

Church Effectiveness Nuggets: Volume 24

Identifying and Mobilizing Parishioners' Spiritual Gifts

Why are we gifting you this volume? Because the mission statement of our primary publication—*The Parish Paper: New Ideas for Active Congregations*—is to help the largest possible number of congregations achieve maximum effectiveness in their various ministries. *The Parish Paper* is a monthly newsletter whose subscribers receive copyright permission to distribute to their constituents—more than two million readers in 28 denominations. Go to www.TheParishPaper.com for subscription information.

Purpose of this Volume: Provides in-depth answers to questions that readers of *The Parish Paper* ask regarding principles and step-by-step, year-around procedures by which congregations can help parishioners to not only recognize their spiritual gift(s) but to commit to using them in a congregational ministry.

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I. Introduction

Churches of every size benefit from spiritual gifts education among members/attendees. Leaders usually attempt to unfold that education in three ways:

- In the first year that church members and attendees complete a spiritual gifts inventory and use their insights to commit to service in a congregational ministry.
- Annually in subsequent years church members/attendees build on their first-year spiritual-gifts insights.
- New attendees and members complete a spiritual gifts inventory as they select a congregational ministry in which to serve.

Many versions of spiritual gifts inventory are available from publishing houses and denominational offices. Different pastors tend to prefer different models.

Four liabilities encountered in the many types of spiritual gifts survey instruments:

1. The inventory instrument's terminology often communicates with people in evangelical- and fundamentalist-theology congregations but not with congregants in mainline denominations.
2. The inventory instrument's extremely time-consuming format means (a) few congregations use them and (b) only a tiny percentage of members complete their inventories.
3. The inventory instrument provides no means by which individuals can make the mental leap from recognizing their personal spiritual gifts to putting them into action in their congregation.
4. The inventory instrument provides no organizational suggestions that enable church leaders to link their inventory's insights with their congregation's committee or ministry team system.

This volume of *Nuggets* contains a spiritual gifts inventory and a year-around organizational system that overcomes all four of the above liabilities.

Included in this *Nuggets Volume* are the following:

1. Permission to photocopy the spiritual gifts inventory for local use
2. A step-by-step, year-around procedure that any congregation can modify to fit its unique size and ministries
3. An example of and instructions on how to construct an annual time/talent tool that helps individuals make the mental leap from recognizing their spiritual gift(s) to selecting and committing themselves to a ministry.

II. A Spiritual-Gifts Month that Keeps on Ticking Year-Around

“I was talking with some people after a weekend worship service once, and I mentioned that we really needed someone to create a multimedia videotape for an upcoming event. The person I was talking with said, ‘Why don’t you get her?’ And he pointed to a woman standing a few feet away.

“I walked over, found out her name, and asked what she did. Her reply, ‘I’m the chief video production director for Walt Disney.’” (*Rick Warren’s Ministry Toolbox*, 5-14-03)

Every church contains people who, when they discover and use their talents, bless their congregation with greater effectiveness and find their own lives blessed with great meaning and satisfaction. Yet, leaders in approximately 70 percent of congregations say something like this: “Some of our best workers are bordering on burnout. We need to get more people involved in our church’s ministries. How can we do that?”

A. Among the numerous causes of that situation the four listed below are especially obvious. However, these four causes of overpopulated bleachers with too few players on the field are invisible to the majority of caring, committed church leaders.

1. Many congregations attempt to involve people in committees and ministry teams by using procedures that worked extremely well in the 1950s. During those years, most midsize and small churches tried to put all their members on committees. Typically, each committee carried responsibility for one or several ministry portfolios. This worked well for numerous reasons. Two of the big ones:

- People in that generation had just finished fighting World War II. Deeply ingrained values caused them to be patriotic and loyal to God, family, and country (the government and the military) and “Do whatever it takes!” to win the war.
- With people who held those values, a church-organizational structure with large committees (a) was ministry-effective and (b) gave most of the church members personal satisfaction.

2. Today, far fewer people enthusiastically relate to organizations and congregations that use 1950s’ involvement procedures. A multitude of causes produced this attitude/behavior change: one was the strong individualism that began to replace the “united we stand” attitudes of the post-World War II era.

By 1965 the TV set in every living room brought daily evidence that distant institutions (the government and the military) did “dumb stuff.” During the Vietnam conflict, many people who considered themselves patriotic and smart decided that they could make their own decisions better than someone else could. Blind loyalty to great causes promoted by institutions led by other people—especially distant bureaucrats—became “history.” A far higher percentage of the population with more years of higher education added to this conviction (when taught to think for themselves, people tend to exercise that skill). The deeply ingrained values of this generation: decide for yourself.

With these kinds of people, the best way to involve numerous parishioners in ministries that they find personally meaningful is through an organizational structure consisting of (a) a small governing board, (b) small committees, (c) numerous ministry teams operating under each committee, and (d) spiritual gifts inventories that help people feel a sense of God’s call to ministry (informed, individual choice).

3. *Most church members want to involve themselves in doing something that makes a meaningful difference in the lives of other people.* But a large percentage of people with birthdates after 1945 prefer to select that activity themselves instead of having church leaders select it for them.

4. *Approximately 85 percent of the people in every birth-date category are more accomplishment-oriented than discussion-oriented.* Therefore, not more than 15 percent of church participants feel genuinely motivated by the desire to serve on committees.

B. Due to these four plus several other factors, effective congregations of every size and denomination are shifting to new kinds of involvement procedures. Most of those organizational structures continue to use committees—which play the important role of “management of ministry”—and up to 15 percent of parishioners feel gifted for and enjoy their service on committees. People in that group enjoy discussing ideas and tinkering with theoretical concepts.

However, the overall approach of those organizationally effective churches is toward more individualized involvement procedures: instead of asking the majority of parishioners to serve on committees, these churches ask most of their members to select the ministries in which they feel God is calling them to serve. Making the giving of time, skill, and energy, a spiritual matter (rather than a matter of accepting or declining invitations to fill committee slots) increases personal motivation. This shift significantly increases the percentage of members and attendees involved in various ministry roles.

For several other reasons and a more in-depth discussion of why 1950s procedures worked then but stopped working during the 1970s, plus a detailed how-to organizational structure that work in contemporary churches, see *Church Effectiveness Nuggets: Volume 23, Fine-Tuning the Organizational and Communication Engine*. Go to the www.TheParishPaper.com Web site and download this resource free of charge.

C. The following steps in a twelve-month plan apply those contemporary principles to involving more members in ministry. The timeline is designed for a calendar-year cycle. Churches that elect officers and appoint committees at other times of the year may alter the timeline accordingly. (Typically, congregations use the full-blown process—all twelve of the following steps—the first year, but only use the “*Step #4*” with adult classes and groups every five-to-seven years.)

Step 1: In June, ask each committee to list all the specific ministry tasks and functions in the church that logically belong under its supervision. *List everything*, from singing in the choir to caring for the rose garden. Include the smallest, least obvious tasks and roles.

Step 2: In August, collect the committees’ lists of ministry tasks and functions. Organize them into categories on two sheets of paper (the list will contain between 40 and 150 items, depending on a church’s size).

Step 3: During September or October, conduct a “Spiritual Gifts Month.” Unfold the weeks of this month, using the spiritual gifts inventory and instructions below and in Section III. The First Year: Why Use a Spiritual Gifts Inventory and in Section IV. Group Use of “How to Identify Your Spiritual Giftabilities.”

Step 4: During the first two weeks of Spiritual Gifts Month, ask all adult Sunday school classes and other adult groups to use the Section IV. Group Use of “How to Identify Your Spiritual Giftabilities.” (Repeat full-blown use of this spiritual gifts inventory with the entire congregation *every seven years* and use it with all new attendees and members throughout each year.)

Step 5: During the third week of Spiritual Gifts Month, the pastor preaches a sermon spotlighting the idea that our congregation continues Christ’s work and that each of our church’s ministries is a personal opportunity to answer Christ’s call.

Use one of the following scriptures as a text: Romans 12:1-8; 1 Corinthians 12:1-27; Ephesians 4:1-7 and 11-16; or 1 Peter 4:8-11. The sermon makes the following three points:

- The Bible says God has given each of us spiritual gifts for accomplishing Christ’s ministries in our church and community.
- What spiritual gifts do you feel God has given you?
- In what ways do you feel God is calling you to use those spiritual gifts for the coming year?

The sermon closes with something like the following: “During the past two weeks, several of us had the opportunity to identify our spiritual gifts through a spiritual gifts inventory.

“In case you did not have that opportunity, we are distributing copies of that inventory in the narthex following the service. I encourage you to take a copy and invest a few minutes this week in discovering which spiritual gifts God has given you.

“Few things are as interesting as what we learn about ourselves! This inventory is the best way to obtain that information. I think you will enjoy the experience.

“The inventory is designed primarily for adults; however, high school youth may find some value in the inventory. Most youth younger than high-school age usually have not had sufficient life experiences to find the inventory of value.”

Step 6: Although some congregations focus on stewardship of talents at the same time as their annual financial stewardship emphasis (often held in November), research demonstrates that doing both during the same weeks weakens the results of both. Despite a few well-known churches that do them simultaneously, congregations get better results by doing them separately. If possible, let at least two weeks elapse between the final week of the Spiritual Gifts Month and the first week of publicity for the annual financial giving campaign.

Step 7: During worship services on the fourth Sunday of Spiritual Gifts Month, set aside five minutes, using meditative background music, for worshipers to indicate on the handout sheet titled “Answering God’s Call with Time and Talent” from Section VIII, below, the answer to the question, “How is God calling me to use my spiritual gifts during the coming year?” Personalize the handout in the following way:

- The front and back of the “Answering God’s Call with Time and Talent” sheet contains the list of ministry tasks the committees listed in June (*Step #1* above) and a place for signature and telephone number.
- Develop and use the sheet with instructions in Section VIII. Making the Mental Leap from Insights to Ministry-Application.
- This sheet builds on personal insights obtained during the first three weeks of Spiritual Gifts Month and equips people to move from spiritual gifts identification to ministry application in and through their congregation.

Warning: Do *not* ask, or permit, people to take the sheets home and return them next week. Experience indicates that less than 20 percent of the sheets come back.

Recognize this personal commitment as an act of worship. Set aside five minutes during worship for completing the sheets. Do *not* ask people to place their sheets in the offering plates.

Rather, tell worshippers during the announcement that ushers will return at the end of five minutes to collect the sheets as we pass them down the pews. In some congregations, as a meaningful act of worship and symbol of God's call, people come forward and place their inventories in offering plates at the front of the sanctuary.

In the announcement(s) that introduce this process, build a spiritual commitment atmosphere in which people answer the question, "How is God calling me to use my spiritual gifts during the coming year?" Do *not* use terms such as "we need volunteers to help do church work."

Warning: In December and January, contact *every* person who completed a sheet. Some of the most painful and spiritually damaging reports from church attendees: "I filled out a sheet and really wanted to serve on a ministry team, but nobody ever contacted me! I felt very rejected and hurt by that!"

Step 8: Use whatever system the denomination's polity calls for in selecting the standing-committee chairpersons. As noted below, under optimum conditions, the nominating committee selects all of the committee chairpersons.

Warning: Do *not* require that those chairpersons are also members of your church governing board! That unnecessarily limits the range of talent and narrows your leadership group's exposure to new ideas. For how-to details regarding this and other organizational matters, obtain *Church Effectiveness Nuggets: Volume 23, Fine-Tuning the Organizational and Communication Engine*. Go to the www.TheParishPaper.com Web site and download this resource free of charge.

Step 9: During December or early January, just before or just after the new church year begins—the nominating committee meets to nominate committee chairpersons and all committee members. For best results limit each committee's size to six people. In churches that average fewer than seventy in worship, nominate three people per committee. Keeping the committees small reduces their inclination to do all the work themselves and increases their feeling that they are "ministry managers" whose goal is to involve the congregation in ministry—rather than the traditional approach in which parishioners view the committees as "people who do the ministry for the congregation." For detailed instructions to the nominating committee see *Church Effectiveness Nuggets: Volume 23, Fine-Tuning the Organizational and Communication Engine*, noted above.

Step 10: During December or January—just before or just after the new church year begins—the committee chairpersons meet to review the "Answering God's Call with Time and Talent" sheets. Working as a group, the committee chairpersons decide which persons they will ask to serve in ministry roles and ministry teams for which each committee is responsible.

Warning: Do *not* arbitrarily distribute the sheets to individual chairpersons and ask them to follow up with contacts. The chairpersons should work as a group, not as Lone Rangers. Working together provides greater accountability. The positive peer pressure that comes from being part of a group-effort minimizes the tendency for some "detail challenged" chairpersons not to make their contacts.

Step #11: In January, prior to the first meeting of each committee, the pastor and the governing board chairperson expect all committee members to attend the annual Leadership Seminar that accomplishes the following.

- If the churches uses an annual *Plan Book* that lists and describes the annual responsibilities for each committee, distribute and review that *Plan Book*. (See an outline of how to produce this tool in *Church Effectiveness Nuggets: Volume 23, Fine-Tuning the Organizational and Communication Engine* or a detailed example of how to produce it in *Church Effectiveness Nuggets: Volume 25, Preparing an Annual*

Congregational Plan Book. Download these resources free of charge at the www.TheParishPaper.com Web site.)

- The annual Leadership Seminar provides how-to information and training on issues such as how to develop a meeting agenda, how to conduct effective meetings, and how to provide newsletter information to the church secretary. (Find several pages of material to photocopy and use in the annual Leadership Seminar in *Church Effectiveness Nuggets: Volume 23, Fine-Tuning the Organizational and Communication Engine*, noted above.)
- Crucially important: set a time every three months or every other month (depending on church size) for the committee chairpersons to meet together as a strategic-planning team to communicate, coordinate, calendar, and vision. (See how-to instructions for that gathering in *Church Leadership Nuggets: Volume 23, Fine-Tuning the Organizational and Communication Engine*, noted above)
- Emphasize the importance of delegating 100 percent of each committee's ministry tasks to worship attendees and church members. (Only the nominating committee and the personnel committee are exceptions to this rule.)
- Suggest involving people in ministry responsibilities in three ways: (a) ministry teams that assume specific ministry responsibilities all year, such as ushers; (b) short-term projects, such as Vacation Bible School; and (c) ministry tasks carried out by one individual all year long, such as caring for the rose garden.
- Some of the committee members, of course, may also want to serve on a ministry team. In some cases a committee member may serve as a ministry team coordinator. However, the committees' most important job is involving church attendees and members in the various ministries.
- People who serve on the eight to fifteen or more ministry teams that the committees develop (number depends on church size) do *not* attend committee meetings. The ministry teams are action-involved rather than discussion-oriented.

Step #12: A coordinator for each ministry team serves all year (morning-worship greeter team is one example of such a team) and stays in contact with the appropriate committee chairperson if and when needs arise. This maintains appropriate communication channels, running both directions. (See detailed how-to procedures for the relationships between and the very different functions of committees and ministry teams in *Church Effectiveness Nuggets: Volume 23, Fine-Tuning the Organizational and Communication Engine*. Go to the www.TheParishPaper.com Web site and download this resource free of charge.)

D. The Bottom Line. In addition to actively involving many more people, these procedures make the giving of time, skill, and energy a spiritual matter—instead of making it the annual ritual of trying to fill all of the slots on each committee. Everyone wins. The church wins. People whose lives are changed through the church's ministry efforts win. God wins.

III. The First Year: Why Use a Spiritual Gifts Inventory?

In a survey of several thousand Christians, less than 25 percent felt that they were making a contribution to the Christian cause in the world. Less than 10 percent could identify a “spiritual gift” that they possessed. Less than 5 percent were actively engaged in a ministry for which they felt God’s special calling or a sense of giftedness.

A. Church leaders therefore increasingly want to provide each parishioner with a means of identifying his or her spiritual gifts. To achieve maximum practicality, such an instrument needs three qualities:

1. Easy to understand and use
2. Appropriate for newcomers from various denominational backgrounds or with no previous church experiences
3. Short enough to administer during an adult Sunday school class or a newcomer orientation

B. “How to Identify Your Spiritual Giftabilities” (an updated, improved version of an earlier instrument by Herb Miller) meets those requirements. Outlined below are step-by-step instructions for how to administer it in a group setting, such as an adult church school class or a newcomer orientation session.

C. Why use this inventory? Churches report several benefits from providing parishioners with the opportunity to experience this inventory. The following are especially obvious:

1. Involves newcomers in faster, more motivational ways
2. Increases the self-esteem and involvement of members who suffer from low self-confidence. Fred, for example, never felt worthy or adequate to do anything in the church. He was always apologizing and feeling that he couldn’t possibly do a task well enough because he wasn’t smart enough or spiritual enough.
3. Reduces burnout and guilt feelings among high-involvement members who seem to operate as if they feel they have *all* the spiritual gifts. Most churches have a Maxine, whose zeal overdeveloped guilt-feelings caused her to volunteer for every task that came up.

D. Using this inventory does not totally eliminate the confusion surrounding the topic of spiritual gifts. But people who use this instrument are confused on a much higher plane than before.

IV. Group Use of “How to Identify Your Spiritual Giftabilities”

The leader begins with an introductory statement that helps group members understand what spiritual gifts are and are *not*. The leader then instructs the group in (a) how to complete an inventory form, (b) gives each person reason to feel affirmed by his/her inventory results, and (c) concludes by encouraging each person to build on his/her insights through personal experience and experimentation.

A. Opening statement:

- Today, each of us will have the opportunity to identify our personal spiritual giftabilities. Before we begin that process, let's be sure we understand the meaning of the term—spiritual gift. What is a spiritual gift?
- The Bible says that spiritual gifts are the special abilities that God gives individual Christians. According to Ephesians 4:12, spiritual gifts are given “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.”
- The apostle Paul lists many of these spiritual gifts in letters he wrote to young churches, preserved in our New Testament. For example, we read in Romans 12:6-8, “We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.”
- Paul does not, however, list all of the spiritual gifts. We can produce a list of at least thirty from all parts of the Bible, and I will give you that list a little later. Some researchers come up with a list of thirty-two—some even more than that.
- We should also take care not to confuse spiritual gifts with offices and roles in the church—such as pastor, elder, deacon, and bishop. A spiritual gift is not a job but an indication of the kind of service in which you would probably be effective and feel comfortable doing.
- During the next few minutes, we will give each of you the chance to discover your spiritual gifts. As you answer the questions that will identify your gifts, please remember that we are not going to cover all the spiritual gifts.
- For instance, we will not cover the gift of “speaking in tongues.” If you have that gift, you already know about it.
- We will not cover the gift of martyrdom. That's the gift you can only use once. If you have it, you would probably prefer not to know about it yet.
- We will not cover the gift of exorcism. There is doubtless much in the church and in some people that we think should be exorcised, but we are not here to either identify those items or to find out if we have that specialized skill.
- We will not cover the gift of voluntary poverty, which some researchers feel is listed in the New Testament. There is so much involuntary poverty around, and most Christians are seeking how to recover from it rather than obtain that gift in either form.
- We will not cover the gift of celibacy. Few people seem eager to receive that gift these days—and if you have it, you already know that.
- Answer the identification statements as honestly as possible. There is no way to fail this exercise.
- Remember that this is not a test—it is an inventory. All of us here will have different scores because we have different giftabilities.
- Don't ponder any of the identification statements very long. Your first thought is usually the truest measure.
- Don't be too concerned about the answer to any one statement. Your results are not determined by the answer to any one statement, but rather by all the statements averaged together.

- Remember that you will not be sharing these sheets with anyone. Therefore, be as honest as you can, so you can get the greatest possible personal benefit from this experience.

B. Instructions for taking the inventory. Following the introductory presentation above, the speaker distributes copies of the three-pages titled “One Hundred Questions that Reveal My Spiritual Giftabilities” and the sheet titled “My Spiritual Giftability Profile” on pages 11-14 below.

- Illustrate the process of answering the questions and putting the score on the “My Spiritual Giftability Profile” sheet by asking the first question or two. After being sure people understand the process, give them time to complete their profiles.
- An excellent way to speed up the process and ensure that everyone finishes at the same time: read the one hundred statements aloud to the group, asking people to follow along on their sheet and mark their answers as you go. To use this approach, read each question *twice* to make certain people understand it and have time to answer. Read the questions as rapidly as possible, which causes participants to answer with their first impressions.
- After you complete each set of twenty-five questions, ask people to slide the blank sheet of paper over their answers in that column, so they will not distort the twenty-five answers in the next column.
- Give participants seven minutes to add up their scores on the “My Spiritual Giftability Profile” sheet.
- Next, read the one-word description for each of the first twenty-five gifts from the sheet titled “Definitions of Thirty Spiritual Gifts Described in the Bible,” and ask participants to write the words in order in the spaces numbered 1 through 25 on the right side of their “My Spiritual Giftability Profile” sheet.
- Now, give people two minutes to rank their seven highest scores with 1 through 7 in the “Rank” column (some of these top seven may be ties).
- Note that some people for whom the “Pastor” gift ranks high are not clergypersons but have the caring heart needed for that role. On the other hand, some clergypersons may not find “Pastor” in their top seven, which means that she or he will have to work harder to fill that role of caring since is not a natural gift.
- Distribute copies of the two pages titled “Definitions of Thirty Spiritual Gifts Described in the Bible” from pages 15-16 below. This allows people to improve their understanding of any words they do not fully understand.

Give participants opportunity to ask clarification questions. Use whatever time remains for overall group discussion. If your group contains more than sixteen people, ask individuals to divide into groups of not more than four each to show how they feel about what they learned in their inventory.

C. Concluding remarks. The leader finishes the session by saying the following: This profile is not the only way to find out about your spiritual gifts. You can learn about them in at least two other ways.

1. Personal experience: If you enjoy doing something in the church, you are probably good at it. If you bitterly detest doing something, you may not be gifted for that role. Square pegs can occupy round holes but not with comfort.
2. Experiment: Try it. You may not like a particular role. But then again, you might. Let your light shine. See if it lights up any hidden dark corners.

If the group is ten or twelve people, ask participants to stand in a circle, join hands, and take turns offering one-sentence prayers. If the group is larger, either ask three or four people to voluntarily offer sentence prayers or ask people to divide into groups of four for one-sentence prayers—following which the leader says the “Amen.”

V. One Hundred Questions that Reveal My Spiritual Giftabilities

Instructions: To obtain your spiritual giftability scores, answer these one hundred questions and write the answers in the appropriate column (A, B, C, or D) on the separate sheet titled “My Spiritual Giftability Profile.”

Score yourself “0” if you do not experience the statement in your life.

Score yourself “5” if the statement represents a high degree of intensity or frequency in your personal experience.

If the statement represents a lower degree of intensity or frequency, score yourself with a “1,” “2,” “3,” or “4,” accordingly.

Column A

1. God frequently gives me a clear picture of what will happen in the future.
2. I try to keep rooms tidy and comfortable by properly arranging tables, chairs, etc.
3. I often carry out special assignments for other people.
4. When I teach, people seem to enjoy learning.
5. I can persuade others toward self-improvement even if they are at first reluctant.
6. I give significant amounts of money to special causes.
7. People seek my advice and follow my suggestions.
8. I often think of ways to help people in physical distress or bereavement.
9. People under my influence grow spiritually.
10. I have been elected or appointed to serve the church on district or general levels.
11. I can readily adjust to the “differentness” in other cultures without making negative judgments.
12. I can explain clearly to non-Christians the biblical meaning of salvation.
13. I can usually select a course of actions that benefits the other people in my group.
14. I can easily remember ideas and facts.
15. The people I vote for in organizations usually make good officers.
16. I have prayed for the physical healing of another person, and healing has resulted.
17. In the name of the Lord, I have done the otherwise impossible.
18. Because of my faith in God’s power, I can overcome challenging problems in ways that seem to defy the laws of reason.
19. I can easily see when and how to delegate important responsibilities and to whom I should delegate them.
20. I can provide food and/or lodging in a manner that guests appreciate.
21. I have played one or more musical instruments in public performances.
22. I have utilized my vocal-music ability in public performances.
23. I have used my writing ability in businesses, churches, or other organizations.
24. I have employed my artistic ability in businesses, churches, or other organizations.
25. I have the ability to design, construct, or repair buildings, equipment, or property.

Column B

1. I find satisfaction in telling a group what I feel is God’s will.
2. I enjoy helping others feel comfortable at meetings and events.
3. I like to run errands for other people.
4. I enjoy learning and teaching new ideas and facts.
5. I enjoy encouraging other people to put forth their best efforts.
6. I like to give significant financial gifts that help worthy organizations accomplish what they could not otherwise do.
7. I enjoy seeing others follow my guidance.
8. I enjoy doing little things for people who are unable to take care of themselves.

9. I enjoy helping people grow spiritually.
10. I feel comfortable taking responsibility for the spiritual growth of large numbers of people in various communities.
11. I feel at ease when relating to people from other cultures.
12. I enjoy seeking out unbelievers in order to witness to them regarding my faith in Christ.
13. I enjoy seeking and applying ideas that help solve specific problems.
14. I enjoy collecting, analyzing, and utilizing complex information to improve the effectiveness of organizations.
15. I can easily see the hidden reasons behind the statements and actions of other people.
16. I enjoy praying for the healing of sick persons.
17. I feel that spiritual forces can alter the laws of nature.
18. I find it easy to trust in God in difficult circumstances, and that faith is usually rewarded.
19. I have a knack for organizing ideas, people, and resources to effectively achieve goals.
20. I enjoy making strangers and/or persons in need feel at home.
21. I enjoy playing one or more musical instruments in public performances.
22. I like to use my vocal-music ability in public performances.
23. I find projects that require writing skill enjoyable.
24. I derive satisfaction from projects that require skill in art.
25. I derive satisfaction from projects that require designing, constructing, or repairing buildings, equipment, or property.

Column C

1. When I tell people what I feel is God's will, they seem willing to follow.
2. People thank me for my careful attention to details.
3. People appreciate the skill I use in helping them achieve their goals.
4. People seem to like my style of giving them information, ideas, and insights.
5. People tell me that I have been a big help when they were depressed, lonely, or trying to make a big decision.
6. Christian colleges, churches, or charities appreciate the large sums I am able to contribute.
7. People in organizations and groups appreciate my opinions and often follow my suggestions.
8. Persons with special needs, such as the elderly or handicapped, appreciate my visits.
9. People express appreciation for the spiritual help they receive through friendship with me.
10. Local church leaders respond well to my guidance in matters such as theological beliefs and establishing new congregations.
11. People of other cultures trust and react pleasantly to me.
12. People respond to my witnessing conversations with them by deciding to become Christian or join the church.
13. People seem inclined to accept my advice and act upon it.
14. People appreciate my ability to analyze complex information and to apply it in simple, practical ways.
15. My friends often seem surprised at how easily I can analyze the motives behind the behaviors of others.
16. Friends seem amazed at my sense of confidence that my prayers will help sick or injured people recover.
17. People have told me that I have more faith in the possibility of miracles than they do.
18. People notice how much I seem to trust God.
19. People comment about the effective and efficient ways I help an organization accomplish its goals.
20. People often want to stay in my home.
21. People compliment me on my ability to play a musical instrument.
22. People seem to like my singing.

23. Friends and other people seem impressed with my writing.
24. People seem to appreciate my ability in art.
25. People comment on my ability to design, construct, or repair things.

Column D

1. In group situations, people ask me to give my opinion regarding God's will.
2. People ask me to take responsibility for matters that require careful attention to details.
3. People in authority often ask me to help them prepare for special meetings or projects.
4. People invite me to fill roles that require teaching skills.
5. People seek my advice when they are depressed or facing a tough decision.
6. Leaders of various charitable organizations often bring special financial needs to my attention, knowing that I can draw upon reserve funds to meet those needs.
7. Groups elect or appoint me to leadership positions involving decision making.
8. Because they sense that I will know what kind of help we should extend, people often tell me of another's misfortune.
9. People often seek my counsel in personal spiritual matters.
10. People seek my opinions regarding biblical, denominational, and local church traditions.
11. People ask me to help with projects involving persons of other nationalities.
12. Church leaders invite me to help with evangelistic reach-out activities.
13. People ask for my help in deciding moral, ethical, and other life issues.
14. Because I often bring fresh insights to complex issues, people ask me to help them find solutions.
15. People in authority ask my opinion about giving certain jobs to certain people.
16. Because God often answers my prayers for healing in a way visible to others, sick people ask me to pray for them.
17. People often ask me to assume difficult tasks because they know that the miracles I believe will happen often do.
18. When people work with me on challenging projects, they seem to gain confidence from my faith in God's providence.
19. People seem to appreciate my organizational abilities.
20. Because I enjoy entertaining guests, organizations in which I participate invite me to provide hospitality skills.
21. I am employed or have been employed in using my instrumental-music talent professionally.
22. I am employed or have been employed in using my vocal-music talent professionally.
23. I am employed or have been employed in using my writing skills professionally.
24. I am employed or have been employed in using my art ability professionally.
25. I am employed or have been employed in using my design, building, or repair craftsmanship professionally.

VI. My Spiritual Giftability Profile

Instructions: Write answers in this sheet here from the three-pages that contain “One Hundred Questions that Reveal My spiritual Giftabilities.”

Put answers to the first 25 questions under Column A, below, down the left side of the sheet.

Score yourself “0” if you do not experience the statement in your own life.

Score yourself as high as “5” if the statement represents a high degree of intensity or frequency in your personal experience.

If the statement represents a lower degree of intensity or frequency, score yourself with a “1,” “2,” “3,” or “4,” accordingly.

After you complete the first twenty-five answers (Column A), cover those and subsequent answers with a sheet of paper to avoid distorting your other answers.

A	B	C	D	Total Score	Rank	Spiritual Gifts
						1.
						2.
						3.
						4.
						5.
						6.
						7.
						8.
						9.
						10.
						11.
						12.
						13.
						14.
						15.
						16.
						17.
						18.
						19.
						20.
						21.
						22.
						23.
						24.
						25.

VII. Definitions of Thirty Spiritual Gifts Described in the Bible

Warning: Do not review this list until you have answered the “One Hundred Questions that Reveal My spiritual Giftabilities” and written the numerical scores on “My Spiritual Giftability Profile.”

After you have answered the one hundred questions, take the first twenty-five words below—from the “Definitions of Thirty Spiritual Gifts Described in the Bible” and write them in order down the twenty-five blanks on the sheet titled “My Spiritual Giftability Profile.”

Then, take your seven highest scores and rank them one through seven in the column titled “Rank.” This gives you a list of your seven highest-ranking spiritual gifts. (Some of your top seven may be ties.)

The last five definitions of the thirty defined below are not unimportant. But people with those gifts *know* that they have them; these people do not need to complete a spiritual gifts inventory to discover those five gifts.

Definitions of Thirty Spiritual Gifts Described in the Bible

The basic New Testament texts regarding spiritual gifts are found in Romans 12:1-8; 1 Corinthians 12:1-27; 1 Corinthians 14:1-5; Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-16; and 1 Peter 4:8-11. These and other gifts are illustrated in numerous other texts throughout the Bible.

1. Prophecy: The giftability to receive and communicate a message from God to a particular audience with clarity and persuasive power. (Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 12:10, 28; Ephesians 4:11-14; Luke 7:26; Acts 15:32; Acts 21: 9-11)

2. Serving: The giftability to identify and perform various details of work essential to the efficient functioning of the church. (Romans 12:7; 2 Timothy 1:16-18; Titus 3:14; Galatians 6:10; 1 Peter 4:10-11)

3. Helping: The giftability to help other Christians increase the effectiveness of their particular spiritual gifts. (1 Corinthians 12:28; Romans 16:1-2; Acts 9:36; Luke 8:2-3; Mark 15:40-41)

4. Teaching: The giftability to communicate Christian information or concepts in ways that allow people to learn quickly and easily. (1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11-14; Romans 12:7; Acts 18:24-28; Acts 20:20-21)

5. Encouraging: The giftability to exhort, counsel, comfort, console, and encourage others in ways that strengthen their Christian faith commitment. (Romans 12:8; Hebrews 10:25; Acts 14:22)

6. Giving: The giftability to earn and give material resources to God’s work liberally and cheerfully. (Romans 12:8; 2 Corinthians 9:2-8)

7. Leadership: The giftability to help Christians set goals congruent with God’s will and to communicate these goals in ways that cause others to work sacrificially and harmoniously toward their achievement. (1 Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:17)

8. Mercy: The giftability to feel empathy and compassion for those who suffer from mental, emotional, or physical hurts and to help them in ways that alleviate their suffering. (Romans 12:8; Mark 9:41; Luke 10:33-35; Acts 11:28-30)

9. Pastor: The giftability to assume long-term responsibility for the spiritual welfare of a Christian group. (Ephesians 4:11-14; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 1 Peter 5:1-3)

10. Apostle: The giftability to give leadership to a group of churches with a kind of spiritual authority that is spontaneously recognized by other people. (1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11-14; Galatians 2:7-10)

11. Missionary: The giftability to minister effectively to persons in another culture. (Acts 13:2-3; Acts 22:20-21; Romans 15:18-19)

- 12. Evangelist:** The giftability to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with unbelievers in ways that encourage them to become active disciples and responsible members of Christ's church. (Ephesians 4:11-14; 2 Timothy 4:5; Acts 8:5-6, 26-40; Acts 21:8)
- 13. Wisdom:** The giftability to see how a given item of knowledge applies to specific problem situations in the Christ's church. (1 Corinthians 2:6-13; 1 Corinthians 12:8; 2 Peter 3:15)
- 14. Knowledge:** The giftability to find, collect, analyze, and clarify knowledge and then appropriately apply that information to problem situations in ways that promote the growth and well-being of the church. (1 Corinthians 12:8; 2 Corinthians 11:6)
- 15. Discernment of Spirits:** The giftability to accurately judge character, recognize whether a person's behavior arises from godly or from evil motives, and see the difference between false teaching and divine truth in a confusing situation. (1 Corinthians 12:10; 1 John 4:1-6)
- 16. Healing:** The giftability to serve as the human instrument through which God's healing power cures another person's physical or emotional need in ways different from those considered medically natural. (1 Corinthians 12:9, 28; Acts 3:1-10; Acts 5:12-16; Acts 9:32-35; Acts 28:7-10)
- 17. Miracles:** The giftability to exercise faith in ways that observers perceive as altering the normal course of nature. (1 Corinthians 12:10, 28; Acts 9:36-42; Acts 19:11-20; Acts 20:7-12; 2 Corinthians 12:12)
- 18. Faith:** The giftability to clearly see the will and purpose of God and confidently act accordingly. (1 Corinthians 12:9; Acts 11:22-24; Acts 27:21-25)
- 19. Administration:** The giftability to clearly understand the goals of a particular part of Christ's church and to effectively execute designed plans for the accomplishment of those goals. (1 Corinthians 12:28; Acts 6:1-7)
- 20. Hospitality:** The giftability to enjoy providing a warm welcome to those who need food and lodging. (1 Peter 4:9; Romans 12:13; Romans 16:23; Acts 16:14-15; Hebrews 13:1-2)
- 21. Instrumental Music:** The giftability to play a musical instrument in ways that spiritually encourage and strengthen others. (1 Samuel 16:14-23)
- 22. Vocal Music:** The giftability to spiritually strengthen people through singing. (Psalm 96:1-4)
- 23. Writing:** The giftability to spiritually edify, instruct, and strengthen people with written words. (1 John 2:1-28)
- 24. Artistry:** The giftability to create, design, and build things that inspire others to greater faith and spiritual growth. (Exodus 31:1-11)
- 25. Craftsmanship:** The giftability to construct or repair buildings and/or other items used to achieve God's purposes. (Exodus 31:3-5)
- 26. Tongues:** The giftability to speak to God in an unknown language and/or to receive a message from God for his people through this medium. (1 Corinthians 12:10, 28; 1 Corinthians 14:13-19; Acts 10:44-46; Acts 19:1-6; Mark 16:17)
- 27. Interpretation:** The giftability to translate the message of someone who speaks in unknown tongues. (1 Corinthians 12:10, 30; 1 Corinthians 14:13; 1 Corinthians 14:26-28)
- 28. Intercession:** The giftability to regularly pray for extended time periods and frequently see these prayers answered to a degree much greater than that found among most Christians. (James 5:14-16; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; Colossians 1:9-12)
- 29. Celibacy:** The giftability to enjoy remaining unmarried without suffering undue sexual temptation. (1 Corinthians 7:7-8; Matthew 19:10-12)
- 30. Martyrdom:** The giftability to undergo suffering for the faith to the point of death with a joyous and positive attitude. (Acts 7:54-60; Acts 12:1-5; 2 Corinthians 11:22-28)

VIII. Making the Mental Leap from Insights to Ministry-Application

Congregations sometimes use spiritual gifts inventories in ways that provide light without heat—insightful information without practical application. People enjoy learning about themselves. But how do they move from having that information to using it in and through their congregation’s ministries?

A. Create the “Answering God’s Call with Time and Talent” sheet for your church.

Every church’s sheet is different, depending on congregational size, location, denomination, and many other factors. Thus, this *Nuggets Volume* provides a “model” form (pages 18-19, below), not a finished product.

However, the pastor and lay leaders in any congregation can use (a) its own list of ministry teams and ministry roles and (b) the example on the next two pages to invent an appropriate, personalized sheet by using the list of ministry tasks its committees developed during June (*Step #1* above, on page 4).

Develop your congregation’s personalized “Answering God’s Call with Time and Talent” sheet by grouping items from your committees’ lists under what you feel are the appropriate headings.

B. Linking information to personal application. During worship services on the fourth Sunday of Spiritual Gifts Month, set aside five minutes, using meditative background music, for worshipers to indicate on the handout sheet titled “Answering God’s Call with Time and Talent” their answers to the question, “How is God calling me to use my spiritual gifts during the coming year?”

The front and back of the “Answering God’s Call with Time and Talent” sheet contains the list of ministry tasks and a place for signature and telephone number.

This sheet allows people to build on personal insights that they obtained during the first three weeks of Spiritual Gifts Month, enabling them to make the mental leap between their spiritual gifts and committing themselves to ministry tasks in and through their congregation.

Warning: Do *not* ask, or allow, people to take the sheets home and return them next week. Experience indicates that less than 20 percent of the sheets come back.

C. Recognize this personal commitment as an act of worship. Set aside five minutes during worship for completing the sheets. Do *not* ask people to place their sheets in the offering plates. Rather, tell worshippers during the announcement that “ushers will return at the end of five minutes to collect the sheets as we pass them down the pews.”

In the announcement(s) that introduce this process, build a spiritual commitment atmosphere in which people answer the question, “How is God calling me to use my spiritual gifts during the coming year?” Do *not* use terms such as “we need volunteers to help do church work.” That is the old slot-filling appeal and has no persuasive, motivational power.

As Brother Andrew reminds us in *The Calling*, according to the biblical record God does not work with volunteers. God calls people. Not one of the twelve apostles volunteered. Jesus called each one of them, and they left their preoccupation with other matters to respond to Christ’s call.

Answering God's Call with Time and Talent

You have many opportunities to use your spiritual gifts, talents, and creativity in practical ways to accomplish Christ's ministries in and through our congregation.

As we move toward building strong ministries during the coming year, how do you answer the question, "How is God calling me to use my spiritual gifts during the coming year?"

I would be interested in sharing my time and talents in the following ways (*please check any ministries in which you are willing to participate*):

Music (Instrumental)

- Hand Bell Choir
- Instrumental Ensemble
- Piano for Children's Choirs
- Vacation Bible School
- Piano or Guitar from Youth Groups
- Instrument: _____

Music (Vocal)

- Adult Choir Member
- Youth Choir Member
- Soloist/Vocal Ensemble
- Children's Choirs
- Children's Church School
- University Ministries Worship

Artistry

- Banners
- Decorate Altar/Sanctuary
- Set Design for Dramas
- Costume Design
- Graphic Design for Publicity
- Power Point Presentations
- Photography
- Bulletin Boards

Craftsmanship

- Carpentry
- Plumbing
- Electrical
- Painting
- Masonry
- Mechanic
- Building Improvements/Repairs
- Build Sets for Dramas
- Cutting Grass
- Shrubs
- Work Day
- Board of Trustees
- Mission Trips

Writing

- Newsletter Articles
- Publicity/Newspaper

Prayer

- Prayer Chain
- Afternoon Prayer Group
- Prayer Team before Worship
- Prayer Card Ministry

Giving

- Stewardship Committee
- Annual Stewardship Campaign
- Missions/Benevolence Committee

Teaching

- Primary Church School
- Elementary Church School
- Substitute Church School
- Junior High Church School
- Senior High Church School
- Adult Church School
- Vacation Bible School
- Adult Bible Study Group

Hospitality

- Usher __ 8:30 __ 10:30
- Greeter __ 8:30 __ 10:30
- Fellowship Hour
- Fellowship Dinners
- Wednesday Night Meals
- Communion Preparation
- Men's Breakfast Cook

Compassion

- Serve Funeral Meals
- Care Team Ministry
- Transportation to Worship
- Homebound Telephone Ministry Team
- Hospital Visitation Ministry Team

--over, please

Evangelism

- Worship Visitor Bread Delivery
- Worship Visitor Telephone Team
- Worship Visitor Packet Delivery
- Weeknight Home Visitation Team

Other _____

Serving

- Preparing Mailings
- Folding Weekly Newsletters
- Telephone Announcement Team
- Typing
- Office Angel Ministry Team
- Nursery Ministry Team
 - 8:30 a.m. 10:30 a.m.
- Vacation Bible School Snacks
- Parents Night Out

Encouragement

- Juniors (5th & 6th Grade) Group Sponsor
- Junior High Youth Group Sponsor
- Senior High Youth Group Sponsor
- Youth Council Ministry Team
- Summer Camp Counselor
 - Juniors Junior High Senior High
- University Ministries Ministry Team
- Grief Recovery Ministry Team
- Adult Small Group Facilitator
- Singles Ministry Team
- Divorce Recovery Ministry Team
- Sports Ministry Team
- Senior Adult Ministry Team
- New Member Ministry Team
- Newcomer Orientation Ministry Team

Administration

- Family Ministries Committee
- Finance Committee
- Personnel Committee
- Stewardship Committee
- Building and Grounds Committee
- Evangelism Committee
- Missions Committee
- Education Committee
- Youth Council
- University Ministries Committee
- Camping Ministries Committee
- Sports Ministries Committee
- Cemetery Board
- Long-Range Planning Committee
- Governing Board

Name: _____

Phone: _____

IX. Annual Reinforcement of Initial Education

Prior to the beginning of each new church year, ask all committees and ministry teams to update (add to, eliminate, or revise) any ministry roles or tasks on the “Answering God’s Call with Time and Talent” sheet that, based on last year’s experiences, they feel need altering.

Revise the sheet.

After two or three weeks of publicity through the newsletter and a personal letter to each household telling people, “It’s coming!”

Do not spell out the exact Sunday when this will happen; rather, say, “It’s coming some Sunday in the future.”

The pastor may or may not elect to preach a sermon specifically focused on the spiritual gifts. However, ask the pastor to select the Sunday to use “Answering God’s Call with Time and Talent” that fits with his/her preaching topic for that day.

Use the “Answering God’s Call with Time and Talent” sheet as an act of worship on Sunday morning, in the same manner as during the first year.

During the worship service, set aside five minutes, using meditative background music, for worshipers to indicate on the handout sheet titled “Answering God’s Call with Time and Talent” their answers to the question, “How is God calling me to use my spiritual gifts during the coming year?”

In the announcements that introduce this process, build a spiritual commitment atmosphere in which people answer the question, “How is God calling me to use my spiritual gifts during the coming year?” Do *not* use terms such as “we need volunteers to help do church work.” That is the old slot-filling appeal and has no persuasive, motivational power.

Warnings: Do *not* ask, or allow, people to take the sheets home and return them next week. Experience indicates that less than 20 percent of the sheets come back.

Do *not* ask people to place their sheets in the offering plates. Rather, tell worshippers during the announcement that ushers will return at the end of five minutes to collect the sheets as we pass them down the pews.

X. Continuously Involving Newcomers in Ministry Roles

What happens when congregations invite newcomers into membership but fail to involve them in the congregation's ministries? Assimilation failure is so high among congregations that two years later 50 percent of new members in the typical congregation are no longer regular attendees.

A. Crucial periods during which newcomers move toward more (or less) active discipleship in a congregation: (a) the months prior to becoming members, (b) the first six weeks after joining, and (c) six weeks to one year after joining. Assimilation procedure failure during these periods spells *permanent* assimilation failure.

B. Five factors determine whether newcomers become and remain active participants/disciples in a congregation:

1. They have a supportive relationship with some small group in the church.
2. They have some type of role/responsibility in the church.
3. They have a warm relationship with two or more people in the church.
4. They have a positive attitude about the pastor.
5. They have a sense of devotion and loyalty to God.

Remove two of those five and newcomers do not become active members, or they drop out of participation after church leaders *thought* they were assimilated. For a more detailed understanding of (a) the psychological, theological, and sociological factors that influence newcomer assimilation and (b) effective assimilation procedures, obtain *Church Effectiveness Nuggets: Volume 7, How to Build Assimilation Bridges for New Members/Attendees*. Go to the www.TheParishPaper.com Web site and download free of charge.

C. The first three assimilation factors—a group, a job, and friends—are most likely to happen in a timely manner under these circumstances: (a) the congregation is organized to provide numerous entry-level ministry opportunities through ministry teams and (b) the congregation's leaders build bridges across which newcomers can easily walk into one of those ministry teams. The larger the congregation, the more crucial becomes the need to build those bridges in a highly intentional way.

Small congregations more quickly and naturally pull people into groups and ministry roles that create friendships. The major *hazard* in small churches is the tendency to recruit newcomers to fill slots, rather than to involve them in ministry roles that (a) fit their personal preferences, (b) match their spiritual gifts, and (c) give them the greatest sense of meaning and satisfaction. Thus, spiritual gifts inventories are also valuable assimilation tools in small congregations.

D. How can we best use a spiritual gifts inventory with newcomers? Application of all three of the following principles is essential:

1. Few newcomers actually complete a spiritual gifts inventory unless they do so within the context of a group setting; sending the instrument home with people usually means several of them fail to find the time to complete it.
2. Few newcomers move from informed motivation to action unless someone (usually a staff member) *immediately contacts a leader of the appropriate ministry team and asks him/her to invite the newcomer to serve*. Expecting newcomers to build that bridge themselves—by telephoning a ministry team leader and “volunteering to serve”—results in only a small percentage of newcomers getting into a ministry team. If someone does not follow up in a personal way, by picking up the telephone and calling the newcomer, the spiritual gifts inventory effort has been worse than wasted. It creates “organized rejection” of newcomers that injures them.

3. Few newcomers move into ministry team service unless the congregation's organizational structure provides that opportunity. If the congregation's primary theory of and structure for accomplishing ministries is the traditional, 1950s era large governing board, several committees, and no ministry teams, the percentage of newcomers who "stick" remains small, even if the newcomer orientation provides them opportunity to complete a spiritual gifts inventory.

E. Additional bridge-building resources: Saddleback Valley Community Church, where Rick Warren is senior pastor, uses a new member assimilation procedure that is especially valuable in large congregations. Download Rick Warren's C.L.A.S.S #301 materials at the www.saddlebackresources.com/en-US/MinistryTools/ClassMaterials/ClassMaterials.htm Web site.

Excellent materials and training events for Directors of Lay Ministries (a part-time position in most large churches and a full-time position in others) are available from many denominational offices.