

# Lenten Study

## Discernment

### Finding Clarity in the Chaos

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## Lent 2020

### Session 2: Discerning our Spiritual Gifts



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## Session 2 -- Discerning Our Spiritual Gifts.

### Who Am I? What are my gifts? (Week of March 8)

75 minutes

#### **Purpose of this four-week study**

To expand our individual understanding of discernment as a “gift of the Spirit”

To learn and share spiritual practices that support us in discernment

To discover and experiment with how we may be most authentic with God.

To appreciate that each of us has our own unique approach to discernment.

#### **Purpose of this session**

To identify some of our spiritual gifts and consider God’s role in them.

#### **Check-in -- 5-10 minutes**

*Go around the group for each person to check in.*

In a word or phrase, how are you doing today?

If you feel comfortable sharing, did you work with the examen practice or a prayer partner this week? How did it go?

**Reviewing Small Group practices** *take turns reading the headlines of the “Small Group Practices.” Invite any comments or questions.*

#### **Opening Meditation/Centering 5 minutes**

Facilitator: set a smart phone timer for three minutes.

Offer the following instructions:

We’ll begin our session with three full minutes of silence. Find a way to sit comfortably in your chair, sitting up straight, feet on the floor, hands folded gently, open-palmed on your thighs or in your lap. Just concentrate on your breath, not forcing it. Just notice your breath. Take a few deep breaths as you need to. If you get distracted by thoughts, come back to your breath.

Begin with the words:

*May God be with us in the silence, in the movement of our breath.*

*Open our hearts today to discern the gifts you have embedded in our souls and bodies.*

Facilitator: conclude the silence with

*May God’s Spirit be among us in this time together. Amen.*

**Discussion -- 5-10 minutes**

What did you experience in the silence?

Does silence make you uncomfortable or calm you down?

When has silence been most helpful? Least helpful?

**Scripture (1 Corinthians 12:4-11) and Discussion -- 10-15 minutes**

Have one or more participants read the passage aloud.

Allow a minute of silence afterwards to consider the text before discussion

1 Corinthians 12:4-11 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit;

5 and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord;

6 and there are varieties of activities,

but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone.

7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

8 To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom,

and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit,

9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit,

10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy,

to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues,

to another the interpretation of tongues.

11 All these are activated by one and the same Spirit,

who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

12 For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. <sup>13</sup>For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

14 Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. <sup>15</sup>If the foot were to say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body', that would not make it any less a part of the body. <sup>16</sup>And if the ear were to say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body', that would not make it any less a part of the body. <sup>17</sup>If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? <sup>18</sup>But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as God chose.

Discussion -- depending on the overall group size, this can be done in smaller subgroups

Some people might respond better if they have time to write their answers first and then give verbal responses. Allow time for writing or thinking about responses quietly.

1. What phrases in this scripture jumped out at you? Why?
  
2. What gifts have others affirmed in you?
  
3. What are gifts you have (or that others notice in you) that you take for granted?
  
4. What gifts do you admire in other people? Why?  
Is there someone in particular who represents those gifts for you?
  
5. Where did your gifts come from? Were they handed down or cultivated by your parents, teachers, family members? How and where did you cultivate them on your own?
  
6. What role did God have in your gifts?

**Spiritual Gifts Inventory 30-40 minutes**

Together, let us take the "Discovering Gifts of Ministry" spiritual inventory

-- answering the questions and pairing up to share discoveries.

Use the descriptions of spiritual gifts to find out what works.

What surprises did the inventory show you? What did it confirm?

What gifts do you take for granted?

What gifts would you like to lean into more, explore further?

How will you let this exercise inform your week ahead?

The rest of the Lenten season (through April 12)? Beyond Easter?

**Take a breath -- 5 minutes**

Return to the opening exercise and try it again for 3 minutes. You can meditate on one of the gifts you are thankful to have, or ask for help/ clarity/ inspiration to cultivate and activate others that may be within but dormant.

**Reading and Exercise -- 20 minutes total**

*As we covered this passage in worship today, you may not have time. This is something that may be for further reflection throughout the week.*

Luke 10:38-42 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

Jesus Visits Martha and Mary

Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. **39** She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. **40** But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me." **41** But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; **42** there is need of only one thing.[a] Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her."

**Footnotes:**

- a. Luke 10:42 Other ancient authorities read *few things are necessary, or only one*

What are Martha and Mary's gifts? What do you think about the way Jesus responded to Martha - was he chiding or urging her to discern?

Do you identify more with Mary or Martha?

Who are the Marys and Marthas in your life?

What are the strengths of each of the sisters' gifts?

What are the drawbacks or "blind sides" of their gifts?

How might you benefit to adapt or recognize the gifts of the sister with whom you least identify?

When are you more Mary? More Martha?

### **Prayer Requests**

As part of the collective closing prayer, participants may want to add their own prayers of concern and celebration.

### **Close in Prayer (this prayer or your own)**

God, help us pause long enough to hear your voice, to feel you in our souls, and support us as we discern and cultivate the gifts you have given each of us.

Give us the clarity and the strength to discover your inner peace and your undying love and share it freely wherever we go.

We invite any prayers of concern or joy in the room today ....

*(participants may say their own prayers aloud)*

For all this and for our time together, we entrust and give thanks to you, O God.

Amen.

### **Preview**

In session 3, the week of March 15, we will explore more group discernment practices. We will learn how discernment within a spiritual community can be a valued complement to solo practices like prayer, meditation, journaling.

Continue to reflect on your spiritual gifts inventory and the questions we posed together.

Take time to reflect further on both scripture passages.

Perhaps read them aloud in different settings and different times and see how they work on you and with you throughout the week.

(If you don't have them with you, it's always easy to google them on your smart phone.)

### **Some suggested practices for the week ahead**

These are some easy-to-try spiritual practices that may help you as you launch on a season of discernment. By no means do you need to try all at once. We invite you to try them out as you see fit, see how they feel and then report back to us next week.

### **Examen: Learning a Spiritual Practice to Use this Week (10 minutes)**

A spiritual practice derived from St. Ignatius of Loyola, a Spanish Basque Catholic priest and theologian, who gave up a life of nobility and co-founded the religious order called the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) in the 16th century. The examen was developed in the 1500s as a core practice is used to this day by Jesuits and other religious groups.

Find a quiet, comfortable place to spend about 10 minutes at the end of each day this week:

1. Give thanks for all God's gifts and benefits
2. Ask for light/ God's presence
3. Review the day: thoughts, words, deeds, desires, consolations, desolations
4. Express gratitude, sorrow or purpose of amendment
5. Ask for the graces you desire for tomorrow

Repeat the practice throughout the week.

### **Practicing Gratitude**

Another practice is to name and write down each day three *specific* things for which you are thankful. It could be anything: time with a loved one, a delicious meal, an unexpected break in your day, a kind exchange with a stranger.

The point is to make it specific, and spend some time in your mind re-living the experience, savoring the feelings and thoughts they brought up in you.

This practice is a core practice that neuroscientists suggest in helping change some of our brain patterns.

### **An online "data-driven" daily discernment practice**

Methodist colleagues of ours at the Harvard-Epworth Church in Cambridge have created a daily discernment opportunity, in which they email you a question each day to answer, in a discernment practice.

You can sign up and check it out at [4oform.org/signup](http://4oform.org/signup)

For more info, check out [unitedparishbrookline.org](http://unitedparishbrookline.org) home page for "Opportunities during Lent"