

TRAINING IN MINISTRY

# HOW TO DISCOVER YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS

## LEADER'S GUIDE

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# WELCOME TO TRAINING IN MINISTRY

Thank you for agreeing to teach a TIM course. We hope these introductory pages will help you be a successful leader of this course, *How to Discover Your Spiritual Gifts*.

## **Why TIM?**

Training In Ministry (TIM) courses are specifically designed to help train Christians for ministry, both in the church and in the community. This training is important for several reasons.

First, Scripture teaches that believers are to be equipped to minister effectively. *"And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,"* Ephesians 4:11-12.

Second, no individual person—not even a super-pastor—can do all that needs to be done in the church. Ministry training greatly increases the church's potential for ministry by multiplying ministering members.

Third, lay people desire meaningful involvement in the work of the church. Much of what is assumed to be apathy may be boredom with a spectator role.

Fourth, most lost people will never come into a church building. The church needs to train lay ministers and send them to where the people are—in the workplace and community, as well as in the church.

## **The TIM Approach to Learning**

The educational methodology employed in every TIM course is called *head, heart, and hands*. Each of these three aspects of learning is carefully built into each TIM course.

HEAD refers to the cognitive aspect of learning. Without adequate content one's ministry will be *shallow*.

HEART refers to personal application. As God's truth is appropriated, a person's attitudes, values, and perspectives change to conform to Christ's. Without application, a person's ministry will be *carnal*.

HANDS is actual ministry activity—involvement in the lives

of others. This is the ultimate goal of every TIM course. Without application of the truth, our learning will be *hollow*.

## **Your Group Learners**

We use the term "learner" rather than "student" because the word "disciple" (*mathetes*) means "learner". These New Testament learners integrated these three aspects of learning—*information* (head), *life* (heart), and *ministry* (hands) as they communicated the Gospel to others. The result was that 2,000 years later the world is still impacted by the message they lived and taught. We pray that you will similarly impact the area of the world where you live and work.

## **Understanding Your Learners**

If your study group consists of older adults, be encouraged. Older adults can learn, just as well as children. But with differences. As a successful teacher of adults, keep in mind the following adult education principles.

ADULTS NEED REASSURANCE ABOUT LEARNING. Many adults believe the myth that "you can't teach an old dog new tricks." Others remember former failures in school and, therefore, avoid formal learning situations. Research studies show that, except in the case of brain impairment, age puts no limit on learning ability. It's also a mistake to equate learning with school-type situations. Whether they're aware of it or not, your learners have been learning all their lives. Everything you say and do in the group meeting should communicate a positive message: "You can do it!"

ADULTS LEARN MORE SLOWLY AS THEY AGE. Thirty-year-olds learn more slowly than seventeen-year-olds, and sixty-year-olds learn more slowly than thirty-year-olds. Some of your adults may shy away from learning experiences because, as adults, they tried to take classes in a school designed for twenty-year olds. To keep the learning experience positive, watch the pace. Don't move on until everyone has caught up, even if it puts you "behind schedule." What's important is whether your learners learn, not whether you cover everything by a certain date. (Note: This principle applies to you, too. Be sure to allow plenty of time for lesson preparation!)

ADULT LEARNING IS EXPERIENCE-RELATED. The average college freshman lacks the perspective that a fuller life will bring; his

or her knowledge is secondhand from books and structured experiments. But older adults have had the rich experiences that give perspective, understanding, and the mature judgment needed to distinguish the urgent from the important. Any new knowledge must be integrated into this network of meaning. What does all this mean for you? Adults can help teach each other by sharing experiences. Also, new knowledge is usually related directly to the real world because adults are building on a real-life foundation, rather than on abstract concepts. However, this does have one potentially negative effect: Adults don't change very quickly. A lifetime of experiences has produced habitual behavior and thought patterns. So be prepared to exercise patience in helping them to transform their lives.

ADULT PARTICIPATION IS LARGELY DETERMINED BY FELT NEEDS. Most adults don't learn merely for learning's sake. They have many demands on their time and energy, and they will resist committing themselves to a long-term learning activity unless they can see some practical benefit from it. They can't be coerced or pressured to learn; their motivation must come from within. Of course, your learners are motivated to start with. You can maintain their motivation most effectively by finding out what they want to get out of their study and then emphasizing those practical results over and over throughout the course. (You have a definite advantage as a TIM leader; the hands part of the course gives you specific, practical outcomes to emphasize for your learners.)

FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS AFFECT AN ADULT'S LEARNING EFFECTIVENESS. Negative feelings such as fear of inadequacy, perhaps from past bad experiences, can stall the learning process. Adults who associate learning with unpleasantness are unlikely to take the risk of change that comes with new learning. To teach adults successfully, you must go beyond technique and consciously try to build positive feelings in your learners. Adults need to feel comfortable, so the physical environment (seating, lighting, temperature) is important. They must also feel valued as persons. Therefore, everyone's contribution is respectfully heard; no ridicule is permitted. They must also feel safe. They must come to trust you and the other learners in the class. This will come over time, as they come to realize that you care about them as individuals, keep their discussions confidential, and trust them enough to be

honest and open about yourself.

## **Leading Your Class Discussions**

Because your learners prepare their lessons before class, you shouldn't see your primary role as a dispenser of information.

Rather, help your learners to more fully understand the information they have been given in the workbook. Guide their thinking as they explore its relation to other truth and to their own lives. In other words, help solidify the *head* portion of the lesson and encourage them to open up to possible *heart* and *hands* applications. And keep this in mind: *the most effective teaching method for accomplishing these goals is discussion.*

The following guidelines can help you become an effective discussion leader:

**BE ENTHUSIASTIC, OPEN, AND FRIENDLY.** This encourages learners to participate.

**BE THOUGHTFULLY PREPARED.** As you think about the next class, jot down questions you think might help your learners get the most out of their own study.

**CONTROL THE DISCUSSION LIKE A MODERATOR.** Don't allow the discussion wander too far off the track, and don't let a few people dominate the interaction.

**DRAW ALL LEARNERS INTO THE DISCUSSION.** If a talkative one wants to add something, say, "Why don't we hear what some of the others think about this issue. Bob, do you have any comments?"

**LET YOUR LEARNERS DO MOST OF THE TALKING.** A good discussion leader will talk only 20 to 30 percent of the time, or less.

**DON'T BE AFRAID OF SILENCE AFTER A QUESTION.** Remember adult learning principle #2? It may take a while for your learners to think of an answer. If the pause gets too long, they might not have understood the question; rephrase it, but don't answer it yourself.

**DON'T BE AN ANSWER MACHINE.** Ask if anyone else has an answer. Or point to a Scripture passage that might shed light on the issue. Encourage learners to wrestle with the issues and come up with answers themselves. It may be quicker for the teacher to answer questions, but the practice is harmful to your learners' spiritual health in the long run. It makes them

dependent and weak; your goal for them is spiritual health and strength.

**LISTEN ACTIVELY.** Lean forward and focus on the person speaking. You may want to rephrase the person's comment or question to make sure you understand it clearly. Not only does this prevent confusion, but it gives a positive message: "You've got something worthwhile to say, and I want to make sure I get it just right."

**TREAT WRONG OR INAPPROPRIATE ANSWERS TACTFULLY.** Ask how many others agree with the comment. Students are less threatened by correction that comes from other learners. If right answers fail to be offered, give the correct information clearly for the benefit of the whole class; then make arrangements to meet with the person privately to present your detailed arguments and evidence. This keeps the issues clear for the class, without injuring the mistaken learner's ego. If you take class time to try to change the person's mind, he or she (and others in the class) may see it as a power play—a way to establish your superiority at the expense of one person. Remember that change takes time. If you gently stick to your approach of speaking the truth in love, the Holy Spirit will gradually change the person's mind.

**SUMMARIZE THE DISCUSSION.** Allow plenty of time to do this before the end of the class time. Cut off discussion early if you have to, but don't neglect to summarize. When learners leave, they should have a clear idea of what they've discussed and what conclusions were reached.

**LEAD WITH CONFIDENCE.** Do you get excited at the thought that God can use you to help adults to spiritual maturity and service? Has God given you a desire to help others become all that they can be in Christ? Then step out *confidently*, depending on His promise to be with us always (Matthew 28:20). God bless you in this vitally important role!



# CURRICULUM OF TIM COURSES

TIM training courses are designed to better “*equip God’s people for works of service, and so build up the body of Christ*” (Ephesians 4:12). Each TIM course has a threefold educational emphasis:

1. To provide a significant level of academic information in that subject area.
2. To encourage application of this truth to the learner’s personal life.
3. Not just to equip God’s people *for* ministry, but to get them involved *in* ministry.

To download free, or purchase any of the following courses and their Leader’s Guides, log on to [TrainingInMinistry.com](http://TrainingInMinistry.com).

## **Grounding Courses**

CHRISTIANITY 101 is designed to disciple new Christians, either in small groups, or one-to-one. *Application:* Learners will lead another person through this course.

A PANORAMA OF THE BIBLE features easy-to-remember visuals for each of the 12 Bible periods. Learners will thrill to find that they can remember the major themes of Bible content and message. *Application:* With the aid of the Leader’s Guide, learners will lead another person, or a small group through this course.

TRUTH THAT TRANSFORMS will provide learners with a solid foundation in the major doctrines of Scripture, with an emphasis on practical applications. *Application:* Learners will, with the aid of the Leader’s Guide, lead another individual, or group of people through this course.

A PANORAMA OF CHRISTIAN HISTORY provides a “big picture” view of the Church from the 1st through the 20th century. It also emphasizes practical lessons we can apply to our own ministry. *Application:* Learners will teach this course to another person or group.

## **Growing Courses**

WELCOME TO YOUR MINISTRY teaches the important truth that

God has called and gifted all believers for ministry and challenges them to get involved in some basic ministries in the church. *Application:* Learners will commit to getting additional training for ministry, and getting involved in it.

HOW TO DISCOVER YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS will provide believers with a better understanding of which spiritual gifts they may have, and how to use their gifts in service for Christ. *Application:* A short-term assignment will be given, wherein learners use one of their gifts in an approved ministry.

LEARNING TO SERVE: JESUS AS ROLE MODEL teaches the servant life-style of Jesus in many ministry related contexts, and helps learners put this into practice in their ministry. *Application:* Learners will be given a ministry role wherein they demonstrate the servant-leader style of Jesus.

### **GOING Courses**

YOUR MINISTRY OF PRAYER studies prayer in Scripture, and will help learners become involved in a significant ministry of prayer. *Application:* Participants will commit to a ministry of prayer as suggested in the course content.

OUTREACH AS A LIFE-STYLE will train lay people to develop friendships with people, leading to sharing Christ with them. *Application:* Learners will practice this personal evangelism approach in their lives of sharing their faith.

YOUR MINISTRY AT HOME provides practical principles in how to establish and maintain a truly Christian home. *Application:* Applying the principles week by week within the learner's family, including being consistent in reading the weekly schedule of verses and journaling based on these verses.

TOUCHING TOMORROW BY TEACHING CHILDREN is a superb tool to train more workers to serve in the exciting ministry of teaching children. *Application:* Teaming up with an experienced teacher as an assistant for one quarter or more.

CHRISTIANITY IN THE WORKPLACE relates faith to practical and ethical issues on the job. Its focus is how to be like Christ in the work world. *Application:* Learners will apply these biblical principles to their areas of work.

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH is a course on Christian apologetics, which will equip learners to defend and share their faith, especially among intellectual unbelievers.

*Application:* Learners will engage in an effective ministry of defending and sharing their faith.

A SURVEY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT is a 12-lesson survey of the New Testament. It includes outlines of each book, background information, and questions for individual study. *Application:* Learners will be able to lead Bible studies in any New Testament book.

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE will give students an in-depth exposure to the inductive method of Bible study and help them develop their own outlines for leading Bible studies. *Application:* Based on their study, learners will lead 10 Bible studies in the book of Ephesians.

YOUR MINISTRY OF LEADERSHIP will encourage, equip, and train Christian men and women for increased effectiveness in leadership. *Application:* Learners will demonstrate the skills taught in this course in an assigned ministry position.

# INTRODUCTORY GROUP MEETING

## **Establishing An Atmosphere For Learning**

It is said that 80% of the ministry of the church today is done by 20% of the people. Some Christians feel they have little or nothing of value to offer in service. They have not found any place of service particularly successful or rewarding. They may say, " I can only do the little insignificant things like locking up the building, turning on the lights, and helping to keep the church yard clean." These people may have the gift of helps, but feel that they are unimportant to the Body and doubt that they have a gift at all. Others are willing to tackle any job, but lack a sense of direction and purpose for their ministry. They are doing works rather than having a ministry. Still others are anxious to discover the spiritual gifts God has given them so they will be more alert to opportunities to exercise their gifts with confidence.

You, as the study leader, have the exciting prospect of helping people like these find their spiritual gifts and begin developing them in ministry! True fulfillment often begins when a person starts using his gifts in Christian service. Moreover the Body of Christ, the Church, enjoys much better health when her members are all working together. As people better understand how the different gifts function and interrelate, they begin to gain confidence and a desire to develop what God has given them. Truly, yours is an exciting prospect as you lead this course!

Naturally, before you can lead others to understand and apply the Bible truths taught in this course, you must first work through each lesson with the same diligence you would expect from your students. You may want to make notes beside points you will want to emphasize. Then, each week as you prepare to lead your study group, review the lesson, your notes, and the suggestions in this guide. You may want to outline your plan for each meeting, including the amount of time you plan to spend on each point.

The first gathering of any group or class is a crucial factor in its success. A climate, or atmosphere, is established that

determines how comfortable the participants will be with each other-and, as mentioned in the introductory section- such feelings can determine how well students will learn.

For this reason, the emphasis in Session 1 is on getting acquainted with one another and establishing a warm social climate that will make participants want to return. An introduction to the content and distinctives of this course is also included. You'll close the session with a time of corporate prayer, affirming the need for the Holy Spirit to build a close-knit, highly motivated group of students. Your objectives for this session are that each learner will:

1. Learn the names of others in the group.
2. Participate in a non-threatening activity designed to break down relational barriers and increase students' "comfort level" with the group.
3. Receive their student texts and identify the subject matter to be covered in this course.
4. Identify the requirements of this course in order to intelligently commit themselves to fulfill those requirements.
5. Define the HEAD, HEART, HANDS approach to learning used in this TIM course.
6. Dedicate this course and themselves to the Lord through a time of corporate prayer.

### **Introduction to One Another (20-25 Min.)**

If facilities permit, some light refreshments will help establish an informal, friendly atmosphere. Greet each person warmly, and *work hard at remembering the names of people new to you*. If possible, arrange chairs so that people can face each other. After you open with prayer, introduce yourself and tell the group that you are looking forward to getting to know each person better. Use the following activity (or a "mixer" of your own) to break the ice and get interaction started.

**NAME TAG LOGO** As your class members arrive, give each of them a name tag and a marker. Encourage everyone to print his first name on his nametag and to add some kind of symbol which will help everyone to remember something special about him. For instance, a fisherman might draw a hook and line dangling from a pole. Someone who especially enjoys

sewing might draw a needle and thread. Explain that this is just a simple drawing which will help everyone to get better acquainted. Show the class your name tag and explain the symbol you have added near your name. Then take a few minutes for group members to briefly share a little about themselves, explaining the drawings on their name-tags. (Even if everyone knows one another by name, this can still be a time of sharing special interests or little-known information with one another.)

After several people have shared their name tags, remark that you all know something about someone else that you probably didn't know before, and you'll know a lot more about each other before the course is over. Then explain that this activity has another purpose. It is a small demonstration of what you expect from this course. Each person has something unique to contribute to the group. Without everyone's contribution, the mix just won't be the same. In this course, as you and your group members study and apply the Word of God, each person will add a unique discovery which will result in a time of growth for all.

### **Introduction to Course Content (20-25 Min.)**

Explain that there are three main objectives for this course: to provide a basic understanding of what the New Testament teaches about gifts, to develop a desire to be used of God in ministry, and to help each learner discover his gifts and begin to use them.

As you pass out the student's texts, relate to the class a time when you injured some small part of your body, let's say your toe. Not only did the initial injury hurt, but you found that for several days afterward you were repeatedly made aware that your toe was sore. You may have limped, taken off your shoe as often as possible, and avoided vigorous sports until the toe was recovered. It isn't that you only had one toe. In fact you had nine others. It may have been that this toe was even quite small by comparison to the others. Yet you became acutely aware of its importance when it was unable to function as it should. Just as our physical bodies suffer when one part, or member, doesn't perform its function well, so the Church, the Body of Christ, suffers when we are unaware of our function or fail to do what we were designed to do. Ask everyone to turn to the Table of Contents. Point out that in Lesson 1 you

will be learning about how Christians are designed to fit together as one Body. Remind learners that some of the most vital functions of our bodies are performed by organs which we virtually ignore-except when they threaten to quit doing their job! Read Ephesians 4:11-16 to conclude this introduction to Lesson 1.

A section titled "Steps to Gift Discovery" in Lesson 2 will help learners begin to zero in on their gifts. Point out that in Lessons 3-11 the gifts have been divided according to how they are used in ministry-speaking, serving, or as a sign to others. The final lesson is designed for setting some personal goals and making some commitments for developing gifts and using them in specific ministries.

After previewing this course, ask some general questions and encourage several to give an answer to each one. Why do spiritual gifts sound interesting to you? How would learning about spiritual gifts help a person be a more effective Christian servant? Make it clear that there are no "right" answers to these questions. You might choose this time to share how discovering your gifts has changed you or your ministry. Your example of personal vulnerability-now and throughout the course-can be an effective means of establishing the atmosphere of trust that is required if any real learning is to take place.

### **Introduction to TIM Distinctives (20-25 Min.)**

Ask your class if anyone ever took a course in school, did well on the tests, and promptly forgot most of what had been "learned." If so, perhaps the course was had little practical application to their lives. (For instance, I studied French for four years, but I have never known anyone with whom I could speak French!)

By way of contrast, explain that TIM courses are designed to reinforce knowledge as well as provide opportunities for practical application of this knowledge in life. Every TIM course is based on the HEAD, HEART, HANDS approach to learning. Group members will need to study the Bible material carefully to gain knowledge. But knowledge cannot support an effective ministry unless it is first applied to the life of the learner. Head knowledge which has been applied personally is still ineffective without hands that reach out to serve. Each Christian is called to minister, to serve. What is

received is to be shared with others. In both formal and informal ways, you want every learner to communicate what he or she learns with others—and to act upon it.

Explain that each lesson is designed to take approximately an hour. Emphasize that the discussion each week will be based on the students' completed lessons. It is important that each class member feel accountable to the others to attend class faithfully, work through the lesson thoroughly, pray regularly for the group, and follow through with the application each week. Ask each group member to open his text and thumb through the lessons. Point out that TIM uses a workbook approach to involve the learner and reinforce what is being learned. (Choose one or two questions from Lesson 1 and work through them together.) Each week the author will provide some insights on that week's topic, but the main goal of each lesson is to raise questions and provide study projects that involve the learner in his or her own study of Scripture. Students should write answers in their workbooks, and jot down questions or mark unclear passages to bring up in class.

### **The Real Teacher (10-15 MIN.)**

Read John 16:7-15. In this passage, Jesus is telling His disciples about the Holy Spirit, whom He will send to them. Affirm that everyone in the group is dependent on the Holy Spirit for illumination, both during individual study and in group discussion. He is the Teacher; we are His instruments, the means He uses to teach others. Close by reading Psalm 119:18: "Open my eyes, that I may see wonderful things in your law." Encourage each group member to begin each week's study with a similar prayer, expressing dependence on the Holy Spirit for His insights.

To close this first session, encourage volunteers to pray conversationally, dedicating themselves and the course to the Lord. More specifically, ask them to pray for one another's self-discipline, so that nothing in their schedules will crowd out the preparation time for next week's session.

Finally, don't forget to make prayer a part of your own preparation each week. Make a list of your students. Pray for them weekly by name. Remember that the goal of the course isn't merely increased knowledge, but changed lives—and only the Holy Spirit can accomplish that work. As you depend on Him, this course can become an exciting adventure as you



watch change take place in the lives of your students. May God use you as a channel to stimulate, encourage and hold accountable your fellow course members.

# YOU ARE THE BODY OF CHRIST

## **Perspectives And Objectives**

A foundation for understanding spiritual gifts must begin with an understanding of the Church as the Body of Christ, its purpose here on earth, and how God planned for the Church to accomplish that purpose. This first lesson is designed to lay that foundation.

As you review your completed work in the student's text and prepare to use the teaching tips in this manual, pray that God will use you to accomplish these objectives for each learner:

1. To understand that the Church is to continue the ministry of Jesus Christ on earth. He has no other plan.
2. To understand that this ministry consists of representing Christ to the world as ambassadors and reconciling the world to Christ.
3. To understand that to accomplish this purpose the Holy Spirit gives each Christian a gift that enables him to perform specific tasks within the Body of Christ.
4. To seek to know his spiritual gift and earnestly desire to develop it in service for the Lord.

## **Focusing Activity (5 Min.)**

Take a few minutes at the beginning of this week's session to share briefly the history of neglect of spiritual gifts in the Church. Perhaps it was because of tradition that Christians who were not seminary graduates or ordained were not encouraged to look for their gifts. Or, perhaps some pastors felt threatened to think that others in their congregation might have gifts such as teaching or shepherding. It wasn't really until the early 1970's that gift discovery began to be emphasized. Ray Stedman's book, *Body Life*, sparked a new interest in what had been a long-neglected issue. If you, as the leader of this study, are excited about helping others discover their own personal treasure-their gifts from God,

your excitement will be contagious. Not only will group members be discovering God's enablement in their lives, but also God's provision for ministry for them.

### **Discovery in the Word (30-35 Min.)**

Each week at this time group members will have the opportunity to share from their assignments in the workbook.

While it is important that they have this opportunity, the way you have them share should vary from week to week. Do not feel that you must cover every question in the workbook. Sometimes the discussions suggested in this leader's guide will call for group members to elaborate upon what they have discovered rather than give information straight from their workbooks. Feel free to supplement answers from the group with Scripture and personal illustrations.

Lesson 1 in the workbook challenged learners to seriously examine the ministry of their church to see if it is effectively doing the ministry of Jesus. Ask the group if they did this, and what they found. List some positive responses on a blackboard or flip chart. Then Ask: Did anyone discover an area you would like to explore to help your church become more effective?

### **The Continuing Ministry of Jesus Christ**

Just as Jesus' ministry was varied, so a variety of gifts is needed to carry out His ministry. His work never stopped. In Acts we read how the apostles carried on the work of Jesus. Now that mission is ours! As you discuss the following questions make sure the group understands that the present ministry of the Church and of individual Christians is to continue the work of Jesus.

- Why are Christians left here on earth after they experience salvation? What are Christians expected to do while they are in this life?
- How would you summarize the ministry of Jesus Christ on earth? What aspects of Christ's ministry are believers' expected to continue? How can we possibly do that?

Encourage the class to look beyond church programming and to look at continuing the work of Jesus in our cultural setting.

### **The Body of Christ-the Church**

# DISCOVER YOUR GIFTS!

## **Perspective and Objectives**

In the previous lesson we discovered that the purpose of spiritual gifts is to enable the Church to continue the ministry of Christ. Lesson 2 focuses on what these gifts are and how we can determine which ones we have.

Remember that with this course you not only want your group members to discover their gifts, but also to begin to develop and use them in ministry. In addition, you want group members to multiply the ministry of this course by sharing their insights with others outside the group. Pray that God will guide you as you work toward these objectives for each group member:

1. To be able to explain what spiritual gifts are and how they differ from talents.
2. To grasp that there are a variety of gifts, but all Christians are gifted.
3. To understand that with gifts come corresponding opportunities for ministry.
4. To work through the Steps to Gift Discovery and make a preliminary attempt to identify his/her own gifts.

## **Focusing Activity (8-10 Min.)**

To introduce this week's topic Ask: What do you see as the purpose of the Christian life? As group members respond, remind the group of the unique provision Christians have available to enable them to achieve this purpose—they are gifted! To stimulate their thinking further, ask someone to explain the difference between talents and spiritual gifts. Discuss how they might work together to complement one another. Remind the group that a natural talent might provide the avenue for expression of a spiritual gift, i.e. singing and exhortation, or a flair for cooking and hospitality. Come prepared to share some examples of people in your

congregation for whom this is true.

## **Discovery in the Word (30-35 Min.)**

### **What are Spiritual Gifts?**

Jump into the theme of the lesson by asking for short personal definitions of a spiritual gift. Ask group members to look up Romans 12, Ephesians 4, or I Corinthians 12. On a blackboard or flip chart write down the gifts as group members call them out. Remind the group that some Bible scholars teach that this is a complete list, while others believe that there may be other gifts as well. Point out that these spiritual gifts are from God's supernatural enablement. Call attention to a key word in these passages: "gifts." We do not earn our spiritual gifts. They are freely given by God to His spiritual children. It is important to emphasize that spiritual gifts can only be effective in God's power.

### **Spiritual Gift or Natural Talent?**

There is often confusion between natural talents and spiritual gifts. The key to understanding the difference is that spiritual gifts are God-given for ministry through spiritual channels and talents are God-given to every human being. In another column on the blackboard, make a list of talents. For instance, your group's list of talents might include special abilities in art, music, cooking, sports, mechanics or carpentry. Encourage the group to question, discuss and comment on the differences they see between the two lists. Of course, Christians who dedicate their talents to the Lord find their talents effective and useful for ministry as well. Perhaps some in the group will be able to point out additional examples of how gifts and talents might work together.

### **Who has Gifts?**

Ask someone to read I Corinthians 12:7 aloud. Discuss: How would you respond to someone who says he has no gift? There may be some in the group who have felt this way. Do not move on until everyone understands that the Bible clearly states that all believers are gifted by God.

### **Gifts are Varied**

Discuss why Christians have such a wide variety of spiritual gifts. Why is there no room for boasting or complaining about the gifts a person has? Emphasize to the class that God has

## SPEAKING GIFTS: APOSTLE, PROPHET

### **Perspective and Objectives**

As you begin to lead the group to look at specific gifts and their distinctive characteristics, it is important to reinforce the importance of each gift and the significance that any and every person can contribute to the Body of Christ. The speaking gifts may be the most visible and therefore may seem to be of primary importance, but all the gifts are interdependent. Each is vital to the Body. As you prepare to lead this lesson, pray that God will accomplish these goals this week:

1. That everyone will be able to define the gift of apostle and explain how this gift is used today.
2. That everyone will be able to define the gift of prophet and explain what responsibilities modern-day prophets have.
3. That learners will examine themselves and determine if they have either of these gifts.
4. That each member of the group will covenant to pray for the others this week as they seek to discover their area of giftedness.

### **Focusing Activity (10-12 Min.)**

Briefly review the list of gifts learners discovered in their reading of Romans 12; I Corinthians 12; and Ephesians 4. Point out the diversity of these gifts and then divide the group into several smaller groups. Ask each group to read I Corinthians 12:12-31 and write down at least three key statements which summarize the relationship God intends for those with different gifts to have. Reconvene the large group and discuss these points until all understand that we are to be content with our gifts, not proud or envious, and that all Christians are to function together in harmony-just as all the parts of our physical bodies work together.

### **Discovery in the Word (30-35 Min.)**

Ask your learners how many gifts they found in their Biblical

count. Explain that the three classifications of gifts listed in Lesson 3 are only for the sake of our study and for easier recognition. These classifications are implied in the Bible but are not the only way of dividing the gifts.

### **The Gift of Apostle**

Some believe that there is no gift of apostle today. This is because of a double use of the word "apostle" in the Bible. There is the restricted use that applies only to Jesus' chosen twelve disciples who ministered with Him and were appointed by Him during His earthly ministry. There is also the general use which merely means a "sent one" by Christ. These latter "sent ones" were on a mission from Christ to plant churches. They were like home and foreign missionaries who are involved in setting up or planting local churches. Review these definitions with the group. Remind the group that every Christian is sent-as Jesus said, "As the Father sent me, so send I you," (John 20:21). The gift of apostle is an unusual calling of God to become a church planter. Be sure to note the difference between an apostle and a disciple. Ask someone to read Matthew 28:19-20 in a modern translation. Point out that Jesus did not emphasize decisions, but disciples.

Come prepared to provide some examples as you discuss the following questions:

- Who do you know who might have the gift of apostleship?
- How does he or she exercise it?
- How could this gift be used in combination with other gifts to cause church growth?
- As learners discuss the answers to these questions they may begin to develop a clearer picture of this gift and how it functions. This may help them decide whether they have this gift. Ask:
- Who thinks he might have the gift of apostle?
- How have you used this gift?

### **The Gift of Prophet**

Ask for volunteers to share what they discovered the New Testament purpose of a prophet to be. As the group discusses this gift, remind the group that someone who has the gift of

## SPEAKING GIFTS: EVANGELISM, SHEPHERDING

### **Perspective and Objectives**

Often these two gifts are considered to be reserved for those who are involved in vocational ministry only. Scripture shows that this is not the case. Ask the Lord to help you as you seek to clarify this subject and ask Him to accomplish these objectives for each group member:

1. To understand that no matter where our gifts lie, we are not excused from obedience to Christ in faithful discipleship.
2. To be able to list four vital characteristics of evangelists.
3. To understand the practical application of the gift of shepherding.
4. To examine his own life to determine whether he has either of these gifts.
5. To continue in prayer for the other group members that they may find and exercise their gifts.

### **Focusing Activity (5-8 Min.)**

Ask someone to read Matthew 28:19, 20 aloud to the group. Point out that Christ did not command just those who were gifted evangelists to share the gospel with the world or to teach the Bible, but He promised to be with all of us as we obeyed Him. With the group, make a list on a chalkboard or flipchart of other Scripture passages that contain commands to Christians in general (i.e. giving, loving, hospitality, teaching). Discuss what our response to them should be.

### **Discovery in the Word (30-35 Min.)**

#### **The Gift of Evangelism**

- Ask: What is the popular view of an evangelist? How does this compare with what the New Testament teaches? Someone with the gift of evangelism has a special ability to bring people to faith in Christ so that they become disciples. It



may very well be that this happens most often in one-to-one situations rather than in large groups. At this point, lead the class in a discussion of these questions. Some interesting and surprising suggestions may surface!

- Who do you know in our church who might have the gift of evangelism?
- Who feels this is his/her gift? Share a little with us about your experiences in using this gift.
- If you don't have this gift, what is your Christian duty in terms of being a witness?
- What are some creative ways our church can be more effective in evangelism?

### **The Gift of Shepherding**

Ask your learners to explain the distinction between a gift and an office in the church. Ask: Why is this distinction important for lay people? (All can't have the office of pastor.) The study of the gift of shepherding provides a good opportunity to illustrate this difference. One may have the gift of shepherding, but not the office. But if one has the office of pastor, he must have the gift as well. Help the class to see that though they may not have the office of pastor, they may very well have the gift of shepherding. Ask: 1) What three major responsibilities do shepherds have? 2) How are each of these areas practical in the spiritual realm? List as many specifics as learners can provide. This will help them begin to see practical ways they might fit into a shepherding ministry.

Make it clear to the group that effective shepherds are not dominant and controlling, but guiding, protecting and enabling the flock to gain its full potential. Help those who feel they have the gift of shepherding to realize that churches would be in trouble if the only ones with this gift were serving in a vocational role. Ask: How many of you feel you have the gift of shepherding? As time allows, give these learners an opportunity to share their experiences.

### **RESPONDING TO THE WORD (10-12 minutes)**

Once again have the group discuss the results of the questions in their workbooks section "Discovering Your Gifts". Which class members see signs of the gift of shepherding or the gift of

## SPEAKING GIFTS: TEACHING, EXHORTATION

### **Perspective and Objectives**

As we continue to examine the speaking gifts in this lesson, it is important to help your learners keep in mind that all gifts are important. God gave each one of us our gifts. There is no room for jealousy or feelings of inadequacy in the area of spiritual gifts. As you prepare to lead this lesson, pray that God will enable you to make this point clearly and that He will accomplish these objectives for each learner.

1. To be able to distinguish between the talent and the gift of teaching.
2. To understand every Christian's teaching responsibility.
3. To be able to define exhortation and explain its purpose.
4. To examine himself to determine whether he has the gift of teaching or exhortation.
5. To continue to pray for fellow learners as they seek to know their gifts and begin to develop them.

### **Focusing Activity (5 Min.)**

Write the following statements on 3" x 5" note cards:

- Teachers are born, not made.
- Teachers haven't taught until everyone has learned.
- Those who can, do; those who can't, teach.

To introduce this lesson, give the note cards to three people in the class as they come in and ask them to be prepared to read their card aloud and tell why they agree or disagree with the statement. Give each person a minute or so to respond. Feel free to expand on what each person has said. Use these statements to stimulate learners to think about the importance of teaching.

## **DISCOVERY IN THE WORD (30-35 Min.)**

### **The Gift of Teaching**

Ask someone to explain the difference between the talent for teaching and the gift of teaching. Be sure to clarify that someone with the gift of teaching will benefit from special training, but does not require it to be able to exercise his gift. Ask: How might the practice of teaching help someone discover a spiritual gift in this area?

In the preceding lesson we discovered that it is possible to have the gift of shepherding without the office of a pastor-shepherd, but that all pastors should have the gift of shepherding. As we examine the gift of teaching, we discover that all are encouraged to teach-regardless of their gifts. Discuss how those who may not have the gift of teaching might fulfill their responsibility to teach. Several in your group may be able to share ways they have exercised this role without having the gift. Discuss the relationship between lifestyle and teaching as taught in both the Old and New Testaments. (Ezra 7:6 and Colossians 3:16)

Ask the group to share the names of several people they know who have the gift of teaching. Ask: How do you know that these people have this gift? Listing others with this gift and their characteristics will help to crystallize learners' thinking as they analyze their own abilities. It might be good to point out that a person with the gift of teaching may not be equally effective with all age groups and groups of all sizes. Some teachers are most effective with junior high-schoolers. Some teach most effectively one-on-one. Discuss: How could the gift of teaching be used outside your specific church? How could this gift be used with other gifts to stimulate church growth? Ask those who feel they have this gift to share which areas they've had the most experience and/or success teaching, i.e. preschoolers, singles, one-to-one discipleship.

### **The Gift of Exhortation**

Ask someone to define the gift of exhortation and explain its purpose. Discuss how this gift should be used, reminding the group that this gift brings special responsibilities as well. Consider the following questions in discussion.

- What is the relationship of the gift of exhortation and the

## SPEAKING GIFTS: KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM

### **Perspective and Objectives**

As you finish examining the speaking gifts this week, remind your learners that you have looked at less than one-third of the spiritual gifts. Encourage group members not to feel discouraged if their gift hasn't surfaced yet. As you prepare to lead the study this week, pray that God will accomplish these objectives for each learner:

1. To be able to define the gift of knowledge and differentiate between this gift and knowledge which comes from formal education.
2. To be able to define the gift of wisdom and explain how this gift is related to the gift of knowledge.
3. To examine his own life to determine whether he has either of these gifts.
4. To continue praying for fellow learners that all may discover and begin developing their gifts.

### **Focusing Activity (5 MIN.)**

Discuss the story told in the introduction of the learners' books. Review the need for wisdom and knowledge in the Church today.

### **Discovery in the Word (35-40 Min.)**

#### **The Gift of Knowledge**

Ask learners to define the gift of knowledge. As the definition is developed, break it down into simple parts so that it will be clear to all. Writing it out in final form on an overhead transparency, chalkboard, or flipchart is sometimes helpful. Discuss how spiritual knowledge differs from the knowledge which comes from having studied a topic thoroughly. Ask: Do most seminary students possess this gift? (Not necessarily.) What is the source of true spiritual knowledge, according to Proverbs 2:6? Discuss the danger of having this

gift.

Have someone read II Corinthians 11:6 and explain this comparison between love and knowledge. (If we have knowledge, we should seek to use it in love to edify the Church and not for our own glory.) Ask: According to Colossians 1:9-12, how should the gift of knowledge affect a person's life?

Ask who in the group feels that he might have the gift of knowledge. Discuss any questions in this section which might have seemed unclear as well as any questions in the minds of the learners. If you don't know the answer to questions raised in class, don't be embarrassed to admit it. Refer learners to other books dealing with spiritual gifts and agree to research the question before the next class meeting.

### **The Gift of Wisdom**

Ask the group to formulate a good working definition for this spiritual gift and then write it on the transparency, chalkboard, or flipchart. Discuss how this type of wisdom differs from the wisdom the world looks for. What is the purpose of this gift? Ask learners to cite examples from the Bible of wisdom and how it was used. Give learners an opportunity to share their list of characteristics of those who have true wisdom (James 3:13-17).

Give the group an opportunity to discuss these questions from their notes:

- What is the difference between knowledge and wisdom?
- Can a person have and exercise the gift of wisdom without the gift of knowledge or must one have both?
- Does the gift of knowledge depend upon the gift of wisdom to be effective?
- How would you distinguish between the gift of wisdom and the wisdom for which we are to pray? (I Corinthians 12:8 and James 1:5)
- Does the gift of wisdom apply only to spiritual matters or to all areas of life?

Ask who in the group thinks he has the gift of wisdom. Perhaps someone will be willing to share an incident which

## SERVING GIFTS: HELPS, HOSPITALITY, GIVING

### **Perspectives and Objectives**

As you begin to study this new category of gifts, the serving gifts, it is important to keep in mind that all are to serve together as members of the Body of Christ. No gift is more important than another—some are just more visible than others. As you prepare to lead this week's study, pray that God will enable you to clarify this important point for all learners. Pray that God will accomplish these objectives for each learner:

1. To be able to define the gift of helps, explain how it should be used, and distinguish between the gift and the helpfulness that should characterize all Christians.
2. To understand what the gift of hospitality is and how it should be administered.
3. To understand how the gift of giving differs from obedience to Biblical commands to give, and what attitude should accompany the exercise of this gift.
4. To examine his life to determine whether he has the gift of helps, hospitality, or giving.
5. To continue to pray for fellow group members and their successful gift discovery.

### **Focusing Activity (3-5 Min.)**

Open the study this week by contrasting and comparing the speaking and serving gifts. While the speaking gifts are often used in a group setting, serving gifts may operate so completely behind the scenes that few people are aware that they are even functioning and, as a result, often receive little attention. Yet, each type of gift is vital to the ministry of the Body of Christ. Perhaps you might draw an analogy to the liver, which functions quietly and yet is vital to our survival. God designed all the gifts to work together in harmony.

## **Discovery in the Word (40-45 Min.)**

### **The Gift of Helps**

With the group, develop a definition of the spiritual gift of helps. Discuss how this gift should be used and some practical applications of it. Encourage learners to share the names of several in your church who have this gift. Ask if anyone in the group feels this might be his gift. If so, encourage that person to explain a little about how he may see what needs to be done that is overlooked by others with different gifts. Discuss whether it would be possible to misuse the gift of helps. (By doing for others what they ought to do for themselves, by trying to bring glory to ourselves) Ask several in the group to help explain the difference between the gift of helps and the need for every Christian to be helpful. This is important to your learners lest they think that they are only to be concerned about functioning in the areas of their gifts.

Ask who thinks he or she might have the gift of helps. Perhaps some will be able to affirm this gift for others in the group. Encourage learners to try this area of ministry to see whether it might be their area of giftedness.

### **The Gift of Hospitality**

Discuss what the gift of hospitality is and what type of attitude should characterize its exercise. Why is this gift important for leaders in the church? Have someone share from the workbook what responsibility all Christians have in this area (Romans 12:13). Ask learners if they feel they are fulfilling this responsibility. Perhaps some will be willing to explain how they show hospitality.

Ask for a show of hands of those who think they might have this gift. Ask some of these people to share why they think so.

Encourage them to share ways they have found to overcome their busy lifestyle to use their gift. Ask them to elaborate on any lifestyle changes or adaptations they have made in order to be more effective in exercising this gift. (Some may have planned for a guest bedroom, a particular floor plan, or set aside a specific regular day to invite guests.) Some learners may be hesitant to be hospitable toward others because they perceive that their house is not expensively decorated or in perfect order. Encourage your learners not to let these

## SERVING GIFTS: GOVERNMENT, LEADERSHIP

### **Perspectives and Objectives**

It's been said that it's lonely at the top, and surely this is so. God has enabled a few to be responsible for leading churches to move forward with direction, unity, and purpose. This week's study will examine the gifts of government (or administration) and leadership. As you prepare to lead this week's study, pray that God will accomplish these goals for each learner:

1. To be able to define the gifts of government and leadership and understand the distinctions between the two.
2. To understand the purpose of these two gifts in the church.
3. To evaluate his own life for signs of these gifts.
4. To continue to pray for others in the group and their successful gift discovery.

### **Focusing Activity (5-8 Min.)**

This week open your study by drawing three circles. Each circle should have a drawing of a simple chair inside it. The first drawing should have a cross just outside the circle. The second circle should show the cross within the circle, but beside the chair. Print an "E" on the seat of the chair. For the third circle, draw the cross on the seat of the chair and put the "E" below the chair, but within the circle. ("E" represents a person's ego.) Explain that the first drawing represents the natural person; Christ is outside this person's life. The natural person is incapable of functioning in the Body of Christ. The second drawing represents Christians who are operating in the carnal state. They may be more unhappy than non-Christians because they are being convicted of their failure to yield the throne of their life to Christ. While Christians may be involved in a ministry in this condition, their effectiveness will be restricted. The third drawing represent those Christians who are choosing to be controlled by the Holy Spirit. Point out that Christians often drift from



the second circle to the third and back again in the course of a day or even a few hours. Sadly, many Christians operate most of the time on the level of the second diagram. They have stored a great deal of information in their minds, but they are not yielding control of their lives to God. Stress that this issue is more important than gift discovery. Head knowledge without a surrendered heart will not result in effective ministry.

### **Discovery in the Word (35-45 Min.)**

#### **The Gift of Government**

Ask learners to define the gift of government. Restate their suggestions until they are clear and there is a consensus within the group. Discuss what roles those with the gift of government might be involved in and why this gift is important to the local church. Discuss: According to Mark 10:42-44, what is the necessary attitude for those in a position of government? Why?

Come prepared to share the names of several people known to your learners who have the gift of government or administration. Ask for a show of hands from those in the group who feel they might have this gift. If someone is unsure, perhaps others in the group will be able to provide insight. Take a few minutes to discuss any questions in the section titled Discovering Your Gift which learners found difficult as well as any questions about the gift of government they may have.

#### **The Gift of Leadership**

Ask someone to give a definition for the gift of leadership in his own words. Ask: How does this differ from the gift of government or administration? Perhaps you will find it helpful to lead the group in making a list of people from Bible times through to today who have shown that they have the gift of leadership or administration. Nehemiah, Gideon, Joshua, David, and Solomon all served as leaders. They were able to see what God wanted his people to do and guide the people to fulfill those goals. Joseph, on the other hand, used his gift of government to prepare the Egyptians for the coming famine.

Discuss: How do you think God uses leaders in the Church today? Ask if anyone in the group thinks he might have the

## SERVING GIFTS: MERCY, FAITH, DISCERNMENT

### **Perspectives and Objectives**

In the past weeks your study group has examined 13 spiritual gifts. Some learners may feel confident that they have discovered what their gifts are. Others may still be unsure, but have begun to explore new ministries. Still others will find their gifts in the weeks to come. Regardless of one's spiritual gift, we must be careful to be obedient to God's Word as we have opportunity. Pray that God will lead you as you prepare to accomplish these objectives for each learner this week:

1. To be able to explain the three basic characteristics of the gift of mercy.
2. To understand what the gift of faith is and how it differs from normal Christian faith.
3. To be able to define the gift of discernment and list several areas in which it is useful to the church.
4. To examine their lives to determine whether any of these gifts are theirs.
5. To continue to pray for fellow group members that they will discover and develop their gifts.

### **Focusing Activity (5-10 Min.)**

A seminary professor often said that a Christian is a great deal like a car. When a car isn't running well the problem is usually with the fuel or the spark. When a Christian isn't functioning in ministry the problem is usually with his faith or his obedience. Encourage your learners to consider whether they might need to "tune up" either their faith or their obedience to make their ministry run more smoothly. Bible study and prayer help Christians become attuned to the Holy Spirit's leading.

## **Discovery in the Word (30-35 Min.)**

### **The Gift of Mercy**

Begin your discussion of the gift of mercy by asking the group to react to the ministry of Mother Theresa as described in their workbooks. While not everyone can be like her, each Christian is commanded to show love for others. Ask: What do you see as the difference between mercy and pity? (Pity is a passive state; while true mercy involves action.) Discuss: Why do you think it is important for a person with this gift to maintain an attitude of cheerfulness? Provide an opportunity at this time for learners to briefly talk about acts of mercy that they have done, received, or seen in the past. According to Galatians 6:10 we should prioritize the exercise of this gift. Discuss why this is important. Ask who in the group feels that they have this gift. If time allows, ask them to share why they think so.

### **The Gift of Faith**

Jesus taught that this gift had a potential for great power. Yet we see few mountains being moved today. Give the group several moments to discuss why this is so. Ask someone to read Hebrews 11:1 aloud and share his definition of faith. Let others respond to and amplify that definition until it satisfies the group. Remind the group that the Christian life is one of faith. Have learners share what they found out about the kind of faith every Christian should have. In light of I Corinthians 12:9 and 13:2, discuss how this differs from the gift of faith. Discuss what Jesus had to say about the power of faith according to Mark 11:22-24. Ask someone to share the value of faith without love (I Corinthians 13:2).

Ask: Do you think you might have the gift of faith? Discuss: How is this gift useful to the church today? Why do you think God has given this gift?

### **The Gift of Discernment**

Before defining this gift, give your learners an opportunity to see its value to the church. First, ask someone to state in his own words how Satan disguises himself in the church. Keep encouraging input from others until this is plain to everyone (II Corinthians 11:13-15). Then make a list on a blackboard, transparency, or flipchart of some major issues which require Christians to use discernment. Now your learners should be

## SIGN GIFTS: MIRACLES, HEALINGS

### **Perspectives and Objectives**

Now you are ready to study a new category of gifts—the sign gifts. These gifts definitely reflect the obvious supernatural intervention of God in the natural order of life. In this study it will be important to avoid two common extremes. One is to categorically deny the present-day existence of the sign gifts. The western mind tends to deny the existence of anything it is unable to understand and explain. Who are we to presume to limit the power of God and say that He no longer performs miracles? Scripture does not teach that the gift of miracles completely ceased in the Church. The other extreme would be to teach that any person at any time can and should be able to do miracles in the name of Jesus. This was never true in Biblical times, nor is it true today. Pray that God will lead you as you prepare to lead this lesson and that He will accomplish these objectives for your learners:

1. To understand the purpose of the sign gifts.
2. To be able to define the gift of miracles and explain why it seems to be rare today.
3. To understand what the gifts of healing are and some of their limitations.
4. To properly relate to Christians whose view of miracles and healing differs from theirs.
5. To continue their search for their spiritual gifts and to pray for the success of others in the group.

### **Focusing Activity (5-8 Min.)**

Write each of the following references on a slip of paper

and pass out the slips at the beginning of this week's meeting: Exodus 15:25; Joshua 10:12; I Kings 18:38; II Kings 20:11; Matthew 9:27; Acts 3:7; Acts 28:5; Acts 6:8; and Acts 28:8. Ask learners to read the verse aloud and explain what sign gift was in action here and what its purpose was. When all have

shared, summarize this exercise by reminding the group that miracles and healings were always done to reveal God more clearly. Some signs demonstrated God's power; others, His loving kindness for His people; still other signs authenticated His messengers.

### **Discovery in the Word (30-35 Min.)**

#### **The Gift of Miracles**

Discuss the three words used in Scripture for miracles: "power," "wonder," and "sign". It is important that learners understand that a miracle must be more than an answer to prayer-it must by-pass the laws of nature in some way. Examine the reaction to some of the healing miracles in New Testament times. (Miracles attracted people's attention and often authenticated the one performing them as one sent from God.)

Discuss the New Testament Scripture references to miracles given in the learners' workbooks. Then spend a few minutes having the learners review aloud why miracles seem so uncommon today. Be sure to remind the group that miracles can and do happen in the world today. Ask who in the group feels that he or she might have the gift of miracles. Perhaps someone in the group will be able to relate a modern-day miracle from God. Discuss how the gift of miracles could be used in the church for Jesus Christ today.

#### **The Gifts of Healing**

Spend a minute or two reviewing the types of healing shown in the New Testament (physical, emotional, and spiritual). Then, give learners an opportunity to share what they learned from the Scripture references in their workbooks about Jesus' healing ministry.

Ask: If we really believe in God and ask Him to heal us, will He? If He does not, does this mean that our faith is weak? To further elaborate on these points, have learners share from their workbooks the answers they found to the following questions:

- Is it God's will for all Christians to be healed?
- Why do people get sick?
- How does God heal?

## SIGN GIFTS: TONGUES, INTERPRETATION

### **Perspectives and Objectives**

The last two gifts you will study are certainly the most controversial of all the spiritual gifts referred to in Scripture. Pray that God will enable you to handle the subject with clarity and simplicity. Ask Him to accomplish these objectives for your learners:

1. To understand what the gifts of tongues and interpretation are.
2. To understand the purpose of this gift.
3. To be able to state clearly the Biblical guidelines for this gift.
4. To hold one another accountable for continuing to seek to discover and develop spiritual gifts.

### **Focusing Activity (5-10 Min.)**

To begin this lesson, ask your learners whether they have begun to develop a feel for the gifts they think are theirs. Ask: Has your understanding of spiritual gifts changed since you first began this course? In what ways? What about your understanding of the ministry of the local church? Have any of you become involved in a new ministry as a direct result of this class? (If so, encourage those learners to share a little with the group about their new ministry.) Ask: Has anyone made plans to begin a new ministry? Would you like to tell us about your plans?

### **Discovery in the Word (30-35 Min.)**

#### **The Gift of Tongues**

Ask someone to read Acts 2:1-4 aloud. Take a few minutes to discuss what actually took place that day. With the help of the group, develop a definition for the gift of speaking in tongues.

#### **What Is the Purpose of Tongues?**

This gift was used as a sign for unbelievers. Have learners share the purpose of the apostles speaking in tongues in Acts 2:1-13; the Gentiles at Caesarea; and the Ephesians in Acts 19:1-7. From these episodes we can conclude that God intended the gift of tongues to evangelize others.

### **What Are the Biblical Guidelines?**

This gift is clearly restricted in Scripture. Discuss the problems the Corinthian church faced and the guidelines for speaking in tongues recorded by Paul.

Just as there are some guidelines for speaking in tongues, there are some basic concepts about tongues in general which must be clear. Spend a few minutes and review these with the group. Ask learners to back their responses with Scripture as you discuss the following questions from the students' workbooks.

- Should all Christians be able to exercise this gift?
- If a person can speak in tongues does that mean that he is more spiritually mature than someone who does not have this gift?
- If a person is growing spiritually, will he receive this gift?
- What is the only way that speaking in tongues can be used to edify other believers?
- Does the ability to speak in ecstatic languages necessarily mean that a person has been baptized by the Holy Spirit?

### **The Interpretation of Tongues**

As one of the guidelines for speaking in tongues, Paul listed having an interpreter present. Discuss what an interpreter would do and why this would be important to the church today.

Ask: Do you feel that you have the gift of speaking in tongues or interpreting? Perhaps someone in the group will be able to tell about an incident in which someone spoke a language he hadn't learned in order to share the Gospel with an unbeliever.

Be sure that you leave the group with a positive attitude toward those who may hold a different opinion toward speaking in tongues than they do.

# HOW CAN I KNOW?

## **Perspectives and Objectives**

Prior to this study, your learners may have been unaware of their gifts. Now, they should not only have a good feel for which gifts are theirs but also have begun to develop them further. Ministries which were tentative may have been reinforced by the confidence that they were using their gifts. Others may have stopped trying to be a square peg in a round hole. Still others may have been encouraged to try some new areas of ministry because of what they learned in this course. Pray that God will lead you as you prepare for this lesson and that He will accomplish these objectives for each learner.

1. To understand and seek to eliminate hindrances to further gift discovery and development.
2. To understand and reapply the methods of gift discovery.
3. To share what he or she has learned from this course with at least one other person.
4. To start using at least one of his/her gifts this week.

## **Focusing Activity (5-8 Min.)**

Ask the group to react to the introduction to this lesson given in their workbooks. Remind them that many Christians are living in much the same poverty as Mr. Yates-yet with boundless untapped resources available to them.

## **Discovery in the Word (30-35 Min.)**

### **How To Discover Your Gifts**

Spend a few minutes listing (with the group's help) the steps to gift discovery on a transparency or chalkboard. Then go back over the list and discuss each step briefly. Ask if anyone has any questions about a particular step. Encourage learners to concentrate on the last three steps. Remind the group that all Christians should be actively involved in developing all the abilities God has given them. As people give us positive



feedback when they see God ministering through us, so we should confirm this in others. Ask: Why do you think Paul put I Corinthians 13 after his discussion of the gifts? (To stress that all gifts must be used with love.) Ask several to read the first three verses of chapter 13 from different translations. Read aloud this statement from the student's workbook, "When you genuinely love others and seek to serve them in love, the gifts you have will surface and their effectiveness will come to the forefront!"

### **Hindrances to Gift Discovery**

Even though your learners have studied the gifts, they still may not have discovered their own gifts. Encourage your learners to see if any of these hindrances are preventing them from full gift discovery.

- Unresolved, or ongoing sins in personal living. Ask someone to read Psalm 66:18 aloud from more than one translation. Have group members restate this verse in their own words and explain how it applies to gift discovery.
- Lack of involvement with the needs of others. Remind the group that the purpose of spiritual gifts is always to benefit the Body of Christ and to continue Christ's ministry here on earth. Take a look at how Paul saw his ministry.
- Attempts to imitate the ministry or gifts of others. Trying to pattern our ministry after others is as unsuccessful as trying to pattern our personality after our friends. Discuss how we might try to imitate others and why.
- Not being open to ministries and activities that appeal to us. Spend a few minutes discussing why certain ministries or activities appeal to your learners. As we see why we are involved in certain areas, it is easier to see areas in which we might be gifted
- Confusion between gifts, ministries, and roles. Give learners time to share how trying to operate out of their areas of giftedness has resulted in difficulties for themselves or someone they know.

If group members are willing to share some hindrances which applied to them personally, allow them to do so now. But handle this time with sensitivity and do not pressure anyone