

Joining God's family is kind of like waking up on the morning of your birthday to find a pile of beautifully wrapped presents waiting. The biggest gift, of course, is labeled "Salvation"—eternal life through Jesus.

God has other gifts to enhance our lives here and now. Another tag reads: "Christian Fellowship"—your support network of church family and friends. Then there's a whole set of packages marked "Spiritual Gifts."

God gives each woman a unique set of gifts to use in service for Him and others.

Some spiritual gifts grow directly out of the natural talents we're born with and develop throughout life. When we begin following Jesus, He can use those talents to do the work of His Kingdom.

But sometimes spiritual gifts take us in a completely unexpected direction. As we open ourselves up to the Holy Spirit's leading in our lives, we may find ourselves becoming "gifted" to serve in areas we'd never considered ourselves talented or skilled. Many of God's gifts are surprise packages!

Discovering the spiritual gifts God has given you, and learning how to use them, is one of the most exciting adventures of the Christian life. As you explore your spiritual gifts, you'll discover that being saved is only the beginning. God has saved you for service in His kingdom—using the gifts He gives through the Spirit.

Learn about Your Spiritual Gifts

Many churches offer seminars in finding and using your spiritual gifts. Also, some churches and Christian publishers have produced "spiritual gifts inventories."

An inventory is like an aptitude test, except that it tests your spiritual gifts. Most inventories use the lists of gifts found in 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, and Ephesians 4 as guidelines. Like any other test, a spiritual gifts inventory is not foolproof and it's not a substitute for prayerful reflection on your own experience in ministry. But it can help point you in the right direction.

To find out more about taking a spiritual gifts inventory or attending a spiritual gifts seminar, talk to your pastor or your Women's Ministries leader.

Developing Your Spiritual Gifts

Once you have discovered your gift—torn off the wrapping and opened it with delight—it's time to put it to use. Find a ministry in which you can serve the Lord and others with your gift, and step out in faith. Get involved!

Developing your gifts will often mean taking risks, moving outside your comfort zone. Being certified in women's ministries leadership can give you training in the use of many of these gifts. Trust God, and move forward!



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Finding and Using Your Spiritual Gifts



Spiritual Gifts in the Bible

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. ...

- To one there is given ... the message of wisdom,
- to another the message of knowledge ...
- to another faith by the same Spirit,
- to another gifts of healing ... ,
- to another miraculous powers,
- to another prophecy,
- to another distinguishing between spirits,
- to another speaking in different kinds of tongues,
- and to still another the interpretation of tongues.

All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.

(1 Corinthians 12:4-11, NIV).

It was he [Jesus] who gave

- some to be apostles,
- some to be prophets,
- some to be evangelists,
- and some to be pastors and teachers,

to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.

(Ephesians 4:11, 12, NIV).

We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us:

- prophecy, in proportion to faith;
- ministry, in ministering;
- the teacher, in teaching;
- the exhorter, in exhortation;
- the giver, in generosity;
- the leader, in diligence;
- the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

(Romans 12:6-8, NRSV)

Spiritual Gifts: Just a Few Highlights

Teaching: This gift is for more than just school teachers! If this is your gift, you have the ability to make Biblical truth plain for others. You may use your gift as a mentor, a Sabbath School teacher, a youth leader, or a small-group Bible study facilitator.

Evangelism: You may have the gift of sharing the gospel and leading people to commit their lives to Jesus. You may use this gift in preaching and public evangelism, personal ministries, in giving seminars, speaking for women's retreats, or ministering in prison.

Hospitality: Many women excel in this area! You may have the gift of reaching out to others, especially strangers, and opening your home to those who need food and a place to stay. It may also involve making people welcome and comfortable in your church.

Intercession: Some women have the gift of being able to devote much time to praying for others. A woman with this gift may pray quietly for others at home, or she may minister as a hospital visitor, an elder, or the leader of a prayer group.

Encouragement: Every church needs more encouragers—women who can comfort, motivate, and inspire others. An encourager may serve in counseling, women's ministries, youth ministry, prison ministry or hospital visitation.

Leadership: A leader can bring growth and harmony to a group or congregation. With this gift, you might serve as a pastor, elder, Sabbath School superintendent, youth ministries or women's ministries leader.

How Do I Recognize My Spiritual Gifts?

As these Bible texts suggest, God offers us a wide variety of gifts through His Spirit—each suited to us as individuals, each enabling us to meet needs in the church and in the world.

But how can you find out what your unique gifts are—what God is calling you to do for Him?

- **Pray.** Open yourself to God's Spirit in prayer and ask Him to show you your gifts and help you use them.
- **Jump In!** Get involved in ministry and service. We learn what our gifts are in the process of using them. Even if you have no idea what your spiritual gifts are, find a need in your church or community and start working to meet it. Help out in a number of different ministries to see where you're most effective.
- **Reflect.** When you've had some practice getting your hands dirty, serving God and others, think about what you've experienced. Ask yourself a few questions:
 - ◆ Which ministries did I enjoy most?
 - ◆ Where did I see positive results?
 - ◆ What do others see as my spiritual abilities?
 - ◆ What have I been asked to do again and again?
 - ◆ Which ministries match my temperament?
 - ◆ Which of my everyday activities could have a spiritual application?