

What You Do Best in the Body of Christ St. Paul Episcopal Church

God has a place at St. Paul's that only you can fill. The purpose of these worksheets is to give you a better feel for what your unique shape is and how you fit into God's overall design. Just as it takes all pieces of a puzzle, interlocked together, for the puzzle to be complete, it takes all members of the body of Christ, working together, for God's work to be fulfilled.

Church leaders are supposed to equip the saints (members of the church) for the work of ministry – a biblical concept that is easy to understand but difficult to implement. The big question that is being asked (and hopefully answered) by this class is: **"How do we get the right people in the right places for the right reasons?"** This is the most important question for any ministry in the life of the church.

This is a personalized process built on the belief that **each individual is unique, with different spiritual gifts, personal styles, and ministry passions**. When using your spiritual gifts, you will serve more competently. When serving in ways that are consistent with your personal style, you will serve with greater freedom. When you are serving in your area of ministry passion, you will serve more enthusiastically. **You are needed in the church not because there are slots to fill, but because in and through your ministry, God's grace is released and his purposes are fulfilled!**

You have probably heard the saying "bloom where you are planted." **But what happens when you aren't blooming?** You think there is something wrong with you. That is not necessarily so. **God has created and designed us with a purpose in mind**. We are "wired" to care about some things more than others. We have been given spiritual gifts to competently accomplish ministry tasks. We have also been designed with a personal style of relating to others and the world around us. And, we have been given a passion.

This class puts them all together, helps you to find your SHAPE and in turn helps you find your place in ministry. **SHAPE** means:

S = Spiritual Gifts

H = Heart or Passion

A = Abilities

P = Personal Style

E = Experiences in Life

In order to find out what, where and how we should serve, first, we need to make honest evaluations about what we are willing to do and to rethink and explore what we need in order to uncover God's purpose for our lives.

One thing we're going to be looking for through this study is a different perspective. Sometimes we create boundaries or rules that keep us from accomplishing what we are trying to do. We stay "in the box" we've created for ourselves (or others have helped us create). When we're seeking growth, we need to be open to the possibility that the rules we've adopted about who we are may be different than what is actually true. The good news is we can enlarge that perspective to see things from God's viewpoint – seeing as God sees.

What picture forms in your mind when you think of a minister? Is it someone who wears a robe and preaches? Someone who visits people in the hospital? Someone who knows Greek and Hebrew? Do you think of a reverend, a pastor, or a priest? **How would you describe a minister?** Is it someone who is paid to run the church and lets you know if he or she needs something? **As you envision a minister, do you see yourself?** A minister is "one who serves." And God created you, a new person in Christ, to fulfill some specific ministry needs. You may not know what your ministry is yet and you may not know how to be involved in your ministry, but, I have news for you – **You are a minister; therefore, you have a ministry!**

God has an eternal purpose for your life. As you understand this marvelous truth and discover the gifts through which God enables you to accomplish that purpose, you can unleash your God-given potential. You can make a difference in your world. You can serve the risen Christ. As we reach out to the needs throughout God's creation, we are able not only to make a positive difference but also to become the means by which the compassion of Christ touches the brokenness of the world, bringing justice and redemption.

Think about the story where Jesus sent the Disciples ahead of him and they got in a boat to sail across the Sea of Galilee. Jesus needed to spend some time alone and was going to catch up with them later. That night, a tremendous wind came up causing huge waves to crash against the boat. Jesus approached the boat, walking on water. The Disciples thought it was a ghost and were terrified. But Jesus spoke to them and said, "Have courage and don't be afraid!"

Peter quickly asked Jesus to tell him to come to him on the water. Jesus did and Peter got out of the boat and started walking on the water toward Jesus. Then Peter changed his focus. He noticed the wind and the waves and started to remember that people don't walk on water. He probably thought, "What in the world am I doing here?" When his focus shifted from Jesus to the circumstances

around him, he became afraid and began to sink. Jesus lifted him up out of the water, saying, "You of little faith. Why did you doubt?"

It is easy to come to the conclusion that Peter didn't have enough faith. But, what about the others who never even got out of the boat??!! Peter had enough faith to walk on water, an experience the others never had.

Peter obeyed the voice of Jesus to come. This obedience resulted in something he could never have accomplished on his own. As long as he was focused on Jesus, he did just fine, but when Peter's attention turned to his circumstances, he was no longer able to continue walking on water. Peter's focus was the difference.

Are you focused on Jesus Christ? Do you hear him saying to you, "Come"? Like Peter, if Jesus calls you to something, you can be sure he will provide the power to accomplish it if you stay focused on him. I believe that Jesus is calling each one of us. His calling is consistent with his design and creation of our unique person. If we will hear him and focus on him, we will accomplish things we would never have thought possible.

But, we have to get out of the boat! There is no other way to see and experience the power of God in our lives. Each of us will have our own walking on water experience when we obey Jesus – when he says to us, "Come," and we step out with our God-given spiritual gift, personal style, and heart for ministry.

Spiritual gifts is not a fad. It is not even a trend. It is much more significant than either one, and its impact is dramatic and far-reaching. The changes being introduced in the church through the identification and expression of spiritual gifts are not a shift toward something new, but a return to the original!! Today, God is changing the way we do church! He is not, however, introducing a new way. He is moving us closer to the model of the early church – to the way he originally intended his church to function. God is placing ministry back into the hands of every believer across denominational and geographical boundaries!

Read: 1 Corinthians 12 – the whole chapter

1 Corinthians 12 tells us many things about spiritual gifts. First, it tells us flat out that we're to be aware of spiritual gifts – we are to be informed and knowledgeable. This emphasis on gifts is dramatic and critical to a proper understanding of the church and our role within it. Second, we're told we are to use our gifts. Paul wrote to Timothy "Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you." This means us too. Sometimes we are ignorant of our gifts; sometimes we're confused about them. Sometimes we just refuse to use them. First Corinthians describes the church as a body. A leg that does not get any exercise will, over

time, atrophy and look deformed. The rest of the body then has to compensate and carry the “dead weight.” The compensation looks unnatural, and it is clearly not the way the body was originally designed to function.

In the same way, some members of the body of Christ are not exercising their spiritual gifts. This means that the rest of the body must work extra hard to make up for their lack of contribution. Those with too many duties get stressed out, overcommitted, and then burn out. But what if every believer was using his or her spiritual gifts? There would be greater joy, appropriate commitments, and energized service. The body of Christ would properly function and be a healthy place for worship, ministry, and reaching a lost world!

Our Creator knows our need to be needed. He designed us with a longing to belong. In meeting the needs of others, we find satisfaction of being connected with them. Our sense of belonging is validated by the mutual ministry of grace givers (those able to meet a need) and grace receivers (those able to have a need met). **We have been grace receivers for the express purpose of being grace givers.** Our divine endowments, or spiritual gifts, are not given for us to keep to ourselves. They are ours to use as we further the kingdom in the world today.

Spiritual Gifts are divine abilities, special energies and tools for ministry . . . distributed by God through the Holy Spirit . . . to ALL Christians, according to God’s grace and design . . . to equip and empower the body of Christ to accomplish what God wants done in the world.

There are personal benefits to knowing your gifts. Once you know your spiritual gifts, you will know your spiritual job description. By knowing your gifts and using them accordingly, you will be better able to accomplish God’s purposes for your life. Your gifts will show you what to do – your ministry will be more focused – and you will do it more joyfully.

There are also church benefits to knowing your gifts. There is more unity and harmony in churches that teach and develop gift-based ministry. Often, we observe the differences in others as obstacles. But God views them as opportunities to serve one another in a variety of ways, meeting diverse needs in the church and in the world.

When spiritual gifts are properly expressed, people can see the servant’s motivation to serve others, noting that these acts of servanthood could only be the result of a heart that has been truly transformed by a loving, gracious, and caring God. This truly models God’s love for the world.

We are to love God and love people. It is the essence of our entire relationship with God and one another as evidenced in the Ten Commandments and the Great Commandment. Spiritual gifts are for the common good, and as we use them, everything is to be done for the building up of the church. Spiritual gifts give us purpose as the Holy Spirit gives us power to glorify God and build up others.

*****It is now time to take the Spiritual Gifts Inventory*****

(this should only take about 10-15 minutes – answer each question quickly, with the first number that comes to mind – no over analyzing!

The instructions should be self-explanatory. When you have completed the inventory, score it, following the Score Sheet instructions. Following the scoring, you can refer to the Spiritual Gifts Summary Sheet to see what gifts the inventory revealed about yourself.

Prayer: Giver of all gifts, we ask that your grace, love, peace and joy be abundant in our lives in the coming weeks! Help us begin to see evidence of specific spiritual gifts at work in and through our lives and may we begin to see the gifts you have given those around us. Guide us in the use of our gifts as we serve you by serving others. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Risen Lord, we pray, Amen.

Facts About Spiritual Gifts

1. God is the giver of the gifts. We do not decide what gifts we want or should get; God does. God knows what is needed for the building up of the body of Christ and the common good of the church.
2. All Christians have a least one or more spiritual gifts. Some people say they have no gifts, but they probably are thinking about talents or natural abilities – which they also have but might not realize. To deny our gifts is to deny God's work in our lives.
3. Gifts need to be used in relation to the body of Christ. The full maturity of the church in Christ cannot take place among disconnected or isolated individuals. Every part of the body must be connected so the body, with Christ as head, can function effectively.
4. Gifts are for service – not for personal adornment, status, power or popularity.
5. Spiritual gifts are not the same as skills or talents. Natural abilities, talents and /or trained skills can be the means for the operation of a spiritual gift. However, just because one has a particular talent, ability or skill, it does not necessarily mean that it will be used to build up the body of Christ.
6. Spiritual gifts are not roles or offices. Roles and offices are human ordering; spiritual gifting is God ordering.
7. Spiritual gifts are not the same as the fruit of the spirit. Read Galatians 5: 22-23. The **fruit** of the spirit are what we are to **be**. We have no choice about bearing the fruit, for, as Christians, our nature should be to bear all the fruit. The fruit of the spirit shows our maturity in Christ. The **gifts** of the spirit are what we **do**. They show our ministry. We have a choice in their operation for we choose to receive and to use the gifts.
8. Gifts are not for self gain. No one gift is better than another. Persons should not be puffed about their gifts nor try to hide their gifts.

When we discover our spiritual gifts, we know **what** we are to do in the body of Christ. Serving in the areas of our giftedness causes us to be more effective and more efficient in our service. We do not suffer burn-out. We have a greater sense of joy!