relationships and governs the use of spiritual gifts. Remember the context of this letter—the churches Peter was writing to were believers under pressure of persecution. These people may have been suffering from loss of livelihood because of their faith; they may have had physical and relational struggles. In the small towns there may have not been more than a handful of believers and one church. There were limited—or no—options to find another church if one was at

odds with their fellow Christians.

Under stress, many people have the tendency to get irritable and short with one another. These believers were stressed and Peter is telling them not to take it out on one another. This is much like Paul's statement in Ephesians that we need to put up with one another in love. Peter's desire for believers here is that they let annoyances and irritations go and forget about them. In our churches and ministries, there will be difficult people. But when you love God and you love His church, you love His

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people. As we journey in our faith, we will find that as we love God more there are fewer difficult people. **We need to love and let things go**, because in reality, we can probably be irritating to someone else, and we want them to love and up with us, too.

Loving each other deeply extends to the following verses and Peter continues to express how the church body should function. Believers in the body of Christ are to be hospitable without whining. The churches Peter was writing to most likely had itinerant preachers in and out of town as they made circuits to cover all the churches in a region. These preachers would have needed somewhere to stay and to be fed. If there was persecution in one area, the church may have been taking in refugees from that area. The cultural setting in our churches is different today than when Peter wrote; the call to hospitality is not. This is a crucial area for fostering unity and connection within the church body. It is difficult to love each other and minister to one another using the gifts if we don't know one another. Believers should share life and meals and fellowship and welcome new people and visitors in the church community. Hospitality is an aspect of love we need to express as part of a church family. It is also a spiritual gift further explained below.

Peter's final exhortation to the churches for living as a community is

how individuals should minister. Just as in Paul's letters, instruction on how to live as a church body precedes instruction on how to serve the body individually. As a praying, loving, hospitable family, 'Each one of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. If you speak, you should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If you serve, you should do so with the strength God provides so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.'

The 'each one' phraseology that signifies every believer in the body

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has gifting. Paul made ad hoc gift lists in his letters to illustrate a point. Here Peter says it doesn't matter what the gift is, whatever it is, use it to serve others. Christianity is the only service-oriented religion in the world. A service-driven attitude is not found in Judaism, Islam, Hinduism or Buddhism. Jesus and the New Testament are the model for service. Christians are called to live life serving one another. What is this service? This is administration of the various forms of God's grace. **God's grace has limitless expression;** each person has a unique way of ministering, a unique way of interacting, and a unique way of being the hands and feet of Jesus.

Nowhere is our call to ministry more clearly stated. Use your gift! You are the vehicle for God's grace in someone else's life. If you speak, you should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If you are called to a teaching, preaching, evangelism role in the church, take that job very seriously. James 3:1 says, 'Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers and sisters, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.' If you are going to speak as your ministry take that role God has given you with utmost seriousness.

If you serve, you should do so with the strength God provides. These are the gifts that don't involve speaking to the body of believers. Have you

ever felt burned-out or tired in ministry? We all get tired. However, when we are right where God wants us that feeling will never last long. Take a moment to reflect on someone you have met who you know is in their calling and you can clearly see relying on God's strength to pursue ministry.

When you are doing what you should be doing you will be energized. Times can be tough but with God's strength you will persevere. What is it God is calling you to do? His call will never go out without His power. God has created you to be a giver of His grace to His church. He has given you the calling and the power to do it. Your job is to respond to the call.

Peter concludes his exhortation here with a doxology, **“To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.”**

See teaching outline for this passage at the end of the chapter.

How Can I Find My Place in the Body?

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. Psalm 139:13-16 (TNIV)

God made you who you are! The following section is meant to be used to help you explore how God has created you to serve His kingdom.

See “For Further Study” for specific formal assessments which can be ordered or taken online.

The Gifts

As discussed in the studies above, the gift lists in these texts are not all-inclusive. Below are explanations of the gifts listed in the passages above. There are gifts of music and craftsmanship and singleness and marriage among others—there are gifts mentioned outside these texts. **Because each of God's children are unique, there is an infinite expression of the gifts of God** so we must be careful not to put the Holy Spirit in a box

or limit our understanding to neat and tidy assessments. The listing of the gifts below may be larger classifications of manifestations of the Spirit, but they are certainly not all encompassing of God's work among His people.

The gift of **prophecy** is making known the will of God. It can be a special word from God, which is subject to the scriptures. People with the gift of prophecy will know the scriptures well and be bold in their proclamations of God's will. This is not an ecstatic experience. The prophet is completely in control of what they say and is subject to the discernment of the hearers. Today the prophet may be those individuals who are strongly aware of God's will for significant issues. There is not necessarily forth-telling involved, nor is one with the gift of prophecy always correct. When properly applied, this gift is a powerful tool for reproof, rebuking and exhorting other believers.

The gift of **service** manifests itself in those who like being behind the scenes. They are the ones who set up chairs and tables, who make coffee they gravitate toward the more mundane jobs. If they see a need they meet it. They love to bless other people. They love to do what no one else likes to do.

People with the gift of **teaching** love explaining and reasoning why things are true. These people like to research and study. They are effective communicators who present their findings whether in front of a group or through writing and sometimes just in conversation. These people tend to have high standards for education. They need to be willing to practice and work on developing their gift.

People with the gift of **discernment** are concerned and able to deftly determine right and wrong, good and evil. They listen well and pick up on the seemingly insignificant things. They ask meaningful, revealing questions and give advice based on their understanding of Biblical truth and conscience.

The gift of **encouragement or exhortation** tends to manifest in people who are known as counselors, whether professionals or over coffee with a friend. These people are friendly, understanding and practical. They are great at telling people how to apply the truth to their lives and giving advice and action plans.

People with the gift of **giving** tend to be very generous. These people are good stewards of money and concerned with financial matters. They

have unique insights and give in areas that may not be the most noticeable, but have the greatest needs. This gift is not always visible. As believers we should all tithe and then some, but givers have a unique financial perspective and a generous spirit far beyond other believers.

The gift of **knowledge** is variously recognized as understanding supernatural instant revelation of specific information. This can be known as a 'word of knowledge'. This gift can also be understood as those people

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who are adept at acquiring and synthesizing Biblical knowledge of facts and principles. These people are excellent researchers and enjoy learning all they can.

People with the gift of **wisdom** are great counselors and are able to provide practical advice and insight. They are able to assimilate Biblical principles and apply them to practical life situations. These people are very perceptive and can read motives and formulate an appropriate godly response.

Those gifted in **leadership** have an extraordinary ability to influence and direct other people. They are independent and challenging; they take stands and give direction to groups. They are great motivators and tend to be results driven. These people may be able to communicate and direct a clear and compelling vision of God's direction for His people.

People with the gift of **mercy** are compelled to reduce suffering or pain in the lives of people. They are not particularly concerned with the cause of pain, but with people's feelings. These are people who are best at just 'being there' and showing sympathy or empathy to people.

Faith is a spiritual gift found in those with an extraordinary ability to trust God in the most adverse of situations. These people have a deep

dependence upon God and His Word. Many great prayer warriors have this gift.

People with the gift of **evangelism** love to effectively proclaim the Gospel to bring people into the faith and to build up the church. All Christians are called to witness to the Gospel and share their faith. The evangelist may be someone given a particular personality or calling that allows them to communicate the Gospel with remarkable clarity and effectiveness. They have a passion and fire for the lost and for motivating others to have that same passion.

Those gifted as **pastors** shepherd the church or groups or individuals and are concerned for their maturity and growth. Those with the gift of pastor or shepherd are not always professional staff in churches. These people feel strongly about leading groups of people and walking alongside them. They have a passion for developing maturity in believers.

Apostles are infrequently attested to in scripture. We can best understand them as one of the twelve, and a circle outside of the twelve, who had direct training and teaching by Christ, or a direct follower of an original apostle. We need to be cautious about our use of 'apostle' today and perhaps use it only very informally to describe pioneers and church planters in unreached populations. Some missionaries would fall into this category. This gift is best understood as a cross-cultural mission impulse that may lead the person somewhere no one else has gone.

The miraculous gifts of **tongues, healing, miracles and interpretation** are present in the lives of believers and the church as God moves in the body according to His pleasure.

Experiences and Passions

God has given you a lifetime of experiences that have led to this place. Your experiences in life are an important clue to how God may have designed you. If you look over your life and you can point to experiences such as always having a love and talent for music. Or perhaps you were elected to student government in school, or to head your homeowners association and have always enjoyed running things. Using the attached worksheet, take some time to think about the dominant themes and enjoyable experiences you have had in your life. Here's an example: You had a wonderful trip to Europe as an enjoyable experience, don't just

write ‘had fun in Europe.’ Instead, write on your trip to Europe you took remarkable, well-composed photographs of the historical places you have studied and been interested in since you were a child.

Like our experiences, our passions are built into our lives to direct us toward purpose or involvement. **Our passions give us emotional or physical energy for our service.** Finally, passions will give us the perse-

Your experiences in life are an important clue to how God may have designed you.

verance and strength we need to keep going even when we are battling discouragement and our circumstances can sap our energy. Passion is what drives one person to have a 40 year ministry to inmates at a prison; it is what drives people to tutor at-risk children after a long hard day of work; it is what compels someone to travel ravaged areas after a hurricane and stay in hot, smelly, uncomfortable accommodations to bring victims medicine and water and food. Examining your experiences, are there any passions that present themselves? Look over the attached Passions worksheet; are there any areas that stand out?

See “Where Is My Passion?” worksheet at the end of this chapter.

Personality Profiles

God made you who you are. He knew your mother and father and upbringing and genetic code. He knew the environment of your upbringing for better or worse. He has used all these things to develop and give you the personality you have. There are several major well-known personality profiles available for use. None is perfect but each reveals different aspects of how and why we behave and relate to one another. The assessment included here is a very brief tool/example which informally combines a few of these assessments. This is simply meant to illustrate a personality assessment and is in no way meant to act as a substitute for a full assessment. Full assessment and analysis of results is outside the capa-

bility of this study.

See the “For Additional Study” section for recommended tools available.

Putting It All Together

God has created you to be a minister of His grace for His kingdom. Scripture shows us that He has made the church to be a unified body with a diverse array of parts. When the body is properly functioning, we are all moving rhythmically together and each part embraces its function. That

When you think you have found an area you seem to have an impulse of gifting and passion and personality for, embrace it with gusto.

function may grow and change over time, but to be used most fully of God we need to be living holy, worshipful lives in service to Him. Spiritual gifts are overemphasized at times as something for the believer. They are an expression of grace given to the church. It is the believer’s responsibility to be a minister of the gifts to fellow believers.

Primarily, you need to be involved in ministry to the body. It really doesn’t matter where. It can be where there is need or wherever interests you most. But first priority is to be involved in service in the Body of Christ. Once you are involved you will better be able to see where God is moving you and is equipping you to be a minister. **Embrace who God has made you to be.** When you think you have found an area you seem to have an impulse of gifting and passion and personality for, embrace it with gusto. Read books on the area of ministry or spiritual development, talk to other people who are gifted in a similar area or have similar interest, pray and look for opportunities to practice your ministry. God made you and loves you, look to Him and ‘be transformed by the renewing of your mind’ so you can understand His desires for the church and for you.

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as

faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. If you speak, you should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If you serve, you should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen. I Peter 4. 10-11 (TNIV)

Get to Know the Writer

Alison Fall is a wife and a mom. She received her Master of Divinity from Denver Seminary and is a Candidate Under Care of the Presbytery of the West. She currently serves in Children's Ministry at Cherry Hills Community Church. Additionally, she has also taught for Ministry by Women and developed volunteer curriculum for the Congregational Life Department at Cherry Hills. Alison's passion is fostering spiritual growth through ministry involvement and connecting Christians with ministry opportunity. Alison grew up in Colorado and loves spending time with her family exploring God's creation.

For Further Reading: Gifted for Ministry

Further Biblical Study:

The NIV Application Commentary series is worthwhile and provides clear sections of original meaning, context and contemporary application for each passage.

The New International Commentary on the New Testament series (NICNT) is more in-depth than the NIV Application but remains accessible and opens scholarly discussion without the need for the original languages.

Most theological libraries, as well as some church and pastor's libraries, will have these series. They are also readily available from online book-sellers and seminary bookstores.

Carson, D.A. **Showing the Spirit: A Theological Exposition of I Corinthians 12-14**. Baker Book House: Grand Rapids, 1987.

An outstanding work bringing balanced insight to the charismatic conversation.

Further Gifting and Personality Study:

Type Talk: The 16 Personality Types that Determine How We Live,

Love and Work by Otto Kroeger and Janet M. Thuesen

One of the original personality works based on Myers- Briggs.

The Purpose Driven Life by Richard Warren

Very popular accessible treatment of how to see God's direction in your life. Details Warren's S.H.A.P.E. ministry tools.

www.leadingfromyourstrengths.com was created by Dr. John Trent and Rodney Cox and offers an excellent assessment on personality and how it relates to effective ministry as a team. This is a highly recommended resource for forming an effective ministry team and developing understanding of personal behaviors and how people relate in the community.

www.uniquelyyou.com an organization founded by Dr. Mels Carbonell which offers very good personality (DISC) assessment and spiritual gifts assessment that can be ordered for classes or taken online.

I. Teaching Outline: I Corinthians 12 – 14

God's presence in the congregation: unity and diversity

A. The Body, The Holy Spirit and gifts. (12:1-31)

Background: What is going on in the Corinthian Church? (12:1-3)

B. Different gifts: One God at work (12:4-11)

To whom are spiritual gifts given?

Why are spiritual gifts given?

C. An illustration, Paul introduces the 'body' analogy for all time (12:12-30)

What about the order of verse 28? Is that hierarchical? Chronological?

What are the greater gifts of verse 31?

What's love got to do with it? Why is Chapter 13 mixed in here?

Understanding what's going on in worship (14:1-25)

D. Tongues vs. Prophecy: What edifies the church is intelligible

II. Teaching Outline: Romans 12:1-8

I. Historical context for the church in Rome

A. Paul's situation

B. The church in Rome....

II. Responding to God's mercies (12: 1-2)

A. God's mercies elicit a response

B. God's mercies call for true worship

- C. God's mercies transform our minds
- D. What are the things in your life which may prevent you from giving your body as a living sacrifice to God?

From *The Message*, Romans 12: 1-2:

So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life – your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what He wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.

III. Humility in the body

- A. Different roles - Diversity
- B. One body – Unity
- C. Minister to build up the body
 - i. If your gift is prophesying...
 - ii. If it is serving/ruling...
 - iii. If it is teaching...
 - iv. If it is to encourage...
 - v. If it is giving...
 - vi. If it is to lead...
 - vii. If it is to show mercy...

III. Teaching Outline: Ephesians 4

- I. Historical context for Ephesians
- II. I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received... (v. 1-6)
 - A. The calling
 - B. The behavior
 - C. One Lord brings unity
- III. Gifts bring maturity, maturity brings unity (vs. 7-16)

- A. Apostle
- B. Prophet
- C. Evangelist
- D. Pastor/Teacher
- E. Why are the gifts given?
- F. What are the dangers of immaturity?
- G. What are the characteristics of the grown up body?

From the Message, Ephesians 4:1-6

In light of all this, here's what I want you to do. While I'm locked up here, a prisoner for the Master, I want you to get out there and walk—better yet, run!—on the road God called you to travel. I don't want any of you sitting around on your hands. I don't want anyone strolling off, down some path that goes nowhere. And mark that you do this with humility and discipline—not in fits and starts, but steadily, pouring yourselves out for each other in acts of love, alert at noticing differences and quick at mending fences. You were all called to travel on the same road and in the same direction, so stay together, both outwardly and inwardly. You have one Master, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who rules over all, works through all, and is present in all. Everything you are and think and do is permeated with Oneness.

IV. Teaching Outline: I Peter 4:7-11

- I. Historical context for I Peter
- II. The end of all things is near...” (v. 7a)
- III. Exhortations for the persecuted church (v7-11)
 - A. Pray like you mean it! (v. 7b)
 - B. Above all love...(v. 8)
 - C. A picture of hospitality with out whining (v. 9)
 - D. Peter's call to service (v. 10-11)
 - i. The 2 fold gift list
 - ii. Whatever you do, do it in God's power!

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. If you speak, should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If you serve, you should

do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory and power for ever and ever. Amen. I Peter 4:10-11 (TNIV)

Where Is My Passion?

Imagine you and I are meeting for the first time chit-chatting about a variety of topics. As you start talking to me about a new subject, you start talking a little faster, you lean forward. You become increasingly animated. Your voice goes up. You are talking about a subject that could keep you up late at night. It's a topic that could cause you to jump out of bed in the morning. What are you talking about?

Make a list of your greatest achievements, but be sure they are things you enjoyed doing. They may be accomplishments that other people don't find particularly impressive, but were important to you. Do not include something such as: you may have been voted Prom Queen but it didn't seem like that big of a deal and you didn't enjoy the process.

Include such things as: when you were in high school, you organized a group of students to become involved in creating awareness of world hunger and invented creative ways to reach the student body population with your message. You were exhilarated by the process and enjoyed raising money to help starving children. List the highlights here:

Are there similarities in your list of enjoyable achievements? What themes can you see?

Your passions will energize you. When you are engaged in your passions you will become more alive emotionally and your thoughts about your passion will actually give you energy! This is God's way of moving you toward those people, roles or causes that are His created agenda for your life. His will for you is partly revealed in your God-given passions. What energizes you?

Where is my Passion?

Which of these groups do you most easily relate to? Who do you wish you could help? Who do you feel drawn to because of personal experience or frequent encounters?

Age Group:

___ Children ___ Parents of young children

___ Teens ___ Parents of Teens
___ College/Young Adults ___ People in mid-life
___ Singles ___ Empty nesters
___ Newly married ___ Seniors

People with practical needs:

___ Education or tutoring ___ Maintenance/repair needs
___ Financial or budget ___ Parenting concerns
___ Health/wellness (medical/dental) ___ Prayer needs
___ Housing needs ___ Ecological concerns
___ Legal counsel

People with counseling needs:

___ Substance abuse ___ Marital counseling
___ Grief support ___ Spiritual/discipleship
___ Family relationship problems ___ Mentoring
___ Support groups ___ Employment/Career
Counseling

Ministries to specific populations:

___ People with disabilities or illnesses ___ International students
___ Business and professionals ___ Missionaries
___ Community or neighborhood ___ New church members
___ Ethnic groups/refugees ___ Unemployed
___ Inmates ___ Orphans/foster children
___ Homeless
___ Other

Examining your experiences and your passions, are there any areas of ministry that come to mind? Write down 2 or 3 possibilities:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Derived from Walnuts Hills 301 and Saddleback 301

The ACTS Ministry

Experiences with Gift-Based Equipping Ministry

Margot Gardner

IT IS OFTEN HELPFUL to learn what another church might be doing to enable their members to not only discover their spiritual gifts, but to use them effectively in ministry. The ACTS Ministry at Signal Mountain Presbyterian, Signal Mountain, Tennessee is one of many churches that make discovering and using spiritual gifts a priority in the life of the church.

Gift-based equipping ministry is vital to the health of the church. It is God's operating system for the church. When spiritual gifts are recognized and utilized in the people and ministries of the church, everyone feels a part of the Body and the Body is functioning as it was designed.

In 2002, Signal Mountain Presbyterian Church began a journey with gifts-based/equipping ministry and the Lord has done some amazing things in the intervening years. What began as a search for software to keep track of volunteers' skills has ended up being so much more! We found Network Ministries International's materials and have been using them ever since. What NMI provides is a curriculum and a process that helps people uncover their God-given spiritual gifts, passion and personal style and then uses that information to help people find their ministry. SMPC calls this ministry **Answering Christ Through Serving (ACTS)**. It's not a perfect system and nothing can replace a personal, intimate relationship with Jesus Christ, nor the power and direction of the Holy Spirit, but when all of these elements combine, look out!

In 2008, we began to focus on how ministry leaders can equip and release the Divine Designs of the people on their teams. We used NMI's Leadership C.A.R.E. (now called Leadershift) as a resource, along with the experience and knowledge of Associate Pastor Tim Filston, to help ministry leaders: define the vision and mission of their ministries, to **Call** people into their ministry area, **Assimilate** new servants into the ministry team, **Retain** team members, and if someone needs to leave a ministry team, how the ministry leader can help them **Exit** to another ministry. What we will continue to focus on in the future with our leaders is how

to build teams that love one another and glorify God by using their Divine Designs effectively in ministry.

What are some of the amazing things we have seen God do through the ACTS Ministry? Here is a partial list of ministries that have been started at SMPC as a result of people uncovering their Divine Designs:

Ephesians 1:5 Fellowship – adoption/infertility ministry

Divorce Care – support for divorced adults

Family/Couples ministry

College ministry

MOPS – started a chapter of MOPS on Signal Mountain

Others have found their places to serve in existing ministries within the church and out in the community. We have had people begin ministering to the elderly; ministering to youth and to boys who don't have a father in their lives; and coordinate the Operation Christmas Child shoe-box drive for example.

We have recently put in place web-based software that allows anyone, from any computer, to access our directory of serving opportunities. Our desire is to facilitate connecting servants with ministries and get more of our congregation involved in using their Divine Designs in Kingdom work.

If you would like to talk to us about our experiences, we would be happy to share what we have learned. Just contact:

Margo Gardner or Jenny Nash

423-886-3390

acts@signalpres.org

Suggested Resources:

Network Ministries International's website where Network and Leadership materials are available: <http://www.networkministries.com/>

The Equipping Church by Sue Mallory and **The Equipping Church Guidebook** by Sue Mallory and Brad Smith – extensive, thorough resources – “must haves”.

Excerpt from the EPC Position Paper on the Holy Spirit. Complete paper can be found at:

<http://www.epc.org/about-the-epc/position-papers/the-holy-spirit/>

Since Christians are called to “...be filled with the Spirit...” (Ephesians 5:18) all believers in Christ having been baptized into His body by the Holy Spirit should seek to experience the fulfillment of this command. We believe that Christians are called upon to proclaim a grace that reaches out to forgive, to redeem and to give new spiritual power to life through Jesus Christ and the infilling of the Holy Spirit.” (*Book of Worship*, 1-3)

Regardless of what term is used, we recognize this deepening work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer as being both valid and necessary, proclaiming evidences of His presence in the process. What do we believe to be these evidences of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer?

Some would require that Christians manifest a particular gift, such as speaking in tongues, as evidence of deeper work of the Spirit within. Others would have us believe such a gift is no longer available or acceptable. As a Reformed denomination, we adhere strongly to our belief in the sovereignty of God, a belief that does not allow us either to require a certain gift or to restrict the Spirit in how He will work. Rather, we call upon all Christians to open their lives unto God’s Spirit to fill, empower, and “gift” as He sees fit.

The Holy Spirit is evidenced, then, in part through the giving of spiritual gifts. Some of these gifts are listed in I Corinthians 12, Romans 12, Ephesians 4 and I Peter 4. Our position with regard to the gifts is best summarized in the publication “Questions Most Often Asked About the Evangelical Presbyterian Church” where we read:

Q. How does the EPC view the gifts of the Holy Spirit?

A. The EPC affirms the gifts of God’s Spirit as Biblically valid for today, and counsels that they be exercised under the guidance of God’s Word and the authority of the local Session. Since the Holy Spirit is the source of Christian unity, we must ever guard against any use of the gifts which would lead to division within the Church. We also affirm the priority of the fruit of the Spirit over the gifts in the Christian life.

Because of our affirming of the validity of spiritual gifts in the Church today, we are sometimes asked if we are a “charismatic” denomination. The publication just referred to answers this question well.

Q. Is the EPC charismatic?

A. If you mean are we Pentecostal, the answer is no. If you mean are

we open to the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the answer is yes.

We believe that the word “charismatic” should not be limited to specific manifestations of the work of the Holy Spirit, such as speaking in tongues, but “charismatic” does refer to the fact that every Christian receives a gift, or gifts, from the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 12:7, 11). In Romans 6:23, Paul states “...the wages of sin is death, but the gift (charism) of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” This means that all who are born again, receiving the gift of life in Jesus Christ, are by virtue of the gift “charismatic” in the broadest sense of the word (Ephesians 4:7).