

Understanding Spiritual Gifts



Kay Arthur, David and BJ Lawson

4minute
BIBLE STUDIES

Understanding Spiritual Gifts

Kay Arthur, David & BJ Lawson

PRECEPT MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL



WATERBROOK
P R E S S

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HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

This small-group study is for people who are interested in learning for themselves more about what the Bible says on various subjects, but who have only limited time to meet together. It's ideal, for example, for a lunch group at work, an early morning men's group, a young mothers' group meeting in a home, a Sunday-school class, or even family devotions. (It's also ideal for small groups that typically have longer meeting times—such as evening groups or Saturday morning groups—but want to devote only a portion of their time together to actual study, while reserving the rest for prayer, fellowship, or other activities.)

This book is designed so that all the group's participants will complete each lesson's study activities *at the same time*. Discussing your insights drawn from what God says about the subject reveals exciting, life-impacting truths.

Although it's a group study, you'll need a facilitator to lead the study and keep the discussion moving. (This person's function is *not* that of a lecturer or teacher. However, when this book is used in a Sunday-school class or similar setting, the teacher should feel free to lead more directly and to bring in other insights in addition to those provided in each week's lesson.)

If *you* are your group's facilitator, the leader, here are some helpful points for making your job easier:

- Go through the lesson and mark the text before you lead the group. This will give you increased familiarity with the material and will enable you to facilitate the group with greater ease. It may be easier for you to lead the group through the instructions for marking if you, as a leader, choose a specific color for each symbol you mark.

- As you lead the group, start at the beginning of the text and simply read it aloud in the order it appears in the lesson, including the “insight boxes,” which appear throughout. Work through the lesson together, observing and discussing what you learn. As you read the Scripture verses, have the group say aloud the word they are marking in the text.
- The discussion questions are there simply to help you cover the material. As the class moves into the discussion, many times you will find that they will cover the questions on their own. Remember, the discussion questions are there to guide the group through the topic, not to squelch discussion.
- Remember how important it is for people to verbalize their answers and discoveries. This greatly strengthens their personal understanding of each week’s lesson. Try to ensure that everyone has plenty of opportunity to contribute to each week’s discussions.
- Keep the discussion moving. This may mean spending more time on some parts of the study than on others. If necessary, you should feel free to spread out a lesson over more than one session. However, remember that you don’t want to slow the pace too much. It’s much better to leave everyone “wanting more” than to have people dropping out because of declining interest.
- If the validity or accuracy of some of the answers seems questionable, you can gently and cheerfully remind the group to stay focused on the truth of the Scriptures. Your object is to learn what the Bible says, not to engage in human philosophy. Simply stick with the Scriptures and give God the opportunity to speak. His Word *is* truth (John 17:17)!

UNDERSTANDING SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Many churches these days seem to place a great deal of emphasis on creating seeker-friendly environments, implementing membership growth programs, building a phenomenal multimedia ministry, and bringing on board “big-vision” staff members with charismatic personalities.

Who is really being glorified in all of this: God or man?

In our efforts to package church into something exciting, we may have overlooked one of God’s key provisions for our growth and maturity: spiritual gifts.

Spiritual gifts are a necessity in the ministry of every body of believers. All of us, as Christ followers should be working together to strengthen the body, to produce unity, to be lights shining in the darkness, and

to bring glory to God. This is done through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, through the gifts that He gives us.

As the preacher A. W. Tozer wrote, “These are not natural talents merely, but gifts imparted by the Holy Spirit to fit the believer for his place in the body of Christ. They are like pipes on a great organ, permitting the musician wide scope and ranged to produce music of the finest quality. But they are, I repeat, more than talents. They are spiritual gifts.”*

Unfortunately, many Christians seem to be unaware of the gifts of the Spirit—what they are, how they are received, or how they are to be used.

In the next six weeks of study you will learn the answers to these questions and more. As you discover a fuller vision for how God intends spiritual gifts to work within the church, your study of this subject will prepare you to tap into God’s agenda and play an active role in His ministry, not only to the body of Christ but possibly even to the rest of the world.

We have yet to see what God would do for His Church if we would all throw ourselves down before Him with an open Bible and cry, “Behold Thy servant, Lord! Be it unto me even as Thou wilt!”†

* A.W. Tozer, *Keys to the Deeper Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 44.

† Tozer, *Keys to the Deeper Life*, 47

WEEK ONE

Sometimes the subject of spiritual gifts seems so confusing it can be hard to even know where to start the discussion. There are so many questions. Who has a spiritual gift? All of us? Or are they for super-spiritual people only?

To get the answers, we're going to go straight to the gift giver Himself and let Him explain the gifts. As you read for yourself the straightforward truths of the Bible, we believe you'll find the subject is not nearly as complicated a subject as you may have thought.

First, we'll consider these two questions: what kind of gifts are there, and who qualifies to receive one?

OBSERVE

Jesus prepared Peter for the world's tribulation; then Peter was to prepare others. So the apostle wrote a letter to the "chosen," the believers scattered throughout Asia during the intense persecution of their day, to encourage them and instruct them in how to live according to God's will (1 Peter 1:2; 4:2).

Leader: Read 1 Peter 4:10–11 aloud. Have the group say aloud and...

- draw a box around each reference to a **gift**, including the pronoun **it**:
- underline the phrase **each one**, which refers here to **believers**.

1 PETER 4:10–11

¹⁰As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

¹¹Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which

God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

As you read the text, it's helpful to have the group say the key words aloud as they mark them. This way everyone will be sure they are marking every occurrence of the word, including any synonymous words or phrases. Do this throughout the study.

INSIGHT

One way to better understand what the text is saying is by asking the “5 Ws and an H” questions—*who, what, when, where, why, and how*—about the passage. By asking these questions, you slow down and actually see what the writer is saying.

DISCUSS

- **Who** receives a gift?
- **What** is this passage about?
- **What** are believers to do with the gift they have been given?

- **How** are they to use what they've received?
- Is the gift to be used for one's personal benefit? Explain your answer.

INSIGHT

A *spiritual gift* is a God-given ability to serve God and other Christians in such a way that Christ is glorified and believers are edified. Each believer has at least one spiritual gift, no matter what his or her natural abilities.

- **What** two categories did Peter divide the gifts into?
- **What** are those who speak supposed to speak?
- **How** are those who serve to carry out their role?

ACTS 6:1–6

¹ Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food.

- **Why** are we to use our gifts in the way described? Look carefully at the end of verse 11 if you need a hint.
- Now let's evaluate what you just read and see how it applies to you. Looking at your experience serving in the church and your desire to do so, which category better describes the way God has equipped you: serving or speaking?
- What have others said to you that confirms this?

OBSERVE

The early church experienced growing pains that alerted the disciples to the impossibility of doing all the work themselves.

Leader: Read Acts 6:1–6 aloud. Have the group...

- circle the words **serv**ing and **serve**.
- draw a box around each reference to **the word**.

DISCUSS

- What complaint had arisen within the congregation?
- How did the twelve respond, according to verse 2? What does this tell you about their understanding of their gifts?
- What type of gifts did the twelve have?
- What category of gifts was needed to resolve the conflict?
- Many people today believe the pastoral staff should take care of all the work related to the life of the church. From what you saw in this passage, is this true? Explain your answer.

² So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables.

³ “Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task.

⁴ “But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

⁵ The statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus,

Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch.

⁶ And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them.

EPHESIANS 4:1–6

¹ Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called,

² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love,

³ being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

- How does this relate to what you read in 1 Peter?

OBSERVE

In the first three chapters of his letter to the Ephesians, Paul described the awesome reality of our salvation. In chapter 3 he specifically wrote about the fact that faith in Christ brings unity to radically different people groups, such as the Jews and the Gentiles. Writing in light of these things, he opened with the word *therefore* in Ephesians 4:1.

Leader: Read Ephesians 4:1–6 aloud. Have the group say and ...

- mark references to **unity**, including the word **one**, with a semicircle, like this:



- draw a stick figure over the word **body**, like this:

DISCUSS

- List the behaviors and characteristics Paul instructed the believers to display in verses 1–2.
- According to verse 3, why are we to behave this way?
- What did you learn from marking *one* in verses 4–6?
- How does this apply to our discussion of spiritual gifts?

⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling;

⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism,

⁶ one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

EPHESIANS 4:7–8, 11–16

⁷ But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.

⁸ Therefore it says, "When He [Jesus] ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men."...

¹¹ And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,

¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;

¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the

OBSERVE

Paul moved from describing what all believers have in common to detailing how they differ from one another. Let's look at what he identified as areas of individuality within the unity of the Spirit.

Leader: Read Ephesians 4:7–8 and 11–16 aloud. Have the group say and...

- draw a box around the words **given, gave, and gifts.**
- mark every reference to **the body** with a stick figure.

Leader: Read the passage again. This time have the group...

- say aloud and mark each reference to **Christ**, including synonyms and pronouns, with a cross: †

DISCUSS

- According to verses 7 and 8, who gave what to whom?