



# Introduction

*Let each of you lead the life that the Lord  
has assigned, to which God called you.*

—1 Corinthians 7:17

EVERY CHRISTIAN

CALLED BY GOD

GIFTED FOR MINISTRY



You are holding in your hands a most wonderful invitation: an invitation for every member of your congregation to discover and celebrate the deep and profound gifts that God has placed uniquely within each one of them.

The biblical witness is clear: God has given every Christian at least two vitally important gifts for daily living. The first is the gift of faith in Jesus Christ, his work of redemption, and thus forgiveness of sin. It is not a gift we have asked for nor earned; it is solely of God, out of God's unending love and care for us. So also is the second gift—of one or more special abilities—to be used for the purpose of ministry and the growth of Christ's kingdom. These special abilities are called spiritual gifts.

This packet of material is about spiritual gifts, and the ways every Christian can discover their own true selves, made in the image of God and gifted by God to live a life befitting that creation. It is not a program; neither is it some trendy gimmick to attract more people to your church. Rather, it truly is an invitation, to journey deeper toward that faith-filled place where God has called us all to be.

## The Source and Purpose of Spiritual Gifts

As the church of the New Testament was being formed and nurtured, it was also exploring a new and remarkable understanding: that God had blessed not simply the priests or other leaders of the church, but every believer, with unique abilities intended for the building up of the community of faith and for the enabling of Christ's message to be most effectively conveyed.

It was a new and radical concept of which Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus. In Ephesians 4, we read: "Each of us has

received a special gift in proportion to what Christ has given...[God] did this to prepare all God's people for the work of Christian service, in order to build up the body of Christ" (TEV). Become mature in your faith and spiritual growth, Paul continued.

Special gifts, or spiritual gifts, are not simply our natural abilities or talents (there is that aspect to us as well, but it's a different part of us). They are special, unique gifts given to believers by God through the Holy Spirit to empower them for the ministries of the church and the call of God in their lives. We do not choose these gifts—God does.

These spiritual gifts are powerful attributes of our individual being, yet intended for use beyond our own personal well-being. In

1 Corinthians 12, we are told that the Spirit gives different gifts to each person so that together we can most effectively be the church.

God has, in fact, bound us all together as many parts of Christ's body; every part is vital to the health of the whole body. The Bible states unequivocally that every believer has at least one spiritual gift; many believers have been given several. It is not a matter of wondering if you are gifted—it is a matter of accepting the fact that you are gifted. There are no greater or lesser gifts; the complete ministry that God intended is only fully accomplished when each believer contributes the unique part that God has designed in him or her.

We have the assurance that with this gift God also grants us the energy, hope, and ability to fully utilize it. Our main responsibility is to bring a willing heart and a listening and obedient spirit, and God will supply the rest. In Romans 12:6 we are assured that “we are to use our different gifts in accordance with the grace that God has given us.” As with all the gifts God has given us, our greatest expression of thanks is to use wisely and fully what he has so graciously bestowed on us. First Peter 4:10-11 reminds us that in doing so, we honor God.

## Discovering Our Spiritual Gifts

All are gifted for the unity of the church and the building up of the body of Christ. This much is clear. But how does that work? How

do we know what our gifts are, and how do we use those gifts?

There are many ways by which the people of God can understand God's design for them in the church. Resources on spiritual gifts number in the hundreds; what's right for you depends on your church and your experience with spiritual gifts. This packet is intended as an introduction to a study and exploration of spiritual gifts and a beginning point for congregations who wish to explore a gifts-based ministry. It's organized in a simple, straightforward method, summarized by the acronym BEGIN: Bible study, then Examine yourself, finally Get INvolved.

## Bible Study

Much like the parable of the sower in Matthew 13 and Luke 8, the seeds of spiritual-gift ministry will thrive in good soil. A conscious commitment to the biblical foundation of this understanding of ministry will help prepare that soil in your congregation.

That means, first of all, a commitment to Bible study. A basic four-week study that begins with the key texts in Scripture about spiritual gifts is included in this packet. It introduces spiritual gifts and tells how they can be discovered and used. If you need a more extensive biblical foundation than is provided by this study, seek out the excellent six-session Bible study on discipleship included in the Learning for Life resource manual. Learning for Life is a resource for training, nurturing, and supporting a Christian education ministry in the local church. Copies

were mailed to each congregation that requested a copy in spring 2001. Additional copies are available for \$49.95<sup>US</sup>/\$72.45<sup>CDN</sup> from the RCA Distribution Center/TRAVARCA, 1-800-968-7221 or [orders@rca.org](mailto:orders@rca.org).

Also valuable in preparing the soil of hearts for the seeds of Christ would be a series of sermons on the subject, a consistory in prayer for God's leading, and individuals who have a heart for seeing every Christian in fulfilling ministry and connected to God's leading.

## Examine Yourself

Spiritual gifts don't mean much until you know what your spiritual gifts are. Two spiritual gift inventories—one for adults and one for youth—make up the next major component of this resource packet. The inventories are simply questions to ask yourself, in a group or individually. When your answers are entered on the accompanying scoring grid, they provide insight into how God has gifted you. The inventory is easy to take and easy to score, but difficult to ignore. Taking the inventory is built into the four-session study.

Also included in this packet is the outline of a twenty-four-hour retreat, including time for study and gifts identification, if that style best fits your congregation. There is also a section of this booklet on the role of passions and personality types as they relate to the use of spiritual gifts; while no tests for personality are included with this packet, it is important to be aware of the relationship between personality and gifts as well.

## Get Involved

Finally, there's the application of what you've learned. Coming to faith in Jesus Christ was for most of us a life-changing experience; so also can be the discovery of our spiritual gifts. Once that discovery has been made, it is crucially important for the church to provide its people with the structure, encouragement, and incentive to live out their calling. How can the congregation fan the flickers of new insight and ministry in its people? How can the church welcome their ideas, believe in them, provide means to help their vision happen, and cheer them on their way? That's the challenge, and reward, of discovering spiritual gifts. The final pages of the inventory suggest a means by which adults and youth can act on what they learn through the ministries of the church—and also at home, on the job, and in the community. Additional resources and contact information for resource people are included to help you along in your journey.

Remember, these are spiritual gifts for the building up of Christ's kingdom. The primary purpose of a spiritual gifts assessment is not simply to find people who can be slotted into openings in your current church structure. Rather, it is to identify and celebrate the unique gifts God has planted in each of us, and to ask how God is calling us to use our gifts to make a difference in the mission and ministry of our church. Be warned: this might shake things up a bit.

## Called by God, Gifted for Ministry

Sitting in the pews of churches across America are literally millions of Christ-ones who are God's gift to a hurting nation...Ninety-eight percent of America's Christ-ones are not ordained ministers, but their callings to ministry are just as important as the pastor's calling.

—from *Calling*, by Tillapaugh/Hurst

Discovering one's spiritual gifts through assessment is not only an affirming experience for believers, but also a freeing one. When we understand where our gift strengths lie and blend that awareness with our passion and personality, we are empowered to say "no" to requests that do not fit our God-given gifts, in order to be able to say "yes" to areas that enliven and enrich our lives as well as the life of the church. We go from being burnt out to being fired up; from "you must" to "I want to!"

We are best led by example; therefore, the best possible leadership for this endeavor is the laity. This is a time for the church leaders and especially the elders, who are charged with the spiritual oversight of the congregation, to be in earnest prayer and discernment, asking God to lift up to their awareness a person in their fellowship of believers who believes passionately that everyone is called to ministry, and who can introduce, shepherd, and encourage others by walking alongside people as they begin to identify and to utilize their gifts.

Please rest assured that no one need venture out alone in this endeavor. There are many people in the larger church actively engaged in spiritual gifts work in their local congregations who would be happy to answer questions and to mentor and encourage you. Their names are listed in the back of this packet for your use.

The spiritual gifts are just that—gifts for God's people. God be with you as you open this present and discover the ways God has blessed you to be a blessing!

# Gifts and the Individual:

## The Role of Personalities and Passions in Spiritual Gifts

How do we know what our spiritual gifts are?  
How can we find out?

The starting point is clear: everyone has been given spiritual gifts; the Bible is clear on that point. Many have received the same spiritual gift or gifts: to be teachers or evangelists, for example, or possessors of wisdom, or faith, or healing.

But not every gift is experienced or lived out in the same way. Every individual is a complex mix of giftedness, personality, passions, and past experiences—some good, some bad, but all of them affecting how we, in our fallen human state, relate to these special gifts from God. Identifying our gifts and how we might use them means first paying attention to some other aspects of ourselves.

## Gifts and Personality

Do you ever wonder why some people love to retreat to the solitude of a cabin in the woods while others need the hustle and bustle of the big city? Why some people need everything around them to be in order while others simply “fly by the seat of their pants”?

Most people are curious about what makes them tick. You may have heard of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator—it’s one of many measures of personality types. The little test that follows is a quick introduction to person-

ality identification. See which one of the answers to each beginning statement matches your approach to life:

In order to be enriched and enlivened, I:

- revel in the opportunity to have some peace and quiet, to find some time alone, to do things at my own pace and in a self-directed manner.
- prefer to have people around to interact with and to bounce ideas off; I like to fill up my days with activities and feel most energized when I am in motion.

I am happiest when:

- there is time to plan carefully what I will be doing, and life has a structure and order about it.
- I am placed in a situation that requires spontaneity, and decisions are based on what is needed at that moment, with the give-and-take input of everyone.

When called upon to make a decision, my natural response is:

- just give me the facts—let’s be logical about this.
- how will it affect the people involved—will it promote harmony?

Your answers to these questions do not determine whether you have spiritual gifts from God or not. Rather, your answers will give you an idea about the settings in which you

will be most comfortable utilizing your gifts. Your personality is an important factor in finding your niche—it's why two people with the same spiritual gift might use them in very different ways.

## Gifts and Passion

Hearing God's call requires a heart willing to listen. This call may not be as profound as Paul's on the road to Damascus, but it is just as important. And just as we must be willing to hear the message, we must also be willing to act on it.

Identifying your passion is the most important thing you can discover about yourself; it is the way God will direct you to a place to minister. For some, this passion may be a dream they've had for years. For others, it may be born out of their own painful experiences or from the experiences of others who have touched their lives. A financial advisor may quit his job to fulfill his dream of pastoring a new church. A young woman experiencing back surgery may suddenly become aware of the physical limitations of the elderly and seek to minister there.

What does passion look like, and how does it affect us? Try taking this brief test:

- What age or group of people am I drawn to or do I have the greatest concern for?
- What issues concern or excite me within the church and in the secular community?
- If I knew I couldn't fail, this is what I'd attempt to do for God with my life (with

no limitations of time, money, or help).

If you are having difficulty discovering your passion, begin by spending time alone with God. Pray that God will show you areas of need in your own life. Listen to the hurts and needs of those around you at home and at work or in the community. Reflect on your own painful experiences. Then, wait with an attentive heart.

It is also important to talk about your passion with others and share what you've learned. You may be surprised to find others with the same interest. God may be raising up servants for a new ministry in your church, and sharing is the only way you will be able to find each other.

Let others know you are looking for a place to serve and keep an open mind as suggestions are made. Remember that God has created you with unique characteristics that equip you to serve in a specific place, and it will take time to discover it. The important thing to remember is to take a step and begin serving. Each ministry will bring you closer to finding your God-given calling to serve others.

## Gifts and Experiences

Our experiences don't determine our gifts; God determines our gifts. But our experiences in life may determine the way we see those gifts. Our upbringing, our faith journey, our current living conditions and patterns: all of

these affect the way a person is able to observe the workings of God in her or his life and respond to those workings.

For example, our past experiences have made some of us prideful about our successes and strengths, seeing ourselves as self-made persons. Others of us discount any gifts at all, hiding behind a façade of humility or false modesty we were taught in our childhood. Still others are perfectionists, harder on themselves than God would be. All of these traits affect the way we see and use our gifts.

One way to understand how our experiences affect our spiritual journey and our receptivity to our spiritual gifts is to do the timeline exercise found in the retreat outline of this packet. It simply asks you to do a timeline of your life, highlighting key experiences and remembrances of your own history. Looking back on your life and naming those influences that formed and shaped you is the first step in allowing your spiritual gifts to move to the forefront. To ignore our life experiences is to be ignorant of how they can continue to shape and direct our spiritual journey.

## A Personal Reflection

Implementing a process to help others identify their giftedness for ministry doesn't take any special training or a large budget, just a willing heart and a call from God.

It has been three years since our pastor first approached me with the idea of presenting a gifts ministry discovery class. Since I was a

stay-at-home mother of six children, the youngest being two-year-old triplets, he was a little reluctant, but felt God was directing him to me. Little did he know that God had also been preparing me. I agreed to look at the materials and soon found that I was very passionate about helping others identify the unique qualities that God had given them to minister in specific ways.

As I answered God's call, I discovered this was the place I could best use the spiritual gifts, abilities, life experiences, and personality traits God had given me. As I stepped out and began working with individuals and groups, God provided the energy and the time I needed. I experienced a deep sense of satisfaction as I encouraged a construction worker to share his faith with a group of single-parent boys as they spent a day fishing; helped a very busy mom with toddlers discover ways she could minister to the children at the Red Cross shelter by providing after school treats each week; and gave freedom to a long-time Sunday morning welcome hostess to understand she was in mission when she pursued her desire to help others in Alcoholics Anonymous, just as she had been helped.

Helping others find their ministry really doesn't require a seminary degree or a position on the church staff. It just takes a willing heart and a dependence on the One who has given you the characteristics to equip you for his call.

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# A Spiritual Gifts Weekend Retreat

## Focusing Our Living through Christ and His Gifts to the Body

### First Evening

#### Opening Worship (30 minutes)

As part of the opening worship, choose four people and have each read one of the Scripture passages on gifts below. Ask people to reflect briefly after each reading on what God has to say to each of us about gifts.

Romans 12:1-8

1 Peter 4:10-11

Ephesians 4:11-16

1 Corinthians 12:1, 4-27

Close with a time of prayer, asking for God's revelation through the Word and his Spirit as the group enters its time of study and discussion.

#### Small Groups (30 minutes)

Break into groups of three to four. Have people introduce themselves and tell one thing about themselves: where we would find them at 10:00 a.m. on Monday morning, for example, or something that makes them smile.

Write the following discussion starters on newsprint or a chalkboard and have people respond to them in their groups:

Tell about a gift you enjoyed giving.

What non-material gift means the most to you?

Tell about a special gift you once received and why it is especially memorable.

What gifts do you believe you have to offer others?

#### Timeline Activity (1 hour)

Leader: "God has been shaping our lives and characters over a lifetime, using people, circumstances, events, and experiences. God has been shaping and forming you. He has given you abilities and gifts to bless and to be blessed."

Give participants about 15 minutes to write a personal timeline. Instruct them to divide an 11" x 17" piece of paper into sections, each section representing either five or ten years of their life, depending on their age. (If they are forty or under, each section represents five years; over forty, each represents ten years.) Have them label each section with the age-period of their life it represents and then write answers to the following questions in each section:

1. What did you like to do for fun when you were in elementary school, junior high, high school, etc.?
2. What kinds of things were you especially good at?
3. In what areas did people say you had special abilities in school, work, and relationships?
4. List significant events and people in each time period.
5. List ministry-type experiences, both positive and negative.

Next have participants look to the future and consider the following questions:

1. What need in the church or society do you care most about?
2. Is something tugging at your heart that you know would benefit people or that you could do to benefit the people around you?

Finally, have participants find a partner with whom to discuss their timeline and their answers to the two questions above. Instruct each person to listen carefully as their partner shares what he or she has written. Tell them to try to pick up on an interest or passion that may point toward an area of gifts.

Conclude the timeline activity by returning to the four Scripture passages read at the beginning of the session. Emphasize the importance of using gifts to build unity and show love.

Closing Prayer

## DAY TWO

Morning Session (3 hours)

Opening Prayer

(After prayer, ask participants if they have questions about the material you covered the previous day.)

Spiritual Gifts Inventory (1 hour, 15 minutes)

After taking the spiritual gifts inventory, have participants choose a partner and discuss the following:

1. Share your top three gifts.
2. Can you see any correlation between these gifts and your timeline interests and experiences?
3. Can you see any relationship between your gifts and needs you are aware of or would like to see addressed in the church or society?

Break (15 minutes)

Large Group Sharing (1 hour, 15 minutes)  
Gather in one group and have people share their answers to the following questions:

1. What are some of your gifts?
2. Can you see evidence of these gifts throughout your life? Where?
3. Have you had experiences that have happened because of a gift? Can you tell about one of these experiences?
4. How have experiences and people shaped your gifts?

Lunch Break

Testimony and/or Teaching Time  
(1 hour, 15 minutes)

Do additional teaching on a particular gift or several gifts. For example, you might teach on the gift of mercy. (A variety of study materials are available if you need help.) Talk about the distinctiveness of the gift, its characteristics, and its proper use.

Bring in someone who has that gift and let them share about how they use it to build up the body of Christ. (It will be helpful if you can highlight two or three gifts and have a testimony for each.)

Once again, have people share in groups of three or four what they have learned about themselves and others in this process.

#### How to Use Your Gifts (1 hour)

At this point it's important to recall the scriptural purpose of spiritual gifts. Go back to the four Scripture passages listed at the beginning of this retreat outline, and have people pull out the passages that refer to the unity of the church and the importance of using gifts in love.

If you are holding this retreat in your church building, this is a great time to get up and walk around the building. In each room, talk about what happens in that room. Which gifts are needed for that to happen? What could happen in these rooms if certain gifts were being used?

This is a great way to help people discover ways they can serve. For example, when you stand in a Sunday school room, people may see that a gift of shepherding is needed, or a gift of encouragement or mercy. In other words, there is more to Sunday school than teaching. People may recall teachers who had these various gifts.

This activity helps people dream and respond; it also helps them see how all the gifts work together and what happens when certain gifts are missing.

When you return to your meeting room, have someone share a testimony; he or she could tell:

how his or her life has been affected by

discovering a spiritual gift;

how his or her life was changed because someone else used a gift; or

how several people worked together, and the body functioned better as a result.

As you conclude your time together, give each person a gifts inventory sheet. Include blanks for their name, top four spiritual gifts, three passions, three to four ministry experiences, three to four talents, and the place God is tugging at their heart to explore getting involved.

It's good for people to have some time to process all that has happened during the retreat and to go back to their lives with a heightened awareness of how God is at work in and around them.

Set a time to have everyone get together again in two weeks and have them bring their completed inventory sheet. It will be a time to talk about the gifts inventory experience and to discover if people are ready to volunteer to participate in a ministry or consider starting a new ministry.

#### A Fun Way to Wrap Things Up

It's a nice touch to send each participant home with a token of the time you have spent together. For example, you might give each of them cookie ingredients layered in a jar and tied off with a ribbon with a recipe card attached. It's a fun reminder that all the ingredients must be mixed together to provide the best effect in the end.

Closing Prayer

# A Suggested Four-Week Bible Study Format

<b>Purpose:</b>	To provide a framework for exploring the biblical basis of spiritual gifts and the gifts that God has given to each individual.	<b>Materials:</b>	Over the four-week period, you will need: Bibles Newsprint or chalk/dry-erase board, plus appropriate markers Copies of the assessment tool for each participant Pencils
<b>Participants:</b>	Any members of a congregation who want to explore their own spiritual gifts and the means by which the church can incorporate a spiritual gifts-based ministry.	<b>Setting:</b>	Find a comfortable room for the number of people you anticipate for your study. Again, if the group is larger than ten persons, you will also need separate space for smaller subgroups.
<b>Leadership:</b>	A member of the congregation who is gifted and passionate for teaching should serve as facilitator of the group. Don't automatically assume this is the pastor's responsibility; since the subject of spiritual gifts is one for all the people, a member of the congregation, perhaps an elder, would be a good choice as facilitator. If the group is larger than about ten persons, you will need facilitators for smaller subgroups.	<b>Time:</b>	1 1/2 hours per session
		<b>Preparation:</b>	The leader will need to review the subject matter for each week. Some sessions include handout materials, which should be typed and copied in advance.

# Session One:

## Opening Ourselves to Scripture

### Prayer and Opening Introduction (5 minutes)

As leader, you'll want to open every session with prayer. It's a good grounding for what you'll do next. For this first session, lead the prayer yourself; in subsequent sessions, you may want to ask others to provide the opening prayer. (Note: It's often best to ask in advance. Many people are uncomfortable being put on the spot.) Then, briefly, introduce the topic of spiritual gifts.

### Opening Gathering (25 minutes)

The first meeting of a small group always requires a getting-to-know-you time, even in small congregations where "everyone knows each other." Allow each attendee to briefly introduce themselves: name, number of years in the church, something about their family or themselves that others might not know. Then, in a second time around, have each person answer the following two questions (with a short accompanying explanation):

- What attracted me to this congregation was...
- What I hope to learn from this time together is...

### A Time for Study (45 minutes)

Bible Passage: Ephesians 4:7-8, 11-16.

(Note: Have this passage typed on a piece of paper, and hand it out to everyone, so they have a common translation.)

### Method of Study: A Responsive Listening Study

This method can be especially effective with small groups of widely varying background in and knowledge of Scripture. Follow the steps outlined below. Note: If your group is larger than ten persons, you'll want to break into smaller subgroups.

Step 1: Prior to a reading of the text, tell the group that you want them to listen for a single word or phrase in the text that captures their attention. (This does not have to be the "most important" word or phrase, but simply one that spoke to them personally.)

Step 2: One person reads the passage out loud, slowly and clearly.

Step 3: Each person shares the word or phrase that captured their attention. They may briefly explain why, if they wish. However, do not allow other participants to comment on a choice, either positively or negatively.

Step 4: A different person reads the passage out loud a second time, again slowly and clearly. Prior to the reading, tell the group to listen for the answer to the question, "Where does this passage touch my life or our community or our world today?"

- Step 5: Each person answers the preceding question, beginning always with the phrase, “I think...”. Do not get into group discussions about any of the responses.
- Step 6: A different person reads the passage out loud a third time.
- Step 7: Invite a response to the following question: “From what I have heard or shared, what does God want me to do or be this week? How does God invite me to change?” Each person should respond using an “I” statement: “I think...” “I feel...” “I wonder...”.
- Step 8: Have people form smaller groups of two or three. Invite them to pray for the other members of their small group, that those persons may be able to act on what they have learned from the Scripture.

Please note: In using the Responsive Listening style of Bible study, never require someone to respond to the whole group if they are not ready to do so. Always provide the option to “pass.” Also, be alert that no one’s response is put down or challenged by

the group; this is a method of study that quietly listens for God’s voice, but does not seek theological unanimity.

#### A Time of Response (15 minutes)

Have the participants take out their printed text of Ephesians 4. Ask them to name the five spiritual gifts recorded in the text. Solicit their feedback to the following questions:

1. What is the purpose of these spiritual gifts?
2. Where are they intended to be used?
3. What personal gain is suggested from these spiritual gifts? (Hint: There is none!)
4. Where do we see these gifts being lived out in our congregation?

#### Homework Assignment

(Note: This is optional, depending on the nature of the class.) Have people draw timelines of their lives. Have them begin in childhood, naming important milestones and things they liked to do. Take it through to the present. The purpose of this assignment is to help people identify their passions and the formative experiences that have contributed to their lives.

#### Close in Prayer

# Session Two: Studying Scripture

## Prayer and Opening (5 minutes)

Open with prayer and briefly review the work and content of the previous week and ask for any reflections on that work.

## Opening Gathering (25 minutes)

Ask if anyone did the homework assignment. Invite a couple members of the group to share their timelines. (You won't have time for everyone to do so. If that's an important value for your congregation, that everyone be heard, then take an extra week to do the timeline.)

If there is no response, simply invite folks to think back on one or two events in their lives that have been formative in their development. Watch the clock, however; otherwise, you may talk all night.

## A Time for Study (45 minutes)

Bible Passages: Romans 12:3-8, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 1 Corinthians 12:27-31. (Again, have these passages typed on a piece of paper, and hand them out to everyone so they have a common translation.)

## Method of Study: Engaging the Text

Divide into three smaller groups. Assign one text to each group. Have them read it together and be ready to report back to the group with responses to the following questions:

- What are the spiritual gifts named in this passage?
- Who receives these gifts?

(individuals/everyone)

- Which are named most important? (all are equal)
- How are the gifts to be used? (for the service of God's kingdom and the church)
- Who will these gifts benefit? (God and God's church)

Bring the group back together. Record their answer to the first question in a grid form, so that you can see the different emphases from the different texts. Compare those differences; ask why that might be. You should expect a lively discussion.

## A Time of Response (15 minutes)

Have the group fill in the blanks to complete the sentences below. (If they give different answers than those listed here, explore those answers as well.) Tell them the answers given below and see if they agree with them. Ask if these sentences could be used to describe their congregation. Why or why not?

- Each one of us has been \_\_\_\_\_.  
(gifted by God through the Holy Spirit)
- Each one of us \_\_\_\_\_ as a unique child of God. (is created and gifted)
- Using your spiritual gifts brings you \_\_\_\_\_. (deep joy and fulfillment)
- Reaching your \_\_\_\_\_ is God's plan. (potential, level of giftedness)

## Closing Prayer

# Session Three: Evaluating Our Gifts

## Prayer and Opening (15 minutes)

Open this session with prayer. Briefly review the work and content of the previous week. Ask for any reflections on that work that people have had since then. Keep this to a minimum tonight. Simply check in with people to see where they have experienced God working in their lives.

## A Time for Study (45 minutes)

The session will be primarily dedicated to having each person complete the spiritual gifts assessment tool, so make sure you have made copies of the assessment for everyone and that you have plenty of pencils available. (Note: RCA congregations may duplicate the assessment tools for adults and youth for use in their own congregations.) Emphasize the importance of answering these questions based on how you really feel, not based on how you think you should answer them or how you'd like to be. This is a self-assessment and will not be turned in at the end of the session. After everyone has completed the exercise, guide them in filling

out the scoring grid and spiritual gift cluster. Note: Do not give the scoring and cluster pages to the participants until they have completed the inventory.

## A Time of Response (15 minutes)

This is a time for participants to reflect on this experience (as opposed to the results—there will be time for that during the next session). How did it feel? How did they experience it? Did the person revealed on paper match the one they see in the mirror? Or did something new appear? Allow participants some space to reflect on this experience.

## Homework Assignment

Encourage each person to look at their scoring grid daily (but not take the test again). Have them pray: God, is there something you would have me do with this?

## Closing Prayer

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-26 aloud to the whole group, then close with prayer.

# Session Four:

## Getting Involved with Our Gifts

### Prayer and Opening (5 minutes)

Open the session with prayer. Then, briefly, review the work and content of the previous week.

### Opening Gathering (5 minutes)

Read 1 Corinthians 13 aloud.

### A Time of Reflection (45 minutes)

The opening gathering for this session is the core of the meeting. It's time to celebrate the giftedness of everyone present. Invite those who are comfortable to share whether the inventory reinforced what they already knew about themselves, or whether they learned something new. Ask others to reflect on each individual's giftedness. Note: This is a good place to offer, as facilitator, some information about the relationship of personality, passions, and past experience to spiritual gifts (you'll find that information on pages 5-7). Remind people that all of those things together make the whole cloth from which God fabricates their unique place of ministry.

### A Time of Response (30 minutes)

Ask these two questions, and record the answers on newsprint or a markerboard. (Don't edit out anything, no matter how it sounds at the time.)

- How does an understanding of spiritual gifts affect the way we do ministry in this congregation?
- What new ministries are possible,

based on the spiritual gifts of those in this church?

- How can we release people to follow their gifts into ministry (in other words, to support them instead of getting in the way)?
- Decide which is the best group in the church (consistory?) to receive a copy of these reflections, and make sure they get them!

### Closing Prayer

Have the group join in this unison prayer. (Make copies for everyone.)

*God of love and compassion, you poured out your life in service in your Son, Jesus Christ. By word and example he taught us to find fulfillment in giving ourselves and to find greatness in serving others. Bless those called to lead us in serving and caring. Empower them by the grace of your Spirit, that your whole church may give its life for the sake of the world, in the name of Jesus Christ, who came not to be served but to serve.*

*Eternal God, you called us to be a special people, to preach the gospel and to show mercy. Keep your Spirit with us as we minister together, so that in everything we may do your will. Guide us lest we stumble or be misguided by our own desires. May all we do be done for the reconciling of the world, for the upbuilding of the church, and for the glory of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*