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THIRD EDITION

DISCOVER YOUR GIFTS

AND LEARN HOW TO USE THEM

ALVIN J. VANDER GRIEND

THIRD EDITION

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LEADER'S GUIDE



Grand Rapids, Michigan

We are grateful to Alvin J. Vander Griend for his contributions in planning and revising this third edition of *Discover Your Gifts and Learn How to Use Them* (revised and expanded from *Discover Your Gifts*, first published by Christian Reformed Home Missions in 1980 and updated in 1983, then revised by Faith Alive in 1996).

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LETTER TO CHURCH LEADERS

Dear pastors and other leaders:

Is the following statement too close to the truth in your church: “20 percent of our people are doing 80 percent of the work”? Hopefully your church is doing a lot better than that, but perhaps you still wish a greater percentage of your members could be involved in meaningful ministry. You and others may be busier than you should be, while many of your members may be sitting on the sidelines.

As you know, that isn’t the way Christ wants the church to be. The New Testament presents the church as a body of believers equipped and empowered by the Holy Spirit, mobilized for ministry. Many leaders have to remind people regularly that church is not an event to attend. It’s a group of people ready to build the kingdom of Christ and to bring the gospel to the ends of the earth.

How can we recover Christ’s vision for the church? A first step is to help people know who they are in Christ and that they are called to service in God’s kingdom. A second step is to help people discover their gifts and learn how to use them. A third step is to help people identify the specific ministries for which Christ has gifted them and to bravely step into those ministries.

That’s what *Discover Your Gifts and Learn How to Use Them* is all about. It’s a practical course of study designed to help you lead your church members to discover their spiritual gifts and put them to use in ministry. The end result will be not only increased knowledge but also more servants of Christ actively engaged in ministries that help build the kingdom of God.

For his glory,

Alvin J. Vander Griend

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

About the Course

This leader's guide is meant to accompany the student book of *Discover Your Gifts and Learn How to Use Them*. It includes a complete set of teaching notes for the course instructor, follow-up suggestions on forming a Gift Leadership Team, various options for using the course, and sermon notes for pastors who would like to preach a sermon series on spiritual gifts.

The sessions should take about 60 minutes (see suggested time-frames for each lesson segment). In some cases you may need more time, depending on the makeup of your student group. However, you may certainly adapt the lesson material to fit the available time you have.

Optional Ways to Use *Discover Your Gifts*

In addition to the five-session format presented in this guide, this course can be used profitably in the following formats (for more information on these, see Appendix B):

- three-session *Discover Your Gifts* course
- two-session course
- one-session class (perhaps as part of a new members class)
- one-day intensive workshop
- overnight retreat workshops
- whole-church *Discover Your Gifts* emphasis

Follow-up Procedures

Discover Your Gifts and Learn How to Use Them may be used effectively as a course for those who simply want to study spiritual gifts. But the full value of this course will be missed if its use stops there. It's very important to implement follow-up procedures so that people will move from study into ministry. Ministry, not academic learning, is the ultimate goal of this course. To accomplish this goal, most churches will need to repeat this course several times until a majority of members have discovered their spiritual gifts and are using them in ministry.

To make sure that ministry *is* the end result, someone—the church's pastor(s), administrator(s), executive team, or an *ad hoc* group of ministry leaders—needs to embrace the vision for a church engaged in gift-oriented ministry, identify ministry opportunities, oversee the ministry-placement process, facilitate the development of new ministries to which God is calling the church, and encourage support systems for those in ministry. Some churches may want to place the challenge of managing this process in the hands of a Gift Leadership Team (see Appendix A).

Engaging the church in a spiritual-gifts approach to ministry is a worthy, God-glorifying objective. From the beginning God intended the church to be not simply a group of Christians who gather to celebrate in worship but fundamentally a ministering body.

Preparing for the *Discover Your Gifts Course*

Church leaders who are responsible for the church's ministries should prepare for this course as follows:

1. Assess the congregation's need for discovery, development, and deployment of spiritual gifts. Ask questions like these: What percentage of the congregation is now involved in ministry? How will church structures be affected? What current practices and attitudes will be challenged? What will be gained?
2. Identify and describe the church's ministry positions to be filled by those who have discovered their gifts. Begin thinking about new ministries where none now exist in order to provide ministry opportunities for members who are discovering spiritual gifts.
3. Analyze the church's organizational structures and make sure that they facilitate gift-based ministry. Recommend necessary changes.
4. Promote the gift-discovery course to the congregation and help to recruit class members.
5. Prayerfully select instructors for the course and give them whatever support they need.
6. Provide opportunities for members who have discovered their spiritual gifts to receive training that will help them develop their gifts further in ministry.
7. Plan for and keep records of spiritually gifted members and the ministries in which they serve and are needed.
8. Help place members who have identified gifts into ministry positions, inside or outside the church, where they can be fruitful.

Discover Your Gifts Teachers

Teachers should

- have the spiritual gift of teaching.
- understand and own the gift vision of the church.
- be able to facilitate learning in a participative style.
- read through the entire gift course before the first session.

- prepare their hearts by acknowledging God's call on their lives, recognizing their own limitations, and seeking through prayer the grace and strength to be effective in this ministry.

Teachers are

- instructors able to clarify the concepts being taught and to reinforce the value of the course.
- facilitators able to direct and oversee small group learning activities.
- encouragers able to support and help empower church members who may be timid about their God-given ability to engage in ministry.
- intercessors who plead for the infusion of God's power and grace into the lives of class members.

Discover Your Gifts

Teaching Methods

- **Small groups.** Small groups are an important part of this course. Every session provides for small group time, offering a comfortable way for everyone to participate. The smaller the group (no more than three or four persons), the more talk time each person has. Don't let your small groups get too large. Try to meet in a space that will facilitate a comfortable small group arrangement.
- **Bible discovery.** Every class session includes valuable Bible study time. The Bible passages to be studied are printed in the student book. The discovery questions in the sessions can be answered from these printed passages. However, you may want to urge class members to bring and use their own Bibles so that they can work with these passages in their scriptural contexts.
- **Teaching segments.** Every class session also includes teaching segments in which you, as leader, will be expected to present content. The content is usually supplied in Part B: FAQs About Spiritual Gifts in the student book, allowing you the freedom to summarize, expand on, or highlight what is presented there. As your students read from these sections after the class sessions, what you have taught will be reinforced.
- **Prayer times.** Opening and closing prayer times are important. Try to tie these into the subject matter of each class session. Engage class

members as often and as fully as possible in these prayer times. Be careful, though, not to force people into praying out loud or in small groups if they are uncomfortable doing so. Note the suggestions for prayer times that are given in this leader's guide, but feel free to alter those to fit your group.

Discover Your Gifts Participants

Course participants should understand that they will be expected to

- attend all the class sessions unless a major conflict is unavoidable.
- complete homework assignments between class sessions.
- participate in small group sharing and activities.

LEADER'S NOTES FOR SESSIONS

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Opening Prayer (1 minute)

In this first session the leader should offer the opening prayer.

Preview (1 minute)

After seeing that each person has a student book, invite everyone to open to session 1 and look over the Preview at the beginning of the session notes. Read this section with the group to explain what you're going to cover together in this first session.

Warm-up Exercise (3-5 minutes)

Quickly divide your group members into small groups of three or four. To start things off, invite people to introduce themselves within their small groups and tell one or two things about themselves. Have them also tell about one of the best gifts (of any kind) they ever received. Give each person about a minute so that everyone has a time to speak.

Tip: If you think you'll need an extra five or so minutes for this Warm-up Exercise, you can spend less time on the Bible Discovery step and ask people to complete unfinished parts of that step at home.

Bible Discovery (25 minutes)

Continue in the same small groups for this Bible Discovery exercise. Encourage everyone to work together in their small groups by reading the

Scripture passages in their student books and answering the discovery questions after each passage. Alert groups to the 25-minute time frame and tell them that when they are finished, the whole class will work to pull their thoughts together by answering some *who, what, where, why, and how* questions. If people get stuck on any questions, let them know they will probably get answers in the next part of the session.

Option: Divide up the Scripture passages among the small groups so that each group gets one longer passage and a couple of shorter ones.

Pulling Our Thoughts Together

(10-12 minutes)

Call everyone back together and lead a whole-class question-and-answer time in which people share what they have learned during their Bible study exercise. Ask the *who, what, where, why, and how* questions about spiritual gifts. Invite answers from everyone. Encourage people to make note of the answers given. Suggested answers with references are printed below, along with some additional insights.

Spiritual Gifts

- **What are spiritual gifts?** Spiritual gifts are grace-given abilities. The Greek word for gifts usually translated as “spiritual gifts” is *charisma*. It comes from the Greek word *charis*, which means “grace.” The word *charisma* occurs seventeen times in the New Testament. It literally means

“grace gifts.” Spiritual gifts are abilities given to individual believers in the community of Christ—Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:4; 1 Pet. 4:10. (This question is covered in more detail in the next section: Unpacking a Definition.)

- **Who gives these gifts?** Spiritual gifts from God are given by Christ through the Holy Spirit—1 Cor. 12:4-11; Eph. 4:11.
- **To whom are they given?** Spiritual gifts are given to every believer in the body of Christ—Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:7; 1 Pet. 4:10.
- **Why are they given?** Spiritual gifts are to be used for the benefit of others. They are abilities that enable believers to minister effectively to others. God uses spiritually gifted individuals to enrich the lives of fellow brothers and sisters in the body of Christ, to the glory of God—1 Cor. 12:7; Eph. 4:12-13; 1 Pet. 4:10-11. See also question 3 of FAQs About Spiritual Gifts (Part B) in the student book.
- **Where do they function?** Spiritual gifts function chiefly within the church. The church, which is the living body of Christ, is an interdependent community in which members belong to one another and serve one another with their Spirit-given abilities—Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:7, 12-27.
- **How do they function?** Gifts must function in the context of love. They are worth nothing unless exercised out of love. The community in which they function is meant to be a community marked by love—1 Cor. 13:1-3; 1 Pet. 4:8.

Unpacking a Definition (7-10 minutes)

The definition below is amplified further in question 2 of FAQs About Spiritual Gifts (Part B) in the student book. Use that material to develop your own brief presentation on the definition of spiritual gifts. Speak briefly about each part of the definition. Group members should be ready to absorb this content after the two segments they have just completed.

Spiritual gifts are special abilities given by Christ through the Holy Spirit to empower believers for the ministries of the body.

- special abilities—
- given by Christ—
- through the Holy Spirit—
- to empower believers—
- for the ministries of the body—

When you have finished your presentation on the definition, give everyone an opportunity to ask questions or add comments. Some issues that may come up for further discussion:

- **special abilities**—“special” here means out of the ordinary, beyond what is normal. An “ability” could also be called a strength, an enablement, an empowerment, an endowment, or a competency.
- **given by Christ**—God the Father is also involved (see “Who gives these gifts?” above). The roles of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are often understood in terms of the Father’s planning and initiating, the Son’s working out of the Father’s will, and the Holy Spirit’s delivering to the end user (us) what the Father has planned and the Son has worked out. These are essentially the roles of the Father, Son, and Spirit in giving us spiritual gifts.
- **through the Holy Spirit**—It may help to reinforce that the Holy Spirit, as the third person of the Trinity, is truly a thinking, feeling, willing, acting, communicating, listening person who never operates independently but always carries out what the Father wills and what the Son has made possible.

- **to empower believers**—nonbelievers have God-given abilities too. God provides all the abilities, strengths, talents, and skills that humans have. However, the Bible doesn't call the abilities of nonbelievers spiritual gifts—probably because they are not used for the work of ministry, the building up of the church and kingdom, or the glory of God.
- **for the ministries of the body**—the word *ministry* is often used interchangeably with the more common word *service*. We are not talking here about the work of the preacher who is sometimes called “the minister” but about all ministries of the members of the church of Christ. Though ministries are primarily for and within the body of Christ, they also operate outside the church to advance the kingdom of God.

Looking Ahead (1-2 minutes)

Before you close this session, underscore the importance of assignments to complete before the next session. You may want to note the Guidelines for Participants in the front material of the student book to remind everyone of general expectations for class participation. One of the best encouragements you can give is your own testimony of the value of “after session” assignments and follow-up study. Invite everyone to turn to Part B: FAQs About Spiritual Gifts and Part C: Gift Studies in their books to note follow-up reading and study that they can do to their benefit.

Closing (3-4 minutes)

If class members are reasonably comfortable praying with others in small groups, have them gather into their earlier small groups to end this session in prayer. Point out the three prayer suggestions at the end of the session in the student book. Note that people can easily expand on the *praise*, *thank*, and *ask* ideas referenced there. Acknowledge that some group members may wish to be silent “pray-ers.”

If many of the class members are not comfortable praying by themselves in a small group, offer a closing prayer yourself. Introduce the prayer with a reminder that you will pick up on the three elements that are referenced in the closing suggestions: *praise*, *thanks*, and *asking*.



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STUDENT BOOK



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INTRODUCTION

God in his grace has given each believer spiritual gifts. In this course you will learn what spiritual gifts are, why God has given them, how they are to be used, and how they can be misused. You'll also learn about the spiritual gifts *you've* been given, including potential gifts that God is working in you to develop. *Discover Your Gifts and Learn How to Use Them* is intended to help you and other believers use your gifts constructively together to the glory of God.

There are four parts to this book:

Part A: Gift Sessions includes five study sessions on spiritual gifts. Each session includes a Bible discovery section, time for instruction, and an opportunity for personal sharing. A Discover Your Gifts Survey is included in this section (and is also available online) for use after session 2.

Part B: FAQs About Spiritual Gifts covers many frequently asked questions people raise about spiritual gifts.

Part C: Gift Studies contains studies of the spiritual gifts featured in this course. Each study includes a definition of the gift, scriptural background, how the gift may be used responsibly and misused, an exploring Scripture exercise, and more. These studies are designed to be used by participants on their own.

Part D: Follow-up Tools includes a Waiting Gifts Survey and a Ready to Serve! form for reporting to your church or administrator.

God intends each believer to be a channel of his grace to others. Using our spiritual gifts is one of the primary ways we fulfill this function in God's kingdom. *Discover Your Gifts and Learn How to Use Them* is a proven tool

for learning your “spiritual job description” and becoming an instrument of God’s grace in this needy world.

You are beginning an exciting and challenging journey. Pray that God will give you the courage and perseverance to complete it. God wants you to be effective and fruitful in the work of his kingdom, and God is most eager to support and strengthen you as you work with other believers to build up the body of Christ.

GUIDELINES

The following guidelines will help you make the best use of this material.

- 1. Take the challenge of the course seriously.** The main challenge is not simply to learn about spiritual gifts. It is to discover your gifts and to put them to use in the kingdom of God. God desires and expects our best. That means giving our best in this course and in using our grace-given gifts for God.
- 2. Participate freely in the small group discussions and activities.** Every class session provides an opportunity to work in small groups. This gives everyone an opportunity to give input and ask questions. Jump into small group times with a bit of “reckless abandon.” Share yourself and your thoughts as freely and fully as possible. Openly accept others and their contributions. In a learning context all questions and comments are valuable.
- 3. Read through the FAQs section (Part B) of this book.** The frequently asked questions in Part B are divided into five sections that correspond with the subject matter of this course’s five sessions. Studying from these pages after each session will enhance what you have learned in class.
- 4. Learn more about individual gifts in the Gifts Studies section (Part C) of this book.** You’ll grow to understand more about God’s plan for spiritual gifts, the Christian community, your spiritually gifted friends, and yourself.
- 5. When the course is finished, look for opportunities to use your gifts in ministry** if you aren’t already doing so. Take a careful look at ministry options for which you are best suited. Learn all that you can about them. Talk to and walk alongside those who are in similar kinds

of ministry. This is one of the best ways to find a ministry in which you can use your gifts. Be willing to start small. It may be best to work in an apprentice role first.

- 6. Get support.** No ministry should be without support. Start by seeking out the prayer support of other interested individuals. Look for others in similar ministries with whom you can share your thoughts and ask questions. This will take some extra time, but in the long run your ministry in Christ will benefit greatly from the support of other believers.

GIFT SESSIONS

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Opening Prayer

Preview

In this session we will

- discover what the Bible has to say about spiritual gifts.
- answer several basic questions about gifts from Scripture.
- unpack a biblically based definition of spiritual gifts.

Warm-up Exercise

In small groups of three or four persons, introduce yourselves to each other. Tell the others in your group about one of the best gifts you ever received and what made it special. Or you might wish to share why you're taking this course and what you hope will result from it.

Bible Discovery

Read the following Bible passages on spiritual gifts in your small group. Answer the discovery questions that follow each passage and make a note of your answers.

Do as much as you can in the time you're given, but don't worry if you don't make it all the way through. There will be time to discuss everyone's responses in the next part of the lesson, and you can always finish completing your answers at home.

Romans 12:4-8

⁴For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; ⁷if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; ⁸if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

1. What does the body metaphor in verses 5 and 6 teach us about gifts in the church?
2. What does grace have to do with spiritual gifts?
3. If you have one of the gifts mentioned here, what does God want you to do with it? What do you think might happen if you attempt a ministry but don't have a gift for it?
4. Underline the gifts mentioned in this passage. Did you encounter any surprises here? If so, explain.

1 Corinthians 12:4-14, 27-28; 13:1-3

⁴There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. ⁵There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. ⁶There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

⁷Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. ⁸To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, ¹⁰to 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. ¹¹All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

¹²Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. ¹⁴Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many. . . .

²⁷Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. ²⁸And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance [administration, leadership], and of different kinds of tongues. . . .

^{13:1}If I speak in human or angelic tongues, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. ²If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

1. Who decides what spiritual gifts each believer receives?
2. Who might be expected to have spiritual gifts?
3. Who benefits from spiritual gifts?
4. How are gifted believers like the parts of a human body? (See also Romans 12:4-5 above.)
5. Underline the different gifts mentioned in these verses. Any surprises? Which ones were also mentioned in Romans 12?

Ephesians 4:11-13

¹¹So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹²to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

1. Notice that in verse 11 people themselves are described as gifts to the church. How do the gifted persons mentioned here serve Christ's people—that is, the body of Christ?
2. In what ways will the body of Christ benefit when equipped believers do “works of service”?
3. Underline the gifts mentioned in this passage. Which ones were already mentioned in previous passages?

1 Peter 4:8-11

⁸Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. ⁹Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. ¹⁰Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. ¹¹If you speak, you should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If you serve, you should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

1. What should we do with our spiritual gifts?
2. What is our ultimate aim when we use our gifts?
3. Which gifts are mentioned in this passage?

Pulling Our Thoughts Together

Now that we've taken a look at some key Bible passages about gifts, let's answer some basic questions together.

Spiritual Gifts

- What are spiritual gifts?
- Who gives these gifts?
- To whom are they given?
- Why are they given?
- Where do they function?
- How do they function?

Unpacking a Definition

Spiritual gifts are special abilities given by Christ through the Holy Spirit to empower believers for the ministries of the body.

- special abilities—
- given by Christ—
- through the Holy Spirit—
- to empower believers—
- for the ministries of the body—

Looking Ahead

In this section of each session you'll find things to do at home that will make these sessions more meaningful to you.

- Read the broader contexts of the Bible passages studied in this first session (from Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12-13; Eph. 4; 1 Pet. 4). This will help you better understand the Bible's basic teaching on spiritual gifts and prepare you for the sessions that follow.
- Begin reading FAQs About Spiritual Gifts in Part B of this book (section 1 of the FAQs corresponds with session 1, and so on). The insights you find there will help to affirm and expand on what you have learned in this session.

Closing

Three ways to pray:

- *Praise* God as the almighty gift-giving God. All the abilities in spiritual gifts are extensions of God's power.
- *Thank* Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit for the special abilities given by means of spiritual gifts to all members of the church.
- *Ask* for the Holy Spirit's wisdom and insight in understanding what spiritual gifts are and why they are given to the church. (See James 1:5.)