

Discernment: Finding Clarity in the Chaos

Week 2: Discerning our Spiritual Gifts

Take-home questions

These are some questions and ideas for you to reflect further on today's worship and to join us in our collective Lenten study of Discernment.

In today's Gospel story (Luke 10:38-42), we heard about two sisters showing two distinct kinds of gifts.

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?

We also read 1 Corinthians 12 in worship.

What phrases in this scripture jumped out at you? Why?

What gifts have others affirmed in you?

What are gifts you have (or that others notice in you) that you take for granted?

What gifts do you admire in other people? Why?

Is there someone in particular who represents those gifts for you?

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?

What role did God have in your gifts?

**For further inquiry, you can take a spiritual gifts assessment at ministrymatters.com
or www.uccfiles.com/faith_practices/DiscMinAdults.pdf**

Some suggested practices for the week ahead

These are some easy-to-try spiritual practices that can help you as you launch into 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. You are welcome to join us in study groups after Sunday worship in Lent or other times. Check out the homepage link at the bottom of the page.

Spiritual Examen: a practice to try this week

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 and 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

You can make it as long or short as you want. Try repeating the practice throughout the week.

Practicing Gratitude

Another practice is to name and write down three *specific* things each day 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, something in nature.

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

This is a core practice that neuroscientists suggest in helping change some of our brain patterns from our predetermined negative, anxious bias to a cultivated, more positive, hopeful outlook.

Prayer Partners

We welcome EVERYONE at United Parish to try having a prayer partner in Lent.

You may think that you are not that spiritual, or that you don't know how to pray, or even if you do, you don't want to share that with someone else, that it's private. That's OK. Just give it a try.

It's a holy experiment, basically committing to having a spiritual buddy in the congregation with whom you talk for 5-15 minutes each week from now through Easter (April 12).

You can sign up at unitedparishbrookline.org/prayer-partners-during-lent

An online "data-driven" daily discernment practice

Methodist colleagues at the Harvard-Epworth Church in Cambridge have created a daily discernment opportunity, in which they email you a question each day to answer as part of your own private discernment practice. You can check it out and sign up at 4oform.org/signup

Scripture for your week ahead

Look again at the passage from 1 Corinthians 12.

Take a few minutes to read and reread it during the week, paying attention to how it lands with you at different times and in different situations. How do you notice those gifts in yourself? In those around you?

For more information, check out unitedparishbrookline.org/news/opportunities-during-lent.