Believe
Chapter 17: Spiritual Gifts

Key Verse:

For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us.

Romans 12:4-6a

Paul likens Christians to members of a human body. There are many members and each has a different function, but all are needed for the health of the body. The emphasis is on unity within diversity.

Drawing on the image of the body familiar to those who have read 1 Corinthians 12:4-31, Paul observes that members of the body do not all have the same function; instead, each one has a gift given by God that contributes to the well-being of the body. Each individual is to exercise his or her gift [prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, leadership, benevolence] in a way that is consistent with its source and in a fashion appropriate to its function for the body. Diversities are acknowledged, but they are radically subordinated to the norm of faith so that they lose their divisive power.¹

Questions:

♥ Read Romans 12:3-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:8-11. Compare these two passages.

○ What gifts are similar?

○ What gifts are different?

♥ How do spiritual gifts help us focus on unity instead of diversity?

¹ Based on The New Interpreter’s Bible One Volume Commentary, page 782.
Believe
Chapter 17: Spiritual Gifts

The key idea for this week is “I know my spiritual gifts and use them to fulfill God’s purposes.” The United Methodist website states:

Every child of God is filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, specially gifted to play a unique and valued role in the body of Christ. No one is without gift or purpose.

Spiritual gifts are not our talents or skills. They are the grace of God at work within us, empowering us to match our deep passions with the world’s deep need. The gifts are given to individuals, but they are given to build and strengthen community and to meet the needs of those around us.²

As you study Spiritual Gifts this week try to discover your gifts (every Christian has at least one spiritual gift!). Talk about your gifts with others. Strive together to understand your gifts and how you can use them to serve God, neighbor, and world. You have been gifted. You have been given a purpose.

Exploring Your Spiritual Gifts?³

The twenty gifts below are those listed within the Pauline epistles to Rome, Ephesus, and Corinth (Romans 12, Ephesians 4, 1 Corinthians 12–13), and recognized by the first-century church. While all of life is a gift from God, these twenty gifts are lifted up within Scripture as the gifts of the Spirit, given specifically for the upbuilding of the body of Christ. The following link will allow you to explore the spiritual gifts in more detail: http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/exploring-your-spiritual-gifts.

- **Administration** - The gift of administration allows a person to organize people and resources for greater efficiency, effectiveness, and success.
- **Apostleship** - The gift of apostleship compels people to reach out to new and unfamiliar groups and individuals to invite them into relationship with God and community.
- **Compassion** - The gift of compassion moves people to action on behalf of those in need.
- **Discernment** - Discernment is a gift of deep intuition and insight.

---

² http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/spiritual-gifts
³ http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/exploring-your-spiritual-gifts
Believe
Chapter 17: Spiritual Gifts

♥ Evangelism - The gift of evangelism is the gift of faith-sharing and proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ to those we meet.

♥ Exhortation - The gift of exhortation is manifest in people who offer encouragement, wise counsel, unflagging support, and empowerment.

♥ Faith - The gift of faith is more than belief in Jesus Christ, but an abiding foundation of confidence that God works all things together for good, and that they people of God can rise above any obstacle.

♥ Giving - The gift of giving is the deep commitment to provide whatever resources are needed to support God’s will and plan.

♥ Healing - The gift of healing is not about transferring spiritual power to eliminate suffering and disease, but the ability to channel God’s grace and healing love to those who suffer physical, emotional, or spiritual pain.

♥ Helping - Helping is a gift of support and behind-the-scenes effort that make groups, families, and congregations more effective.

♥ Knowledge - The gift of knowledge allows people to automatically convert facts, data, and information into useful and important knowledge.

♥ Leadership - The gift of leadership is a visionary, and forward looking gift that enables people to stay focused on where God might be leading us as individuals, congregations, and communities at any given time.

♥ Miracles - Those gifted with miracles never doubt the power and presence of God in creation, and are able to help others see and believe in God’s power.

♥ Prophecy - The gift of prophecy is the ability to speak God’s word to others, or more appropriately to be open for God to speak God’s word through us.

♥ Servanthood - Servanthood is the gift of doing for others, sometimes to the exclusion of meeting personal needs.

♥ Shepherding - The gift of shepherding is the gift of mentoring and providing spiritual guidance to others to help them develop in the discipleship and faith formation.

♥ Teaching - The gift of teaching allows people to transform data and information into life changing knowledge.

♥ Tongues - The gift of tongues is a communication gift that allows people to speak foreign languages and convey concepts they never formally studied.

♥ Tongues, Interpretation of - Those who are gifted to interpret tongues help build bridges across cultural, generational, and language divides.
Believe
Chapter 17: Spiritual Gifts

♥ Wisdom - The gift of wisdom allows people to understand deeper meaning and apply knowledge, beliefs, and experience to everyday situations.

Questions:

♥ What gifts have you seen evidenced within the church?

♥ What gifts do you have?

The United Methodist Church offers an on-line Spiritual Gifts Assessment if you would like to discover your spiritual gifts. This assessment can be found at the following link: http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/spiritual-gifts-online-assessment.

What Gifts?\(^4\)
By Dan R. Dick\(^*\)

Throughout my adult life, discernment has been my primary gift. Always hovering close by are the gifts of teaching, wisdom, and knowledge. People often tell me that I am a good teacher, and one of the things they appreciate is my ability to see what others often miss and to point out where arguments or concepts break down. I cannot count the number of times someone has said to me, "I never would have thought of what you taught the way you do, but now that you say it, I see it perfectly. It's so obvious!" For me, this is the grace of our spiritual gifts — we are enabled to do something exceptionally well that, in turn, benefits others. All gifts are given to individuals, but as the writer of Ephesians reminds us, the gifts are given to equip the saints for the upbuilding of the body — for the common good.

I am often asked about how I became "interested" in the gifts of the Holy Spirit; and more particularly, about my desire to develop Christian leaders who are grounded in

\(^4\) http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/what-gifts
Believe
Chapter 17: Spiritual Gifts

their spiritual gifts. The short answer is that I became interested in self-defense. In the 1970s, I was serving as an education coordinator at High Street United Methodist Church in Muncie, Indiana. One of my tasks was to recruit teachers for all age levels for the coming year. At a church council retreat, I asked the questions: "How do we determine whom to ask to teach? What are the criteria we use for teacher selection?" The questions were met with dumb silence. Finally, the associate pastor said, "We take whoever is willing."

As an idealistic twenty-year old, "taking whoever was willing" seemed inadequate somehow, so I proposed to develop a "tool" to help determine who possessed the necessary skills and abilities to teach in the church. Hearing no argument and ignoring the eye rolling and head shaking, I determined to develop a means for teacher identification. The problem was, I had no clue how to begin.

As luck would have it — or by the intervention of the Holy Spirit (I don't want to rule that out!) — I attended a seminar on education at Ball State University. The speaker, William Dorton, was introduced as a "gifted" teacher; and throughout the presentation, Mr. Dorton repeatedly referred to his "gift." At one point, he mentioned that growing up he never considered himself a teacher until "a group of Friends (Quakers) discerned this gift in me at a meeting and it changed my life." Curious, I approached Mr. Dorton following his seminar. I inquired about his use of the term "gift" in relation to his teaching, and he referred me to a "new" (this was 1976) book by another former Ball State graduate, Kenneth Cain Kinghorn, titled Gifts of the Spirit. Although I do not fully agree with everything in this slim volume (nor did I then), I can confidently say that no other book — short of the Bible itself — has done more to shape my ministry or create in me a personal vision for my life's work. Kinghorn's work set in motion a lifelong course of study and reflection. I have worked with the discovery, development, and deployment of spiritual gifts with thousands of men and women of fifteen denominations, a dozen secular professions, and four major Catholic orders over the past seventeen years. Of all the work of my calling, nothing is more satisfying or rewarding.

Relying on a few pages of Kinghorn's book, I developed a short series of questions to help people determine whether or not they were "gifted" to teach. That original list is long lost. And I am sure that were I to develop a list of questions today, it would be quite different; but it served well to identify a group of teachers — some who never considered teaching before in their lives. The result was a core group of highly effective, deeply spiritual educators who used every means available to bring all ages
Believe
Chapter 17: Spiritual Gifts

to a deeper relationship with God in Jesus Christ. Every new teacher that year stuck with education in some form for years, and most continue to this day.

As my awareness and study of gifts deepened, I began applying the thinking to other areas. As I expanded discussions in the church to gifts of leadership, evangelism, prophetic utterance, faith, and healing, Ken Kinghorn published an incredibly helpful tool called "Discovering Your Spiritual Gifts" — a two hundred statement inventory. I began using the Kinghorn tool — with limited success.

Over the years, my thinking around spiritual giftedness has evolved in one essential and significant way: Almost all the early spiritual gifts materials held the institutional church at the center. In other words, we are gifted to support the church. What I have come to realize is that we are not gifted because of the church; rather, the church exists because we are gifted. Instead of identifying spiritual gifts as a way to place men and women on committees or councils, we should form committees and councils that enable people to discover, develop, and live from their gifts twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. We do not serve the church; we are the church — gifted by God, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and called to live from our gifts in the world.

My most recent learning concerning spiritual gifts is their synergy. Gifts are given to individuals for the common good, but they are most powerful when they are linked together. When a person possessing the gift of knowledge joins a gifted teacher, amazing things can happen. Gifted healers find a new level of ministry when linked with those possessing the gift of compassion or miracles. Leaders complement administrators; evangelists empower apostles; the wise benefit the prophets; discernment builds faith. Spiritual gifts provide us with an incredible kaleidoscope of mix-and-match possibilities. Living from our gifts allows us to form wondrous networks of spiritual power for the building of communities grounded in love, peace, mercy, acceptance, and grace.

My life has been transformed by my awareness of God's gifts. I join with my wife Barbara in the hope that your life and vocation might be transformed as well.

*Dan is director of connectional ministries for the Wisconsin Annual Conference. He is the coauthor of Equipped for Every Good Work.
Believe
Chapter 17: Spiritual Gifts

Questions:

♥ How would the church be different if we were to “form committees and councils that enable people to discover, develop, and live from their gifts twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week”?

♥ Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: “Gifts are given to individuals for the common good, but they are most powerful when they are linked together”?

Spiritual Gifts — Primacy, Not Priority

By Dan R. Dick*

A few years ago I received a letter from the lay leader of a congregation working on the discovery and development of spiritual gifts. One line stood out as I read the inquiry: "We are lacking in the greater gifts, but have an abundance of the lesser gifts." I phoned the author of the letter and asked her to explain more fully what she meant.

"In First Corinthians (12:27-31) Paul writes that the gifts God gives are first apostleship, second prophecy, then teaching, and on down the line. We have lots of administrators and helpers, but no prophets, apostles, or teachers. We are really depressed that we don't have any of the really important gifts."

This comment reflects one of the most common mistakes we make in our thinking about spiritual gifts. All gifts are important, and each may be the most important gift in any given situation. All gifts are necessary; and in different combinations, all gifts have the power to transform lives and glorify God. Paul does not write to prioritize spiritual gifts, but to explain the order in which they were revealed and employed in the church at Corinth. A gardening metaphor may help illustrate.

First, apostles entered to break up and plow the soil. Prophets then followed to plant seed in the tilled earth. Teachers fed and watered the new growth. Miracle workers

---

*http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/spiritual-gifts-primacy-not-priority

Adult Sunday School Curriculum for Methodists
By Heidi Herrera, St Stephen's UMC, Albuquerque, NM
Believe
Chapter 17: Spiritual Gifts

shone life-giving sun, while healers weeded and hoed. Helpers and servants harvested, administrators organized and packed, and those with the gift of tongues delivered the growth to new sources. Paul describes a linear process whereby the gospel grew from barren ground to bounteous fullness to feed starving souls beyond the confines of the established congregation.

Is this the only order in which this wondrous work might happen? Of course not. God's Holy Spirit works in combination with each community of faith to lay a foundation and build upon it with whatever gifts are shared. The important thing to note is that whatever gifts are present, those are the right gifts — each valuable and necessary to the greater will of God.

Paul writes of primacy, not priority, when he helps the Corinthian congregation understand its identity as the body of Christ. Seek ways to better understand how you might use, combine, and grow the gifts God has given your faith community.

*Dan is director of connectional ministries for the Wisconsin Annual Conference. He is the coauthor of Equipped for Every Good Work.

Questions:

♥ How would you explain “the greater gifts” (1 Corinthians 12:31) to someone not familiar with spiritual gifts?

♥ Was the gardening metaphor helpful?

♥ Based on the article above, is one gift better than another?
Spiritual Gifts

Spiritual gifts are God’s grace to us for the purpose of strengthening our faith - this sharing bears the fruit of the Spirit. When Paul yielded to the Christ, God’s purpose became Paul’s purpose, and God’s love for us became Paul’s love for the church.

There is much sharing of gifts in the church, although motives may vary and there are varying outcomes. True sharing comes from the heart and in humility. When God chooses us to be instruments of God’s grace, which in itself is God’s grace to us, we are humbled by God’s steadfast love.

Questions:

♥ Romans 12:9 tells us “Let love be genuine.” Read Romans 12:3-8, in light of Paul’s command, “Let love be genuine,” how should our spiritual gifts be utilized?

♥ Read Galatians 5:22-23. How are the fruit of the Spirit and spiritual gifts related?