

SHAPE
Week 1: Spiritual Gifts

This includes:

1. Leader Preparation
2. Lesson Guide

1. LEADER PREPARATION

LESSON OVERVIEW

When we choose to follow Christ, God gives us unique spiritual gifts designed to help build up the church. We're all a unique blend of gifts, and we have the opportunity to discover and use our gifts—otherwise, the church isn't as healthy and complete as God desires. This week's lesson will help your students learn more about the gifts God gives, including the spiritual gifts they may have been given.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. **WHAT:** All Christians have received spiritual gifts from God to help strengthen the church.
2. **WHY:** Teenagers have the opportunity to discover and use their spiritual gifts, so that they will start making a difference NOW rather than sitting on the sidelines.
3. **HOW:** Encourage your students to consider what spiritual gifts God has given them and to examine the ways their gifts could be used in ministry.

PRIMARY SCRIPTURE

Romans 12:6-8

SECONDARY SCRIPTURES

1 Corinthians 12:1-11, 28-31 and Ephesians 4:11-16

TEACHING PREP

The short overview below is designed to help you prepare for your lesson. While you may not want to convey this information word-for-word with your teenagers, you'll definitely want to refer to it as you lead your small group lesson.

Read Romans 12:6-8.

When you look at this entire chapter, you discover the context for Paul's comments on spiritual gifts. He begins by encouraging Christians to honor and worship God through the way they live. He warns: Don't think better of yourself than you should. Understand who you are in Christ. And one aspect of our identity in Christ is our role in the church—one body with many parts.

This chapter is built on the idea of being a living sacrifice for God. Paul encourages us to truly love each other, be happy with those who are happy and mourn with those who mourn, and conquer evil by doing good. Discovering and using our spiritual gifts is an act of worship that honors God.

THE BEFORE & AFTER [optional]

Text Questions

We've provided a couple of different text message questions to send out to your students prior to your meeting. Feel free to use one or both of the questions below. As with the rest of the curriculum, edit these questions to fit the needs of your ministry.

- How gifted are you? Trick question—we're all gifted! Find out more tonight at small group.
- Are you making a difference in your world? Make sure you come to small group tonight.

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2. LESSON GUIDE

GETTING THINGS STARTED [optional]

Before your small group meets, send a text or email to your teenagers asking everyone to bring along a "white elephant gift" to this week's gathering. Explain to your teenagers that you aren't asking them to buy anything; you simply want them to find something at home that they no longer use or want to keep. Ask them to wrap the gift and bring it to your small group. You'll probably want to have a few extra items wrapped, in case some forget to bring gifts.

Welcome your students and invite them into your meeting area. Open in prayer, and then SAY SOMETHING LIKE:

OK, it looks like you've all brought along your "white elephant gifts." They've all been wrapped and you don't know what's in these different boxes, but I'm not going to let you choose your gift. In fact, I'm going to decide which gift you receive today.

Distribute the gifts to all of your students, and then ask them to open the gifts and see what they received. Don't allow them to swap gifts.

ASK:

- *How pleased or disappointed are you with the gift you received?*
- *Whose gift would you rather have received, and why?*
- *How did you feel when I told you that I would be giving you your gifts and you wouldn't get to choose? Why did you feel this way?*
- *How is this activity similar to or different from the way God gives spiritual gifts to Christians?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *When people do this kind of gift exchange at Christmas or on other occasions, each person usually has the chance to choose a gift, or at least swap a gift with someone. But when it comes to spiritual gifts, we don't decide which gifts we get—we only decide if we're going to discover and use the gifts we've received from God. But that's OK because God loves us and desires the best for us, so we can trust that God's gifts are truly the best gifts for us.*

If you came up with an opening activity, movie clip, or game that worked well with your group, and you'd like to share it with other youth workers, please email us at ideas@simplyyouthministry.com.

TEACHING POINTS

The goal of the Teaching Points is to help students capture the essence of each lesson with more discussion and less lecture-style teaching. The main points we have chosen here are (1) Your gifts come from God, (2) Your gifts are unique, and (3) Your gifts benefit others.

Remember: All throughout these lessons, it's up to you to choose (1) how many questions you use, and (2) the wording of the main points—keep ours, or change the wording to make it clearer for your audience.

Read Romans 12:6-8 together as a group. Consider allowing one or more of the teenagers to read the text.

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *Let's take a few moments to see what the Bible says about spiritual gifts and why they are an important part of who you are.*

1. Your gifts come from God

ASK:

- *What's the best Christmas or birthday gift you ever received? Why was it so meaningful, and how did you express your thanks to the person who gave you that gift?*
- *What do you think about when you hear the phrase "spiritual gifts"?*
- *In Romans 12, Paul encourages his readers to use their spiritual gifts well. How does doing things with excellence honor God?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *This may be a weird way to think about it, but using your spiritual gifts well is similar to giving your tithe or offering at church. Seriously. It's a way of demonstrating your love for God. You're taking what God has given and then using it for the right purposes. It's an act of worship and stewardship.*

2. Your gifts are unique

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *God knows each of us better than we know ourselves, and he has a reason for the specific gifts he's given us. It's similar to our opening activity. God is the one who decides which gifts we receive.*

ASK:

- *Why do you think God has gifted each and every Christian?*
- *Why doesn't God give the same set of spiritual gifts to everyone?*
- *Are some spiritual gifts more important than others? Explain.*

3. Your gifts benefit others

ASK:

- *Read 1 Corinthians 12:7. What happens if you don't use the spiritual gifts God has given you? How might it affect you, and how might it affect other Christians?*
- *In 1 Corinthians 12:31, Paul encourages Christians to "desire the most helpful gifts." Which spiritual gifts do you believe are the most helpful, and why?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *What happens if you're part of a team or group and some people don't do their part? The whole group suffers, right? That's what Paul says happens to the church if we aren't all using our spiritual gifts. The church isn't complete or whole, and as individuals we're missing out on the entirety of God's love and plan for our lives.*

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION [optional]

ASK:

- *Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:11 that the Holy Spirit decides which gifts each Christian receives. How do you think the Spirit makes that decision? What criteria might go into that decision-making process?*
- *How might God use the same spiritual gift in different ways? For example, various people may have the spiritual gift of teaching, but how might that gift be used in different settings?*
- *In Ephesians 4:13-16, Paul says that when people serve and use their spiritual gifts, the body—in other words, the church—will become unified, mature, healthy, growing, and full of love. When have you seen examples of this?*
- *How accurately does that describe our church? What can you do to make this a more accurate description of our church? What can our small group do?*

APPLICATION

ASK:

- *Read Ephesians 4:11-16. Paul says the role of pastors isn't to do the work of ministry—it's to prepare us to do that work. How is this different from the way many people view the role of pastors?*
- *How are you being prepared to do the work of ministry?*
- *What do you need to nurture and develop the spiritual gifts God has given you? What has helped you grow in your gifts so far?*

Pair up with another person in the group to discuss these questions.

ASK:

- *Look through the list of spiritual gifts from Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:1-11, 28, and Ephesians 4:11. What gifts do you think God may have given you, and why?*
- *If you already know or strongly believe you've been given certain spiritual gifts, how are you developing or using these gifts?*

- *Look at the lists again. Choose a total of three spiritual gifts from these passages, and talk about the ways these gifts could benefit our small group, our youth ministry, or our congregation.*

Bring everyone back together to discuss some of the answers to these questions.

SUMMARY

End your small group lesson here. Provide your teenagers with a quick summary or take-home challenge based on (1) the content of this lesson, (2) the dialogue that took place during the lesson, (3) your understanding of the issues and struggles your teenagers are facing, and (4) the big picture of your youth ministry and what your leadership team wants accomplished with the teaching and discussion time.

FOR KEEPS [MEMORY VERSE]

Encourage and/or challenge your teenagers to memorize the verse below.

God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us (1 Corinthians 12:6).