

Final thoughts

God has a plan. He delights when His children and His church obey Him and follow His commands. If you are a child of God, the Holy Spirit has given you gifts to use for Him. Don't sit back and refuse to exercise your gifts. Get busy and blend your gifts with your abilities. God promises us this, "Fear not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."

Sisters, we can't go wrong with God on our side. Find something in your church to do and do it. You'll be surprised at what can be accomplished with God working in you. The blessings will become apparent to all.

—Carolyn



Customizing a Program

EXERCISING THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS

study by Jan Clay
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Beginning thoughts

I love it when a plan comes together. No, I'm not a part of the "A Team," but I did enjoy watching that program. Some of their adventures seemed too far-fetched, but in the end, the plan always worked.

I'm of the firm opinion that churches should have a plan to promote Jesus, His Gospel, and the Truth—no matter what. And God allows each individual church the freedom to set down plans and follow them. This, in my mind, is where gifts come into play. True, some churches possess a greater variety or quantity of spiritual gifts, but within every church, the Holy Spirit manifests His gifts to believers—men, women, teenagers and children. All they need to do is exercise those gifts and be busy about the work of God.

Throughout my life, I have met many people with various abilities, talents, and spiritual gifts. It's usually easy to tell who has a spiritual gift along with a natural ability and talent. This person stands out quite brightly in a crowd. Yet others with spiritual gifts, who don't have special abilities or talents to wave their flags quite so vigorously, still do what they are called to do, faithfully and consistently. Their places don't go empty. Praise the Lord for people like this.

A church can have a plan but without members to carry out that plan, it's useless. The message and mission of the church must be the Gospel of God as given by Christ and His apostles. Christ came for people. People need the Lord. If a church seeks God's guidance in formulating a plan, implements that plan through the power of the Holy Spirit—positioning members where they can use their gifts—then that church will honor and glorify God. The plan will come together.



Customizing a Program

DISCOVERING YOUR GIFTS

BODY FITNESS GOAL: God has so graciously favored each part of the body with his or her own spiritual gift(s) from the Holy Spirit. Each member should be doing his or her best to discover those gifts and to use them fittingly and freely in God's service.

CORE DEVELOPMENT: *"Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands" (2 Timothy 1:6).*

- 📖 We are given glimpses into the lives of some of the people in the Bible for an example and benefit to us. Some of these are listed on p. 35 of *Treasure*. Go over them together.
- 📖 From Acts 6:5, who were the first seven men called to be deacons in the Bible? (*Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas*).
- 📖 Look at Stephen a little closer and name his spiritual gifts. (*Preacher, Evangelist, Faith, Wisdom*)
- 📖 What other gifts did Stephen possess? (*Wonders and miracles, which is part of being an apostle—Acts 6:8.*)
- 📖 When Stephen was arrested and brought before the Sanhedrin, what was their accusation against him? (*Blasphemy—Acts 6:13*)
- 📖 What happened to Stephen? (*He was stoned—Acts 7:58.*)
- 📖 What was Stephen allowed to see before he died? (*His heavenly home, the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God—Acts 7:55-56.*)
- 📖 Name some of the *firsts* associated with Stephen. (*First deacon, first Christian martyr*)
- 📖 Can you name some other Bible people and their gifts?
Examples: (1) Paul: Evangelist—Acts 13:14-16 (the entire sermon is Acts 17-41; Teacher—all the books he wrote; Exhorter—I Timothy 2:1. (2) Peter: Evangelist, Preacher—Acts 10:34-36; Healing—Acts 9:34, 36-41.
- 📖 Do you know people who are gifted but are not putting their gifts to work?
- 📖 How can you encourage another to use her gift for the Lord? (*Sometimes, it only takes a word about how you've noticed how well this person performs a task.*)
- 📖 Is there a purpose for exercising spiritual gifts? (*For the honor and glory of God.*)

COOL DOWN: Dismiss by praying for God's illumination in discovering your spiritual gifts.



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DEVELOPING YOUR GIFTS

BODY FITNESS GOAL: Every Christian carries a distinct responsibility in the body of Christ through the use of their individual spiritual gifts. Knowledge of these gifts should enable each person to find his or her place of ministry in the local church and beyond.

CORE DEVELOPMENT: *"Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church" (1 Corinthians 14:12).*

- 📖 Go over the Scriptures listed on p. 37, *Treasure*, and the gifts of these two men.
- 📖 Which of the two main gift categories did they possess more of—speaking or serving? (*Speaking*)
- 📖 Have you ever served in an area you knew was not your gift?
- 📖 Do you know of people in the church working in areas where they aren't gifted?
- 📖 Is this wrong or bad? (*Of course not. They are doing the best they know how for the Lord, and will develop skills along the way. God might even choose to bestow that gift on them after He realizes their faithfulness to the work being done. However, for the church, it might be better to find someone, if possible, who is gifted in that area. Just try not to discourage anyone from working in the church.*)
- 📖 What are some reasons you might give for not exercising your gift? (*Feel inadequate, not spiritual enough, someone else does it better, lack of time or energy, lack of desire, etc.*)
- 📖 Do you want to do something for God, but feel that the opportunity hasn't been presented?
- 📖 So what do you do? (*Watch for God to open doors and then walk through them.*)
- 📖 How do you develop any spiritual gift you might have? (*(1) Learn about the gift; (2) Accept the gift; (3) Pray for guidance; (4) Offer yourself to God, (5) Examine yourself; (6) Seek confirmation; (7) Try out your gift/Practice, practice, practice; and (8) Look for results.*)
- 📖 Is there anything else that would help you develop your gift(s)? (*Talk to other Christians who have the same gift; attend conferences, seminars, or workshops on the subject; continue working to improve your gift.*)

COOL DOWN: Use the suggestions listed to dismiss in prayer.



Customizing a Program

DISCERNING WHEN AND HOW TO USE YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS

BODY FITNESS GOAL: The Bible gives instructions regarding the use of spiritual gifts. Each member should strive to exercise her gifts in the proper place with decency and order, to promote peace and discourage confusion within the body.

CORE DEVELOPMENT: *“For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints” (1 Corinthians 14:33). “Let all things be done decently and in order” (1 Corinthians 14:40).*

- 📖 What are the meanings of *discernment* and *perceive*? (*Webster’s says, (1) To discover with the eyes or the mind; (2) Realize; (3) Become aware of through the senses.*)
- 📖 Do you like confusion and chaos? Would you rather live in peace and order?
- 📖 Which of these descriptions would fit the character of your church? (*I hope the second one, but have sadly experienced the first.*)
- 📖 How does proper use of spiritual gifts help a church maintain peace and order? (*Through unity and care for each other—1 Corinthians 12:11-14, 25, 26.*)
- 📖 Do you ever feel like you’re just “spinning your wheels” and not getting anything accomplished in ministry work? (*Be honest! I’m positive this has happened to everyone involved in ministry. We’re all human.*)
- 📖 Could this be the result of misuse of gifts?
- 📖 Can we be over zealous sometimes in trying to use our gifts?
- 📖 Do you feel like you are using your gifts in the right way and at the right time? (*Take a survey by the show of hands for this question. If the answer is no, allow a few to express why.*)
- 📖 Who helps a Christian discern things in their lives? (*The Holy Spirit—1 Corinthians 2:12-14.*)
- 📖 Can you think of specific people in the Bible who had that discerning spirit/spiritual perception and used it for the benefit of others? (*Shunammite woman—2 Kings 4:8-10; Nehemiah—Nehemiah 6:12-16; Samaritan Woman—John 4:19.*)
- 📖 Some references to others in the Bible who received discernment: *Solomon—1 Kings 3:9, 10; Disciples—Luke 24:31; David—2 Samuel 5:12; Peter—Acts 10:34.*
- 📖 Can yours or others perception or discernment become dull/lack understanding? (*Yes, look at these Scriptures: Hebrews 5:11; Acts 18:27; 2 Timothy 3:7; Luke 12:56; Romans 3:11.*)

COOL DOWN: Dismiss by praying for your pastor and church leadership.



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DIVERSIFYING THE USE OF YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS

BODY FITNESS GOAL: God allows and encourages diversity in the way each member applies his or her spiritual gifts. Each believer should practice these gifts in ways that contribute to unity and connection within the body.

CORE DEVELOPMENT: *“And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all” (1 Corinthians 12:6).*

- 📖 Do you believe that God never changes, that He is the same God all the time? (*See Psalm 102:27; Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 1:12; Hebrews 13:8.*)
- 📖 What does diversity mean? (*Variety, difference—Ephesians 4:11*)
- 📖 Why does God give us a variety of operations or workings? (*God is the one who gives the power, and He works uniquely in each life—Ephesians 1:19.*)
- 📖 Is God’s power effective if used for purposes other than what He intends? (*No—God is in control. We can use His power if we use it for what He wants, but if we work on our own, then it could be harmful—Colossians 1:29.*)
- 📖 Can the church use people willing to be used by the Holy Spirit?
- 📖 Have you found your function within the body of Christ? What is your gift?
- 📖 What is the work of the church? (*(1) Healing the broken-hearted; (2) Giving deliverance to the captives (bound by doubt, fear, anxiety, selfishness, addictions); (3) Open the eyes of the blind (by sin); (4) Preaching the good news of the Gospel; (5) Encouraging the poor and despairing of heart; and so much more.*)
- 📖 What does “manifestation of the Spirit” mean? (*Spirit indwelling—1 Corinthians 12:7. Spiritual gifts are given only to Christians, and they are something we never had before we accepted Christ.*)
- 📖 Are spiritual gifts the same as natural abilities or talents? (*No, these are not the same as abilities to sing, to lead, to speak, to play an instrument, or whatever it may be. People all over the world, whether believers or not, possess natural abilities and talents.*)
- 📖 Do you enjoy seeing talented people who utilize their spiritual gifts in combination with natural abilities?
- 📖 What is the purpose of giving diversities of gifts? (*So that each person exercising their gift can benefit others.*)

COOL DOWN: Use the suggestions listed to dismiss in prayer.