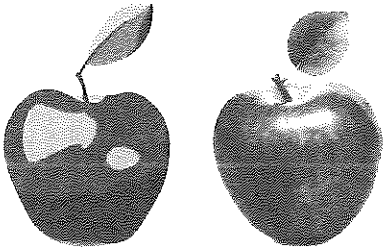


God Sends



Topic

Christian service

Theme

God commands believers to lovingly exercise their spiritual gifts for the benefit of the church.

Desired Learner Response

The learner will determine ways to enhance and use his spiritual gifts.

Materials

- Resources 1, 12, and 13
- Pair of shoes
- Candy bar
- Cooking pot
- Jumper cables

Scripture Focus

Acts 1:8; 2:1–4; Rom. 12:7, 8; 1 Cor. 12:27, 28; Eph. 2:8–10; 4:11–16; 1 Pet. 4:10, 11

Summary

God saved us so we might serve Him and bring glory to His name. The Holy Spirit empowers us to serve, gives us spiritual gifts, and edifies others as we use our spiritual gifts.

Outline

I. God's Reasons for Our Service

- A. To fulfill our purpose (Eph. 2:8–10)
- B. To glorify God (1 Pet. 4:10, 11)

II. The Spirit's Role in Our Service

- A. He empowers us for service (Acts 1:8; 2:1–4)
- B. He endows us for service
 - 1. Descriptions of speaking gifts (Rom. 12:7, 8; Eph. 4:11)
 - 2. Descriptions of serving gifts (Rom. 12:7, 8; 1 Cor. 12:28)
 - 3. Determination of gifts (1 Pet. 4:10)
- C. He edifies through our service (1 Cor. 12:27; Eph. 4:11–16; 1 Pet. 4:10)

Memory Verse

*"As every man hath received the gift,
even so minister the same one to another,
as good stewards of the manifold grace of God"
(1 Peter 4:10).*

GETTING STARTED

Two Kinds of Gifts

Display four items that could be gifts: a pair of shoes, a candy bar, a cooking pot, and a set of jumper cables. Have the learners suggest ways to categorize the gifts. After they share some ideas, tell them the two categories you are looking for. They are (1) gifts that are for personal usage or consumption (shoes and candy bar) and (2) gifts that are for helping others (cooking pot and jumper cables).

ASK: How would you react to getting a pot or jumper cables as a gift? (Q1)

ASK: Why would you feel that way? (Q2)

Spiritual gifts are like the gifts in the second category; they are mainly for helping other people. Getting spiritual gifts is not like getting a pair of shoes or a candy bar. Those types of gifts we tend to keep to ourselves. Spiritual gifts are more like tools we can use to build up the lives of others.

This lesson is about God's reasons for our service and the Spirit's role in our service.

Gift List

ASK: What would you list as the ten worst gift ideas? Record learners' answers on the board. After listing several, circle all the gifts that are for helping others (e.g., a cooking pot, hair trimmer). Add a few of those types of gifts to the list if there aren't too many listed.

ASK: What do all the gifts I circled have in common? *They are all gifts a person would use to help someone else.*

The best gifts are usually the ones meant for personal use. We all like getting those types of gifts. Spiritual gifts are like the gifts I circled; they are mainly for helping other people. But spiritual gifts are not bad gifts. They are wonderful opportunities to build others up spiritually.

This lesson is about God's reasons for our service and the Spirit's role in our service, including our spiritual gifts.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

The previous lesson presented the reality of the church. God designed the church as the program for this age. Christ is busy building His church, and He has chosen to do so through believers in local churches. God expects us to lovingly serve each other as part of a local church.

I. God's Reasons for Our Service

A. To fulfill our purpose (Eph. 2:8–10)

Our purpose in life is connected to serving God.

READ: Ephesians 2:8, 9. **ASK:** What wrong conclusions might we draw about works based on this passage? (Q3) *That works are somehow pointless or even wrong. That God is not interested in our good works.*

Emphasizing the grace of God for salvation is of the utmost importance. But God's grace for salvation is not an end in itself. Salvation by grace opens the door for a life of service to God.

READ: Ephesians 2:10.

"Workmanship" in Ephesians 2:10 refers to the work God is doing in our lives to change us. Lesson 6 presented the fruit the Holy Spirit produces in our lives as we are devoted to God (Rom. 12:1, 2) and as we live dependent on the Spirit (Gal. 5:16). "Workmanship" is a reference to that fruit. We are "in Christ" (Eph. 2:10) at salvation. That allows God to make us like Christ after salvation.

ASK: According to Ephesians 2:10, why does God want us to be like Christ? (Q4) *So we can fulfill our purpose of doing good works.*

Many believers see good works as optional. What matters most to them is that they are saved and guaranteed eternity in Heaven. But they have missed the fact that good works are the point of their salvation!

ASK: When did God plan for us to do good works (Eph. 2:10)? (Q5) *Before we were even created. "Before ordained" refers to God's plan He laid out before the foundation of the world.*

God has a plan for our lives that He laid out before we even existed. Part of His plan is for us to do good works. There is a lot of talk today about finding yourself and discovering your purpose in life. For a believer, that should never be an issue. We know that God wants us to serve Him, and we can be confident He will let us know where and how He wants us to serve Him.

"That we should walk in them" refers to our lives. Doing good works for the Lord is the point of our lives.

ASK: How do you respond to the connection between God's plan for your life and good works? (Q6)

B. To glorify God (1 Pet. 4:10, 11)

As we use our lives to do good works for the Lord, there is always the temptation to make the work all about us. We want people to notice what we are doing. We like the attention. It feeds our egos. But God did not ordain us to do good works so we could have our egos stroked.

READ: 1 Peter 4:10, 11. **ASK:** Why does it make sense for God to get the glory

Lesson 9 included a section on people who serve to gain attention for themselves. They treat church like a competition to see who can be the "best" Christian.

for our service for Him? (Q7) *Because He graciously gave us both the opportunity and the ability to serve Him.*

We can't take the credit for our good works because it is God Who supplies the ability to even do good works. The verb describing the supplying of "ability" (4:11) is a strengthened verb for giving and conveys the idea of abundantly supplying.

The fact that God abundantly supplies for our service for Him means that He has given us a stewardship (4:10). He wants us to do something with the supply that He owns and has entrusted to us. He expects us to be faithful in our stewardship (1 Cor. 4:2) and thereby bring Him glory.

RESOURCE: Display resource 12. **ASK:** What are some ramifications of our service being a stewardship from God? (Record or reveal answers.) (Q8) *God is counting on us and is expecting us to be good stewards. We must give an account of our stewardship to God. We have no excuses for not serving God. Complaining about having to serve God is highly offensive to God.*

So as we fulfill our purpose to do good works, we bring glory to God because He is the One Who abundantly supplies the ability to serve Him. And none of this would be possible without Christ's death on the cross. Peter recognized that and praised Him, ascribing glory to Him forever and ever (1 Pet. 4:11).

II. The Spirit's Role in Our Service

So what is the supply God gives us that allows us to serve Him effectively? We need to look to the Holy Spirit and His work to understand the supply God gives us to serve Him.

A. He empowers us for service (Acts 1:8; 2:1-4)

There could be no true service for God without the Holy Spirit. He supplies the power we need to serve in the church. In the time between Christ's resurrection and ascension, Christ told the disciples to go to Jerusalem and wait for the Holy Spirit. They would receive power once the Holy Spirit came upon them (Acts 1:8). On the Day of Pentecost, that is exactly what happened. The Spirit made His presence known with a rushing wind and flames (2:1-4). Immediately the disciples experienced the Spirit's power in their lives.

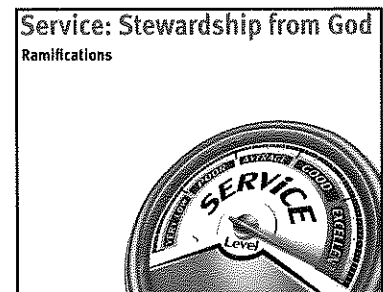
The Day of Pentecost is the beginning of the church. Since that day, the Holy Spirit immediately indwells every person who trusts in Christ as his Savior. Every believer has the same Holy Spirit in him, so all believers are equally empowered to serve the Lord.

ASK: Since the Spirit is in you, could you ever have a valid excuse for not serving God? (Q9) *No, the Spirit will supply the power to serve God no matter what our circumstances.*

B. He endows us for service

As the Spirit empowers us to serve, He also gives us spiritual gifts to use in our service. A spiritual gift is simply an ability God gives us to use in our service for

Lesson 11 covers our accountability to God as well as the rewards Christ will distribute at the Judgment Seat of Christ.



The Holy Spirit empowered some early believers, the apostles in particular, with the ability to do sign gifts. That was a temporary manifestation of the Spirit in their lives to help authenticate the beginning of the church and communicate the inclusion of Gentiles in God's program for this age.

Him. Spiritual gifts are not talents, but we could use our talents as a conduit for our spiritual gifts. For example, a person talented in music could use singing as a way to exercise her gift of exhortation.

ASK: How much thought have you given to what spiritual gifts you have? (Q10)

There are several spiritual gifts, like the gift of speaking in tongues, that were intended for the start of the church in the first century. Those sign gifts have ceased and aren't considered in this lesson.

Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4, and 1 Peter 4 all give partial lists of spiritual gifts. From those passages we can compile a master list that helps us consider what spiritual gifts we might have. We can organize these gifts into speaking gifts and serving gifts. First Peter 4:11 uses these two categories to classify spiritual gifts.

1. Descriptions of speaking gifts (Rom. 12:7, 8; Eph. 4:11)

Speaking gifts include teaching, exhortation, pastor-teacher, and evangelism. **Teaching** (Rom. 12:7) is simply communicating truth from God's Word in an understandable and applicable way. This doesn't preclude a person with the gift of teaching from needing to study God's Word. A good teacher will be diligent to study God's Word thoroughly before teaching it. A good teacher will also seek to hone his teaching skills and get better at using his gift.

The gift of **exhortation** (Rom. 12:8) is the ability to encourage someone going through a difficult circumstance. The encouragement is not just making a person feel better. It is spiritual in nature and helps the person respond to the circumstance in a godly way. This gift might also be used to motivate people to participate in the ministry of the church.

Pastor-teacher (Eph. 4:11) is both a spiritual gift and a position in the church. All men called by God to be a pastor will have the gift of pastor-teacher. Pastoring is a reference to caring for people. Teaching is mentioned above. Those who aspire to be pastors need to meet the qualifications laid out in 1 Timothy 3:1-7.

Evangelism (Eph. 4:11) is the gift of being able to communicate the gospel clearly and effectively. God expects every believer to evangelize. Those with the gift of evangelism should train other believers to evangelize effectively.

ASK: Whose names would you put next to each of the speaking gifts? (Q11)

ASK: How have individuals with these gifts helped you? (Q12)

2. Descriptions of serving gifts (Rom. 12:7, 8; 1 Cor. 12:28)

Ministering (Rom. 12:7) is the gift of meeting needs. Deacons should have this gift since they are responsible for meeting members' needs (Acts 6:1-7). Those with this gift are particularly good at understanding needs and finding ways to meet them.

The gift of **giving** (Rom. 12:8) refers to those who give of themselves to the Lord. They may give money, or they may give their time and abilities. What is given is not as important as the attitude with which it is given. Consequently, a person with this gift does not have to be rich.

Ruling (Rom. 12:8) is the gift of being able to help a church understand and fulfill its purpose. Those with this gift work with the church's pastor with an atti-

tude of humility and service. They will help him with vision for the ministry and with communicating that vision.

God gives some people the gift of **mercy** (Rom. 12:8). They can comfort and strengthen the hurting as they exercise their gift. They empathize with the hurting and minister to their hearts.

Helps (1 Cor. 12:28) is the gift of assisting in ministry. Often those with this gift are working behind the scenes to do what others will overlook.

Those with the gift of **administration** (1 Cor. 12:28) work with the pastor and those with the gift of ruling. They organize and run ministries in the church that help to fulfill its mission. They also enlist and train people to work in the ministries.

ASK: Whose name would you put next to each of the serving gifts? (Q13)

ASK: Give an example of how a person with one of these gifts has helped you. (Q14)

3. Determination of gifts (1 Pet. 4:10)

We should never let not ignorance of our exact spiritual gifts keep us from serving. We should be more concerned about being willing to serve God (1 Pet. 4:10). But there are three questions that help us understand what our spiritual gifts are.

First, what do you like to do? Using your spiritual gifts is enjoyable when you are devoted to God and dependent on the Holy Spirit. What you like to do is usually in line with what your gifts are.

Second, what types of service do people say you do well? As you begin to serve God in ways you find enjoyable, other believers will notice your service and recognize what you do well. Their affirmation of your service is a good indicator that you are exercising your spiritual gifts.

Third, what opportunities is God bringing your way? You should not have to search and search for ways to use your spiritual gifts. God in His sovereignty will give you opportunities to use your gifts.

ASK: Based on these three questions, what spiritual gifts do you think you might have? (Q15)

C. He edifies through our service (1 Cor. 12:27; Eph. 4:11–16; 1 Pet. 4:10)

God intends for us to use our spiritual gifts for the benefit of other believers. Other believers are counting on us to do our part in ministry.

The word “minister” in 1 Peter 4:10 means to be a servant. The idea is to wait on each other as each other’s servants. At first read, that might seem like a raw deal. But Paul gives more insight into the benefits of using our spiritual gifts.

READ: 1 Corinthians 12:7.

Using our spiritual gifts causes a “manifestation” (1 Cor. 12:7) of the Spirit. We make the Spirit known when we use the spiritual gifts we received from Him. The exercise of our gifts reveals His presence, His power, and His character. The Holy Spirit is magnified by the use of spiritual gifts.

ASK: According to 1 Corinthians 12:7, who profits when we serve each other through exercising our gifts? (Q16) *The whole church profits.*

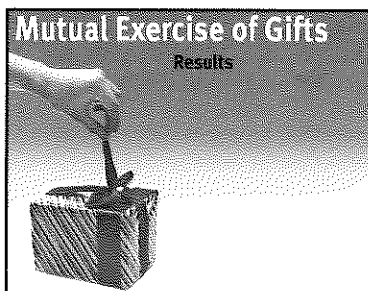
The whole church profits from our exercising of our spiritual gifts because all members are connected in the body of Christ. When we serve a member of Christ’s body, we are also helping ourselves. If your hand were to refuse to clean and bandage a wound on your knee, the hand would only be hurting itself because it is part of the same body as the knee. An infection in the knee would affect the hand and the rest of the body.

God designed for the local church to function as a body and to build itself up through the exercise of spiritual gifts.

READ: Ephesians 4:11, 12.

The pastor equips the people to minister. Part of that equipping ministry includes using the Word to spiritually prepare members to serve. Remember, believers are God’s “workmanship” (Eph. 2:10), a reference to the spiritual work God is doing in their lives to change them to be like Christ. There is a measure of spiritual growth that needs to happen in a believer before he is equipped to use his spiritual gifts to their fullest, though even brand new believers can serve God in some capacity right away. Once the believer matures and begins to use his gifts, he helps others grow spiritually. The pastor’s ministry in essence multiplies every time a believer begins to exercise his gifts in the church.

As more believers respond to the pastor’s equipping, the church begins to function as a body. When the body works together, its individual parts become stronger. In other words, the body begins “edifying” itself.



RESOURCE: Display resource 13. **READ:** Ephesians 4:13–16. **ASK:** What happens when the church edifies itself through the mutual exercise of spiritual gifts? (Record or reveal answers.) (Q17) *There is unity. The church begins to mature and to reflect Christ. The church is doctrinally sound. The church is characterized by love.*

“Love” (Eph. 4:16) is vital to edification within a church. If members do not have love for one another, then they won’t build each other up in the faith. The absence of love in a church is actually evidence of a lack of Spirit-led believers because love is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). We show love as we learn to depend on the Spirit and live according to His enabling.

A pastor’s job is never done, especially if new believers are being added to the church regularly. But even longtime members need to be fed from the Word so they might continue to mature. No church will ever become absolutely perfect. But that is still the goal. A church and its pastor should not lose sight of the goal to measure up to Christ.

MAKING IT PERSONAL

What's My Gift?

ASK: Do you know your spiritual gifts? If not, review the questions to ask yourself to get you started in discovering what they might be. Remember that a willingness to serve out of love for others is more important than knowing what your specific gifts are (Q18).

Gift Enhancement

ASK: If everyone in our church used their spiritual gifts as much as you do, what condition would our church be in? (Q19)

ASK: What could you do to enhance your use of your spiritual gifts? (Q20)
Encourage your learners to identify mentors who could help them develop their gifts. They should also take advantage of any training resources your church offers.

Opportunities to Serve

ASK: What opportunities to use your spiritual gifts will you take advantage of? (Q21)

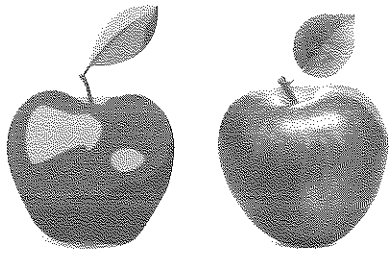
Summary and Memory Verse

RESOURCE: Display resource 1. Add a summary statement for lesson 10 or use the following: Exercise your spiritual gifts.

Encourage learners to memorize 1 Peter 4:10. Give them an opportunity to say the verse in class next week.

Living in the Real	
1. Wake up to reality!	8. Handle God's Word as God intended.
2. Live in response to Who God is.	9. Take an active part in Christ's church.
3. Live in response to God's person.	10. Exercise your spiritual gifts.
4. Walk in newness of life as God's redeemed.	11.
5. Boldly approach the throne of grace.	12.
6. Live in the power of the Spirit.	13.
7. Value and study the Bible as God's very words.	

Christ Will Reward



Topic

Believers' rewards

Theme

Christ will reward believers for their service at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Desired Learner Response

The learner will serve God in a specific way using rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ as his motivation.

Materials

- Resources 1, 14, and 15
- Trophies or ribbons

Scripture Focus

Various passages

Summary

After the Rapture, all believers from the Church Age will stand before Christ in Heaven and receive crowns for their service for God. But only those acts of service they did in the power of the Spirit and for the glory of God will be eligible for reward. Believers will use their crowns to worship God for all of eternity.

Outline

I. Christ Will Reward Us for Our Service

- A. Timing of the ceremony (1 Cor. 15:50–53; 2 Cor. 5:10; Titus 2:11–13)
- B. Qualifications for the crowns (1 Cor. 3:5–17; 1 Pet. 4:10, 11)
- C. Descriptions of the crowns
 1. Incorruptible crown (1 Cor. 9:25)
 2. Crown of rejoicing (1 Thess. 2:19, 20)
 3. Crown of righteousness (2 Tim. 4:7, 8)
 4. Crown of life (James 1:12)
 5. Crown of glory (1 Pet. 5:1–4)

II. We Will Worship God with Our Crowns

- A. Around His throne (Rev. 4)
- B. For all eternity (Rev. 7:9–17; 11:15–19; 14:1–5; 15:2–4; 19:1–8)

Memory Verses

"The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Revelation 4:10, 11).