

What is a Spiritual Gift?

Spiritual gifts are abilities given freely to every believer by the Holy Spirit, in order to build up the Church.

Spiritual gifts are abilities. Peter wrote, “Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms” (1 Pet 4:10). Our spiritual gifts are personal and unique capacities to give God’s grace to others. It might be serving others or teaching others or speaking God’s Word to others, but it is an ability to do something.

Spiritual gifts are given freely. Spiritual gifts come from the Holy Spirit, through His gracious generosity. They are given to us (1 Cor 12:7) and received by us (1 Pet 4:10). God has given us a unique and personal role to play in His work in the world.

Spiritual gifts are for every believer. Divisions in the Corinthian church were created because some felt that some gifts were better than others. But Paul tells us that, regardless of the form of your gift, every believer has a spiritual gift (cf. Rom 12:3ff; 1 Cor 12).

Spiritual gifts are given to build up the Church. Spiritual gifts are intended to serve others. They are for the “common good” (1 Cor 12:7). They are intended to build up the Church (1 Cor 14:12; Eph. 4:11 ff.). Your spiritual gift might be to teach disciples and help them grow. Your spiritual gift might be to share the gospel with non-believers (evangelism) and lead others to Christ. Your spiritual gift might be to care for others (hospitality and service) in Jesus’ name as a reflection of His grace and mercy. Whatever your gift, it is for the building up of the Church, not for your own promotion. It is to serve His Body for His Kingdom for His glory.

In the Bible, there are three main passages where spiritual gifts are listed (1 Corinthians 12:4-11 & 12:28, Ephesians 4:10-12, and Romans 12:6-8). These lists include gifts like teaching, prophecy (which is speaking the Word of God, not telling the future), service, leading, exhortation, and so on. These lists, though helpful, were not meant to be exhaustive, meaning that they don’t list *every* spiritual gift you could have. They’re just examples. Keep that in mind as you take the Spiritual Gifts Assessment. It is not meant to precisely name your one and only spiritual gift. It is meant to be a tool to help you begin to see one of the ways you were uniquely made by God.

Take what you learn from the assessment as well as what you’ve considered about your **skills, personality, passions, pain** and other **life experiences** and think about how they fit together and what God may have designed you to do. How do they intersect with the commands of Christ and the work of the Church? What are the commands of Christ? Christ commanded us to share the gospel (Mt 28:19), to love and serve one another (John 13:34), and so on. What is the work of the Church? The Church’s work is to proclaim the gospel (in word and action) and to make and grow disciples. How does the way you are uniquely made align with that mission?

When discerning your spiritual gifts, it can be tempting to start by looking at what you're good at or what you love to do. But it is best to start with looking where God has already placed you because, though spiritual gifts are unique to you, they are for the glory of God and the benefit of others. So, begin by asking questions like, "What needs do you see in the Church or in your community? Where has God shown you a need? Do you see single mothers that need more care and support, to hear the gospel? Have you witnessed children needing mentors? Are there people around you who need to be challenged with the gospel? What opportunities are available in church? What needs to be done?"

Once you discern the need, then find where your **skills, personality, spiritual gifts and passions, pain** and other **life experiences** could meet those needs. Where has God gifted you to fill a need in the church and in the world? When wanting to identify our spiritual gifts, we should start with what Christians are commanded by Christ to do and what the mission of the Church is because, ultimately, our gifts are not to make us more fulfilled or more notable, but they are given to build up the Church.

How do I take a next step?

Once we know the right questions to ask in finding out how we're made, we have to discern a next step. There are places in the church and out in the community. How do you find where God is leading you to go?

First, we encourage you to look into the opportunities available through Forest Hill. **During Step 4 of the IT Experience there will be chance for you to learn more about ways you can take an easy next step into using your gifts and abilities.** For example, if you see a need for helping people feel connected and you have the gift of hospitality, look for volunteer opportunities with Connections, such as greeting people at the door of the church or offering to give tours of the Family Ministry to new families. If you have the gift of faith, find out how you can pray with others for the needs of the church. If you have the gift of teaching, learn more about leading a LifeGroup with the adults, kids or students.

Now, what if there are no existing opportunities through Forest Hill that you feel are where God is leading you? Aren't gifts given to build up the Church? Yes, but the Church is not just the building on each campus, nor is it just the people who attend Forest Hill Church. The Church is every believer everywhere. The Church is a collection of people who have been redeemed by Jesus and gifted with His Holy Spirit. The Church is the people in your LifeGroup, in your neighborhood, in your workplace, and at the weekend services, who are committed followers of Jesus Christ.

So, once you identify a need and how you're gifted to meet that need, you can identify others who share that God-given vision and whose gifts complement yours. For instance, if you have the gift of service and you see the need for helping single mothers, you might need someone with the gift of leadership to help organize and lead people to fulfill the vision; you might need someone with the gift of faith and prayer to saturate your work in

prayer and seek God's will; you might need someone with the gift of exhortation to help you and the families to keep striving in adversity. That is the Church working together! We don't depend on the local church to start a brand-new ministry under their roof, but we, as the people of God and as members of the local church can band together to work for God's mission in the world. Start having conversations about the needs you see – within church and within your community (wherever you live and work). This can help you clarify the need you see or convince you of a greater need. And others might be motivated by the need and vision that you see.

Here are some questions for you to get started in finding your next step. Don't answer them without first praying for guidance. And use the wisdom of God's Word and the wisdom of people who know you and love Jesus to help you.

1. What needs do you see around you (in your church, neighborhood, workplace, family)?
2. What are you talented in doing?
3. What do you enjoy doing?
4. What do others say you're good at doing?
5. Are these talents affirmed or commanded by God's Word?
6. What opportunities exist through Forest Hill to use these gifts to meet these needs?
7. What opportunities or ministries in my community serve these needs? Do they need my gift?
8. Is God calling me to a new place to use my gifts? Where might He be urging me to go?