

KNOWN™

Gifted A Study on Spiritual Gifts

WEEK 1

I Am Gifted

What is one of your natural abilities? These abilities usually take little effort—you just seem to catch on. We all have natural abilities that are given to us by God—some people are natural athletes, some are natural musicians, and some are natural artists—but what about spiritual gifts? Does every person have a spiritual gift? Questions about spiritual gifts are asked by most Christians at some time.

One of the most important birthdays of your life is your 16th birthday. Getting your drivers license and being able to drive alone without a parent is something we all look forward to. However, any time before that moment, driving alone is not an option because of your age.

What are other events that need to happen before you can have certain things (such as a diploma, trophy, or honor)?

God makes you spiritually alive when you accept Christ as your Lord and Savior. When you make a spiritual decision to accept Christ, you receive a spiritual gift through the Holy Spirit. A spiritual gift cannot be given until you have been made spiritually alive through Christ.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-7. Why is it important to see the difference between spiritual gifts and natural abilities?

What are some of the listed spiritual gifts that you might not completely understand?

Keep in mind that the purpose of a spiritual gift is to build Christ's church. A spiritual gift is not to be used for selfish gain, but to help advance God's kingdom. Whatever your spiritual giftedness may be, it is intended to be used for God and for His church.

My Prayer

Thank You, God, for making me alive through Christ so that I can help advance Your kingdom.

Just for Me

Facebook has allowed people all over the world to personalize their profile page to best describe themselves. Each Facebook page shows a person's likes, dislikes, friends, personalized messages, descriptions of an individual, and photos. You can really learn a lot about a person through Facebook—each page gives a unique description of an individual person.

How is your Facebook page a personalized expression of who you are?

Do you have anything else that can be personalized just for you?

Read Ephesians 4:11-12. Have you ever considered that God has personalized a spiritual gift just for you?

What do you think that spiritual gift is?

You have unique gifts that are specific to you because of God's grace given to you through Jesus Christ. Not one Christian is excluded from receiving a gift from God—we don't deserve it and we can't earn it, but these gifts of God are measured out individually and uniquely for His purposes.

In Ephesians 4:11, what is the biblical role of your pastor/student pastor?

God has personalized a spiritual gift just for you and wants to see you embrace the gift He has given. If you are not sure what your spiritual gift is, begin to ask God to reveal that gift to you.

My Prayer

Thank You for providing a spiritual gift just for me.

Why Am I Needed?

Team building games are fun, but they can be very frustrating if your team is not on the same page or doesn't seem to care. For example: your team forgets to catch you in a trust fall, tries to run the opposite way in a three-legged race, or while you are blindfolded your teammate leads you right into a wall. All of these team building games require the help of your teammate, not the hindrance of one.

What are other activities that cannot be accomplished without the help of others?

Read Ephesians 4:15-16. What does it mean to "grow in every way into Him"?

Why did God design us to need one another?

Why is having the support of the church important?

Nothing is bigger than being a part of God's work here on earth. He created the church body to love and support one another as we minister to all people. We belong to one another, we affect one another, and we need one another. God gave us spiritual gifts so we can help the church do its work.

What are ways you could use your gifts to build up others in the church?

How can you help the leadership of the church increase its ministries?

Your spiritual gift was given to you specifically to advance the church. What greater task is there than to be a part of what God is doing in and through the church? God wants to use you.

My Prayer

Help me to use my spiritual gift as You want, Lord.

WEEK 2

Not The Same

Baskin Robbins is known for its 31 ice cream flavors—in fact, their slogan is “31 Flavors.” This famous ice cream place has flavors from Banana Nut Fudge to Vanilla Burnt Almond. Baskin Robbins didn’t stick with the standard vanilla, chocolate, or strawberry, but expanded their flavors not only to increase revenue, but also to target the taste buds of a variety of customers.

Read Romans 12:7-10. What are some of the spiritual gifts God gives?

Why do you think there are a variety of spiritual gifts?

How boring would it be if God gave each of us the same spiritual gift? We would have a bunch of people who looked, acted, and spoke the same. Just think about it: what would happen if everybody in the church had the spiritual gift of preaching God’s Word? Hmmmm.

God provides spiritual gifts not only to help us grow in our faith but to enhance the ministries of the church—His church. The church should celebrate the different spiritual gifts that have been given to Christians.

Think about it, you were given a spiritual gift that will help advance God’s kingdom. Does that motivate you to discover the unique gift God has for you? Here is someplace where you can start to explore what your spiritual giftedness may include: <http://www.lifeway.com/article/170310/>

My Prayer

Thank You for giving me gifts that are specific to me.

Perfect Fit

Have you ever tried to play a sport or attempt an activity and realized you weren’t very good at it? Have you ever seemed to be out of place? How did it feel? What was the most frustrating?

Read Romans 12:4-6. What is the one thing Paul is clear about in his letter to the Romans?

Why is variety so important in life?

If you’ve ever attempted to put together a 1000-piece jigsaw puzzle, you know how frustrating it can be to locate the right piece for the right place (especially at the beginning when you still have 900 pieces left to examine). Pieces cannot be forced into the wrong place and reshaped to fit into another piece. There is a specific destination for each piece that will create a beautiful picture when placed correctly.

In what ways are spiritual gifts like puzzle pieces?

What is it that you are passionate about?

What do you do well? Could these be your spiritual gifts?

If you don't know what your spiritual gift is, begin the process to discover it. You may find that you are not a good teacher, but a great encourager; or you tend to show mercy, but you aren't really great at giving. God will show you if you ask Him.

"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you" (Matt. 6:33).

You have a specific place that was designed for you to fill. When we as individuals fill the places God intends for us to fill, the end result is a beautiful masterpiece of Christ's work in the world. Keep serving God and people—you will discover your gifts.

My Prayer

God, place me in situations where you can use the gifts You have given to me.

Revealing

Do you look like your mom or dad? Or both? Do you act like one or the other? Have you ever had someone tell you that you are just like your parents? We all have attributes of our parents and tend to act similar to one parent or the other.

What are the unique qualities that you have that are reflections of your parents?

Your actions, behaviors, and attitudes can reveal qualities of your parents. In the same way, when you use the spiritual gifts God has given, you reveal the unique qualities of God.

Read 1 Peter 4:11. What is God's desire for you?

Why is God so deserving of all glory, honor, and praise?

When you use your spiritual gifts to reveal the qualities of God, He is glorified. Think about it, you can glorify God and you don't have to be a pastor, worship leader, or Bible teacher. You simply need to be who God created you to be. When you discover and use your gifts for Him, you are exactly where God wants you to be.

Each day when you wake up this week, ask God, "What can I do to glorify You today using the gifts You have given me?"

My Prayer

May You be glorified in and through me so that I will show people Your unique attributes.

WEEK 3

Better Than Yours

We all enjoy getting gifts, right? Of course we do. Everyone gets excited when their birthday comes around because we know gifts usually follow.

What is the best gift you have ever received?

What made it such a great gift?

When we begin to open our gifts, we sort of know what to expect. After opening our gifts, we tend to think some gifts were better than others—for example, underwear and socks don't stir the same emotional response as an iPod Touch. Although we think there is no equality in the gifts, each gift serves a purpose and has a specific task. When you stop and think about it, socks and underwear are a pretty important part of your life.

Have you ever received a gift you thought was better than others? What was it?

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-14, What was Paul describing?

Why would Paul use body parts as an example related to spiritual gifts?

Paul used body parts to put perspective on the importance of our spiritual gifts. The believers in the Corinthian church had not been Christians for very long, and many of them were having a difficult time placing value on spiritual gifts. Paul made the point that each spiritual gift is just as important as the next. Each helps the body of Christ because one complements another. If one part is gone, the whole body—the church—suffers.

Your spiritual gift is important and the church suffers when you don't use it. Your spiritual gift has a specific task that has a significant purpose to help the church. Don't hold back; fill the gap!

My Prayer

God, help me to discover and use my gift where You need me.

Better Together

In 1980, the USA Hockey team sealed their place in history with what will always be remembered as the "Miracle On Ice." The team was never expected to have a chance to win a gold medal at the Olympics; in fact, Herb Brooks, the USA coach, didn't have high expectations for gold, but thought a bronze medal was within reach.

The USA team played incredibly throughout the tournament and shocked the world by beating the world's best, the Soviet Union, to take home the gold medal. (For more about the story, check out the movie "Miracle" [Walt Disney Video, 2004].)

What was the key to the USA hockey team's success?

Why were they able to win the gold?

Read 1 Corinthians 12:25-26. What does it mean to work as a team?

Do you see other members of the church as your teammates?

What is keeping you from using your spiritual gift to fill your place on the team?

For the 1980 USA Hockey team, everyone on the team was working toward the same goal and each teammate brought his talent to the team. As Christians, we also have a goal to work toward—to KNOW God, OWN our faith, and make God KNOWN. In order to achieve that goal, the church has to work together, using our individual gifts to benefit the whole.

My Prayer

God, help me to be a team player and use my spiritual gift in order to help the church be successful.

Not Alone

Have you ever felt alone with no one to support you? You know the feeling, it's like when your friends plan to stand and shout at a sporting event, graduation, or church event—but when the time comes you are the only person to stand and shout. It's certainly not a good feeling to be standing alone without support.

When was the last time you felt alone with no one to support you?

Have you ever left someone alone without support?

Read 1 Corinthians 12:15-20. What point is the author trying to make?

How do we make one another stronger?

What happens when someone doesn't use his or her gifts?

God is in the business of equipping His people for doing His will on earth. He never intended for you to serve Him by yourself. You, along with the rest of the church, have been called to support, love, and stand up for one another to make Him KNOWN to the world.

What is it you can do to support your church?

Your spiritual gift is needed and has a place within the church to help it function better.

The church is stronger when we all work together as one body. God is faithful and will not leave us hanging with no support. Do what you can this week to support other believers.

My Prayer

God, I thank You for surrounding me with others who will support me.

WEEK 4

It's Mine and You Can't Have It

"What's mine is mine and what's yours is yours. Don't mess with my stuff!" If you have siblings, more than likely you've heard that statement a time or two. Most sibling fights happen because one sibling takes ownership over an item and is not willing to share. It even happens between friends.

What are things you tend to take ownership of?

Why are those things so hard to share with others?

Read Colossians 1:16-17. Is there anything that God has not created?

Why were all things created?

What should be your response for the things that have been given to you?

Unfortunately, not everyone realizes that God created all things to be used for His purposes—including spiritual gifts. God created these gifts and then gave them to us. Therefore, we cannot take ownership, but we can certainly give credit to the rightful owner.

What are ways you can begin to use the gifts God has given you and how can you share those gifts?

Giving credit to the rightful owner means using your spiritual gifts and then thanking God for allowing you to use those gifts. Don't rob God of the glory that is rightfully His. Share the gifts that have been given to you with those around you and then give praise back to God.

My Prayer

God, I want to use what You have given to me to give back to You.

Pay Attention!

Have you ever been completely ignored? How did that go for you? When we are ignored we get frustrated, upset, and sometimes angry because we feel as though our opinions, thoughts, and concerns don't matter.

Read 1 Timothy 4: 14. Why did Paul write these things to Timothy?

Do you think God gets frustrated, upset, or angry because we ignore the gifts He has given to us? Why?

In Paul's letter to Timothy, he made it very clear to Timothy not to neglect who he was in Christ. Timothy was young at the time, but Paul let him know not to let his age stop him from using the gifts God had given him for His purposes. Paul would write the same thing to you today.

Has anything kept you from using the gifts God has given you for His purposes?

One of the most difficult tasks today is using your spiritual gifts to live out your faith in front of your peers. Whether teaching, showing acts of faith, showing encouragement, giving, showing mercy, leading, or other spiritual gifts, we are to be examples to those around us by using our gifts in faith, love, purity, speech, and conduct.

Make it a priority this week to use your spiritual gift to be an example of Christ's love to those around you. Let's not neglect the gifts that come from a God who loves us deeply.

My Prayer

God, help me to use the gifts You have given me to love people and make You famous.

Who's the Man?

In the 1946 Broadway musical, Annie Get Your Gun, a scene was filmed using this lyric from a song called "Anything You Can Do": "I can do anything you can do better. I can do anything better than you."

Later, it was made popular again in the 1997 Gatorade commercial starring Michael Jordan, NBA Superstar, and Mia Hamm, American soccer player.

Do you ever catch yourself thinking you're better than someone else? What makes this thought so common?

In today's society, there seems to be more competition to gain individual success than ever before. We tend to focus on being bigger, better, and faster than those around us. Most of the time, self-focus seems good but tends to harm the whole. Think about it, have you ever made a decision that helped you as an individual, but caused harm to another person—maybe a friend or family member?

Read Romans 12:3-5. Why did Paul address self-centeredness?

How would you define/describe self-centeredness?

What are ways you can keep a humble spirit?

Before we can use our spiritual gifts as God intended, we first need to acknowledge that our gifts are intended to help the church, not ourselves. We need to humble ourselves before God and know that we are nothing apart from Him.

My Prayer

God, may I decrease my pride to help Your church.

KNOWN

Defending the Faith A Study on Apologetics

WEEK 1

Spiritual Preparation

You need to leave for school at 7:00. So, what time do you need to wake up? Well, that depends. If you need to take a shower, haven't finished your homework, have no idea what you're wearing, and like to enjoy a relaxing breakfast, you'll need to get up pretty early. But if you've already done everything to get prepared (some people even sleep in their clothes!), you can sleep until the last minute.

What does your spiritual preparation look like?

Do you still have a lot to do to be ready to share your faith, or have you started taking steps to help you be prepared?

Spiritual preparation takes some planning. Read 1 Peter 1:13-16. Make a list of the actions required in these verses. Give yourself a grade (A through F) on how well you are performing each.

Just as you probably wouldn't go to school without brushing your teeth and putting on shoes, you should not expect to successfully defend your faith without the basics: self-control, obedience, and a good understanding of God's holiness so that your life reflects Him.

Are you taking the daily steps required to be ready? Do you spend time worshiping God, learning His Word, and communicating with Him in such a way that you hear Him?

Make a note of the areas you need to work on to improve. Be conscious about spending time in spiritual preparation.

My Prayer

Father, please help me to be ready to defend my faith by making personal time with You my top priority!

Bring It On

Be careful... . If you really know how to defend your faith and are ready to do it in Christ's power, you may have a mob on your hands.

Christ wasn't the only great teacher of His day. But He had the authority and knowledge of God, which made all kinds of people want to hear Him.

Read Mark 3:7-10. How did Christ get ready for what was to come?

How did He respond to the crowds?

Picture the scene—there were so many people wanting to hear Jesus that he had to get in a boat so He wouldn't get pushed into the water! Crazy, right?

Know, then, that you may also be thrown into a spotlight when you can tell your friends why you choose to follow Christ and obey Him instead of living like everybody else. There are all kinds of teens who say they believe something but don't back it up with their words or actions. Even fewer are able to explain it.

This is exactly what God intended, though—for those who know and love Him to be so different from the rest of society that others cannot help but wonder, “What makes that kid so different?”

Accept the attention. Don't shy away from it. Let your light shine for others (Matthew 5:16).

My Prayer

Oh, Lord, help me be ready to be the kind of believer that looks forward to—and isn't scared of—the questions and attention that will come.

Live It

What is a testimony? As Christians, we are encouraged to share our testimony with others. But what does that mean, really?

The word “witness” is a good synonym. When you give a witness, you tell what you have learned or seen or known about God. “Evidence” also has a close meaning. When you share your testimony, you're telling someone the evidence of why you believe and follow God.

In your opinion, what is the most effective type of testimony?

Look at the example in Acts 4:29-35. How did these believers testify to their faith?

What made their testimony so powerful?

You see, if you explain your testimony with words alone and do not back it up with actions and attitudes that reflect God, your testimony is weak—or, even worse, hypocritical. Only when you put hands and feet to your faith will others really believe your testimony.

Christ healed the sick, helped the poor, and loved all who came to Him. He is the perfect example of a testimonial life. As you continue to learn how to defend your faith, let the Holy Spirit show you how to demonstrate it as a living, breathing testimony.

My Prayer

Lord, I want to let others see You in my life. Help me to demonstrate my testimony by how I live!

WEEK 2

Use your Influence

Whose responsibility is it to make sure people around you know the truth of Jesus? “Well, of course,” you might say, “it’s my pastor’s job. And my youth minister’s. And the guy that leads our Tuesday night visitation. And, maybe there are some evangelists and speakers that are good at teaching about Jesus.”

Right? Well, not totally. Because the responsibility does not fall just to those who are good or trained or comfortable with teaching about Jesus.

Read Matthew 28:19-20. To whom was Jesus speaking?

What instructions did Jesus give them?

Would you say that this verse applies to you? Why or why not?

This passage is commonly referred to as the “Great Commission”—where Jesus formally gave His appointed task (His commissioning) to the disciples who were with Him. Were they all preachers and speakers? No way. They were businessmen, fishermen, and other “normal” people. They, like us, were given the task of discipling (leading), baptizing, and teaching others.

It all begins with the command to “make disciples”—what do you think it means to make disciples?

All believers in Christ have been given the same commission, or task—to spread the message of Jesus. Yes, those polished guys listed above may seem to be more comfortable at a pulpit or behind a microphone, but they don’t hang out with your friends or have the influence you do over others. This is why it’s up to each one of us to proclaim Christ in our world.

My Prayer

Oh, Father, please give me the courage and passion to share You with others!

Led Astray

Consider Eve: She lived in the most beautiful, perfect, incredible place on earth. In fact, she and Adam were the first people to live in God’s wonderful creation. She lived at peace with animals. (Even spiders? Maybe not.) Plus, God was so close to her that she talked with Him. If there was anyone who would not have been led astray by a false teaching, it would have been her, right?

Well, unfortunately, even Eve was influenced to believe a lie.

Read 2 Corinthians 11:3-4. How was Eve led astray?

How were the recipients of Paul’s letter led astray?

Though Satan himself influenced Eve to believe a lie, the Corinthians simply weren’t paying attention to the fact that lies were invading their beliefs. They tolerated what seemed to be the truth, and before they knew it their beliefs weren’t in line with what the Bible and Christ taught.

What are some things that might lead you astray if you are not diligent in your faith?

Christians—real Christians who love and want to follow Christ—can easily fall into deception when we are not being cautious about what is and is not truth. They sound like much of society: “Sex before marriage isn’t a big deal.” “It’s okay to cheat on this test; everyone else is.” “Don’t worry—your parents will never find out.”

Know God’s Word for yourself, and be aware of falsehood. Guard your faith with truth. Read, and pray, James 1:5.

My Prayer

Wow, God, I never dreamed I’d fall for a lie. Please help me to know Your truth and be wise.

Too Good to Keep Secret

Are you any good at keeping secrets? I’m not talking about the “Oh, my mom would kill me if she knew I accidentally ran over her prize roses with the lawn mower,” type of secret. I’m talking about the, “My friend is going to love it when we jump out and yell, ‘surprise!’” type of secret. Some secrets are so good you just can’t help telling others, right?

Our relationship with Christ is supposed to be that kind of secret. It’s not something we’re supposed to keep to ourselves. We’re supposed to be so hyped about it that we just feel like we might bust if we don’t share it.

Look how Paul explained it in 1 Corinthians 2:6-10. How did Paul describe the wisdom we can get from God alone?

How did he describe the other type of wisdom?

Wisdom that comes from God enables you to share the message of Christ with others. When you accept Christ as your Savior, it’s as though your brain is uploaded with some amazing software that allows you to access all kinds of knowledge about God through the Holy Spirit. People who don’t know God simply don’t have access to it.

The wisdom of our age sounds good and seems to make sense; but it’s not truth! Possessing God’s truth should inspire you to make sure that everyone you know has the secret wisdom that comes from God.

My Prayer

God, Thank You for letting me in on the secret of your wisdom.

WEEK 3

Courage In All Things

When I was young, my family would go to a waterfall area every summer. We'd splash in the pool at the bottom for a while, and then my dad would climb to the top of a small rock and slide down it. The first time he did it, he invited me to go—I told him no way. But after watching him a few more times, I went. It was SO much fun! I didn't have the courage it took to slide down the waterfall rock, but I got courage from knowing my dad was there and able to help me.

So where do we find the courage to stand for our faith? It's not within ourselves. We get courage from following God, experiencing His power and plan, and knowing that we get to use His power for His purposes.

Read Philippians 1:19-26. For what reason did Paul need courage?

How would God be glorified if Paul was courageous in life? In death?

Paul realized that he would need courage regardless of how his situation ended: Either he would live and tell others about Christ, or he would die and go to heaven forever. Both avenues took courage.

Living for Christ takes courage, whether the experience seems good or bad. Depend on His strength to give you courage in all things. Consider what it would take for you to be able to say the same kinds of things Paul said in these verses.

My Prayer

Father, I need Your courage! Thank You for Your strength and power.

Courage In Crisis

Sometimes we need courage at the beginning of a challenge, such as being brave enough to strap on that roller coaster seat belt and hang on. In other times, we need courage after a challenge is over, such as not letting your legs collapse underneath you after the ride is over.

What things require you to have courage?

Sometimes it takes more courage to explain our God-honoring actions than it took to be obedient. If you've ever had to explain to a friend that you didn't come to a party because there was alcohol, or that you wouldn't let someone copy your homework because it was dishonest, you know what I'm talking about.

Peter faced the same type of situation on a much more dramatic scale. He healed a beggar, which seemed pretty simple, but the backlash was unbelievable. Peter went through a lot.

Read Acts 4:3-4,8-13. What consequences did Peter and John face because of their willingness to heal the man?

How did Peter demonstrate courage?

How did his courage affect others?

Courage in Christ is provided to you as a believer, whether you need it to take the step of faith or defend the step after you thought the challenge was over. Be ready to stand strong regardless of when the courage is needed.

My Prayer

Holy God, I know You are glorified when I am courageous, for my courage comes from You.

Weapons of Courage

You wouldn't go into a battle without gear. In most wars, the side with the best armor is victorious. In the world of spiritual struggles, Christians are not weaponless. We take courage from knowing how we are armed.

Read Ephesians 6:13-17. What different types/pieces of armor are mentioned?

What is the purpose of this spiritual armor?

The reason we can go to battle against evil is because we have been fitted with the armor necessary for our fight. The belt of truth holds our convictions firm because we know real Truth—Jesus. The breastplate of righteousness protects us from doubting that we are right before God. Peace on our feet allows us to fight without offending. The shield of faith keeps the lies of the enemy from piercing us, even when we can't explain God. The helmet of salvation lets us live in ultimate confidence that we are eternally saved. And, of course, the sword of the Spirit—God's Word—provides us with all we need to repel the enemy.

We can't do it on our own; the armor of God is something we must use for defending our faith and facing evil.

What piece (or pieces) of your spiritual armor needs some attention right now?

As you get dressed tomorrow, imagine that you are also putting on these very specific, very valuable pieces of armor. When you are challenged or tested, remember that your courage comes from the Spirit's protection.

My Prayer

Thank You, Father, for the courage I get from the armor You've given me.

WEEK 4

The Good Fight

As Christians, we're called to fight: We must contend for God's kingdom, fight against Satan and the world, and go into battle with other Christians.

Still, does it sound like fighting and honoring God would be a little tricky? I mean, can you picture Christ punching Pilate in the face? (He wouldn't.)

Read 1 Timothy 1:18-20. What kind of fight does Paul instruct his reader to fight?

What two other instructions does he include in verse 19?

As believers, we don't live like the world lives, and we don't fight like they do. We're called to fight a good fight. Do you know what that looks like?

What do you think this "good fight" looks like?

A good fight means we stay obedient to God; we don't break His commands. A good fight means we are loving to others; we don't tear them down or hurt them. A good fight means we are focused on others knowing God, not on getting them to admit that we are right. A good fight means those who are watching us see God, not our battle.

What might be two other statements you would add to the descriptions of a good fight?

As you contend for the faith this week, remember to fight the good fight and honor Christ in your battles.

My Prayer

Father, I want to fight the good fight. Help me to glorify You as I fight for Your kingdom.

Spiritual Food

Have you ever watched a little baby try to eat food for the first time? They don't really understand how to do it. They push it out of their mouths with their tongues, usually accompanied by a funny 'this is disgusting' face.

Babies take time to learn how to eat food, because for the first months of their lives all they get is milk. However, learning to eat food is necessary and a vital part of growing up.

Read 1 Peter 2:1-3. What is spiritual milk? What does it help us do?

What should make us want more hearty spiritual food?

New Christians, whether age 5 or 85, start with some basic milk from the Bible: God loves you. Jesus saves you. Heaven is where you'll spend eternity. But as you grow up spiritually, what you digest from Scripture should change. You begin to understand who the Holy Spirit is and what He does. You learn how to share your faith. You learn to pray with power and hear God's voice.

But the question is this: Are you choosing to grow in your spiritual food?

How well are you growing?

Who is helping you to grow?

You don't just drink milk any more—you like to eat a lot of other things. Learn to grow up spiritually, too. Feast on God's meat in His Word this week.

My Prayer

Father, I have tasted Your presence, and I know it is good!

Not Enough Time

I never seem to have enough time. I love reading, but my stack of books grows. I have a few movies I want to watch, but the DVDs seem to just sit on the TV stand. I'd really like to spend more time in God's Word, but sometimes I only manage a short morning devo.

Do you have enough time to do all you want to do for God?

The Bible tells us that we've got to intentionally make the most of our time.

Read Colossians 4:2-6 aloud. What does verse 5 instruct you to do?

How do verses 2 and 6 give insight into how to obey God's instruction in verse 5?

You make the most of your time—especially in terms of sharing Christ—when your entire lifestyle is focused on glorifying Him. Just as you see in verses 2 and 6, an attitude of prayer and thanksgiving, coupled with words that are gracious and beautiful, turn every minute of our day into a time of testimony!

Whether you're riding to work, sitting on the bus, enjoying free time in class, waiting in line at a store, watching your little brother and sister, or anything else, remind yourself: I can use this moment to reflect Christ.

My Prayer

Lord, I want to stay focused on You and represent You in my relationships today.

KNOWN™

Work It Out A Study on Conflict Resolution

WEEK 1

Root of the Problem

Her parents are divorcing. My best friend betrayed me. There was another fight at school. I yelled at my brother. War is breaking out in yet another country.

Looking around in your personal life, community, state, or the world in general, CONFLICT seems to surround us. It is undeniable that conflict exists, but where does it come from?

Read James 4:1. What is the cause of conflicts?

What are some of the conflicts that can go on inside a person?

If you have a sibling, what kinds of things make you mad at your sibling?

The first brothers mentioned in the Bible had a conflict that resulted in one killing the other.

Read Genesis 4:3-8. What do you think pushed Cain into ultimately making the decision to kill his brother?

The seeds of pride and jealousy that were in Cain's heart grew into anger, hatred, and then action (murder). God knew what was in Cain's heart and even warned him.

Pray and ask God to check your heart and show you any seeds that could cause you to be at risk for conflict. Listen with an honest heart.

My Prayer

Lord, I want to abandon conflict and embrace Your peace.

Me Last

Take turns, don't cut in line, and don't take things that aren't yours. These are a few basic rules of life we are taught as children. We have to be taught these, because they don't come natural. What comes natural is to scream, "me first" or "mine." A more common term for this is selfishness.

Wanting to be the greatest or first causes a lot of conflicts. Even the disciples argued about wanting to be first.

Read Mark 9:33-34. Why do you think each disciple wanted to be recognized as the greatest?

Based on what you read here, how do you think they measured personal greatness?

Selfishness and wanting to somehow be ahead or better than others can be seen every day. "Sure, I'm glad to help someone with an assignment, but they better not end up with a better grade than me." "I'll help team members with basic skills, but they're not taking my starting position."

Compare these attitudes with the attitude of Jesus in Mark 10:44-45. Was greatness important to Jesus? Why or why not?

How did Jesus measure personal greatness?

Jesus had all power and authority, yet viewed Himself as a servant. Being successful doesn't always mean you're at the top of the ladder. The greatest success story may be the one holding the ladder steady for others to advance.

My Prayer

Father, teach me to rejoice in the success of others.

Double-Vision

"I can't stand two-faced people!" This statement is used quite often among teens. It usually refers to someone who responds one way in a situation, but acts differently when the situation changes. A Bible character who displayed this characteristic was Judas. Judas looked like the other disciples. He worked with them, walked with them, talked with them, but ended up betraying Jesus.

Read Matthew 26:14-16. What caused Judas to betray Jesus?

What was the focus of Judas' heart?

Judas may have had the appearance of being a disciple, but his heart did not match his behavior. This is usually what is meant when someone accuses another of being "two-faced." Many people are two-faced when it comes to their commitment to Jesus.

What does the Bible say about two-faced people in James 4:4?

Letting the world be the primary focus of our lives will result in conflict with God. When we think of being an enemy of God, we may think about extreme examples such as terrorists or murderers. What about someone who goes to church and spends their time texting? What is the focus of their heart?

It is always easy to find weakness and inconsistency in others, but what about your life? Consider whether the focus of your heart matches your spiritual appearance. If not, pray and ask God to help you get things aligned.

My Prayer

Father, show me when the things of the world try to steal my attention away from You.

WEEK 2

Criticism Heals Nothing

The man had lost everything! All his livestock had been stolen or died. His children were all killed when their house collapsed in a storm. He had boils all over his body, and his wife told him to “curse God and die.”

If a man ever needed encouragement from a friend, it was Job! So after all these disasters, he had three of his friends arrive to offer their comfort. All of his friends offered pretty much the same advice.

Read Job 4:8 for an example of the advice they offered to Job. What do you think Job’s friend meant by his advice?

Was it his intention to hurt Job further? Why or why not?

When others speak to us in hurtful ways, or we hear they are making negative remarks about us, it usually results in conflict. Such conflicts are much more painful if they are with a close friend.

How do you respond to conflict with a friend?

Friends who are hurting don’t need our criticism. Criticism only increases conflict.

Review Job’s response to his friend in Job 6:14. What did Job need from his friends?

Job desired loyalty from his friends. Often our friendships are conditional and rather than try to work through conflict, we find it easier to quit. Even if we sharply disagree with the values or choices of a friend, we can show them the love of God which can bring the hope and healing needed to overcome differences.

My Prayer

I praise You, Father, that You have always remained loyal to me.

Family Feud

Whether you call it a feud, fuss, fight, or just sibling rivalry, family conflict has become so common that it is considered normal by some.

What are some of the causes of conflict within families? What role do you play in conflict within your own family?

The Bible has many examples of conflict within families. One of those is the story of the prodigal son. The main conflict in the family happens after the prodigal returns home to a rejoicing father.

Read Luke 15:28-32. Why was the older son unhappy about his brother’s return?

Do you think he had a right to feel this way? Why or why not?

Sometimes when a family member suffers the consequences of making a poor choice, we tend to feel that they are “getting what they deserve.” Some family conflicts are based in jealousy when we feel we do not get the same time and attention that others have.

Read Romans 6:23. As sinners, what do we deserve? Why?

What did we get from God (our Father)? How is eternal life described in this verse?

Jesus died for us willingly, and did not hold a grudge. Grudges and jealousy increase family conflict. Forgiveness and grace bring family peace.

My Prayer

Thank You, Father, that Jesus did not hold a grudge when He went to the cross for my sin.

Choosing Sides

Of all the teachers at your school, who is your favorite? There may be a number of students who would agree with your favorite teacher choice, but other students would probably choose a different teacher.

How would you feel about the students who did not agree with your choice?

Such differences could be the source of conflict, as others begin to elevate their favorite. The same kind of conflict can result in churches when people begin to elevate church staff or church leadership.

Read the example in 1 Corinthians 1:10-12. What caused this rivalry and division?

When we are passionate and committed to a certain belief, person, or cause, sometimes we become quite aggressive in defending our position. It is not always the loudest, toughest, or most intelligent who win in such a conflict.

Read Mark 15:4-5. Why didn't Jesus answer when questioned?

In the middle of extreme conflict, Jesus showed great self control. His main concern was not defending Himself, but completing God's will for His life.

When do you find it the most difficult to demonstrate self-control? Why?

When conflict is going on about us, your focus should be on the big picture of bringing glory to God, rather than an immediate desire to win an argument.

My Prayer

Help me, Father, to see how I am connected to other believers through You, rather than focusing on our differences.

WEEK 3

Shared Spirit

One important ingredient of a relationship is finding things you have in common. Many social websites refer to this as “compatibility.” The more interests you share with someone, the closer the relationship becomes. Some sites even try to match you with people who have the same interests or with products that other people have also purchased believing you may have something in common.

Whether it is friendship, dating, or some social club, what causes relationships to develop?

What do you think are some of the most important common interests that draw and hold relationships together?

It is important that what draws a relationship together is something that will last, since many things will change over time (like physical appearance).

Read Philippians 4:1-3. What was the common interests between these two women?

What was the source of their agreement?

It is interesting that these two women were not instructed to agree with each other. They were instructed to “agree in the Lord.” Their focus was not to be on each other, but on the Lord—something they definitely had in common.

Read John 4:20-21. Is it possible to love God and not get along with another believer? Explain.

Even in the best relationships, people will have differences. Focusing on differences will lead to conflict. The glue that holds relationships together is focusing on what is shared in common. With believers, focusing on Jesus will keep relationships healthy, even through differences.

Remember your common bond in Jesus as you interact with other Christian students this week.

My Prayer

Almighty God, open my eyes to see what I have in common with others.

Team Discipline

If you spend much time watching sports, you may have witnessed a fight between players. When players begin to fight, quite often you may see that a teammate is trying to hold his friend back from fighting.

Why would a teammate try to stop someone from fighting?

Usually when teammates try to prevent a friend/teammate from fighting, it is because they are focusing on something more important than the fight. They are looking at safety and what is best for the team in the long term.

Why is the concept of “team” being more important than “me” a good concept on the field?

How might that same attitude impact your youth group?

A perfect example of someone who looked beyond His situation and focused on the overall purpose of His life is found in Hebrews 12:2.

Read Hebrews 12:1-2. When Jesus looked at the cross, how could He experience joy?

Jesus focused on something beyond the cross. Jesus' purpose was to provide a way for us—for you—to be saved, which brought Him joy. The cross was the method by which He fulfilled God's purpose for His life.

When you see friends involved in conflict, one way to help them is to encourage them to look beyond the immediate situation or emotion. Remind them to look for God's purpose that lies beyond the conflict.

My Prayer

Father, let Your purpose be greater than my pride, feelings, or emotions.

Passing the Points

Between 1984 and 2003, a basketball player from the Utah Jazz was responsible for at least 31,612 points by NOT shooting the basketball. How? It was because during his career, John Stockton accumulated a total of 15,806 lifetime "assists."

How would you define the word "assist?"

According to the Wikipedia definition, "an assist is attributed to a player who passes the ball to a teammate in a way that leads to a score by field goal, meaning that he or she was 'assisting' in the basket."

Why would someone pass the ball rather than shooting?

Rather than arguing over gaining the personal spotlight, those working together for a common purpose are more concerned about the goal of the team.

Read 1 Corinthians 3:5-9. According to these verses, how important is planting and watering?

What is the most important element in growth?

Verse 8 in this passage refers to the one who waters and the one who plants as being equal. A great number of conflicts occur as a result of being treated unequally. Working together as equals in God's kingdom helps dissolve and resolve conflicts. This will result in our witness to the world growing and expanding.

Consider in whose life you may be planting seeds of the gospel and in whose life you may be watering seeds that are already there. (Or stop and think if you just are not doing any gardening.)

My Prayer

Lord, help me to work and treat others as equal teammates in Your kingdom.

WEEK 4

Getting the Last Word

At an anniversary party celebrating 50 years of marriage, the elderly man was asked how he had managed to stay married so long. He said that whenever he and his wife had a disagreement, he always made sure to have the last word. His last word was, "Yes, dear."

Would you view such a man as strong or weak? Why?

Most people who are involved in conflict want to have the last word. We want to prove that others are wrong and we are right, so the arguing continues and anger increases.

One great way to end an argument is found in Proverbs 25:15. According to this verse, what are the key ingredients to winning in a disagreement?

More can be accomplished with patience and gentle words than through threats and shouting. This verse says that "a gentle tongue can break a bone." It takes a great deal of force to break a bone. This is saying that there is great strength in being gentle. Reacting in anger is quite natural and easy, but always leads to greater conflict. It takes much more strength to be gentle than to fight.

Read Proverbs 25:6-7. How do these two verses reinforce the truth of verse 15?

Are you strong enough to respond gently when attacked? Prepare yourself by thinking of a couple of gentle responses you could use when there is conflict around you.

My Prayer

Father, please give me gentle words to share when there is conflict going on around me.

Cancelling Debts

In the model prayer, Jesus prayed, "forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matthew 6:12).

Read Matthew 6:12. What does this mean?

When we have done wrong and feel regret, we want to be forgiven. When someone has done wrong to us, though, it seems much more difficult to give forgiveness.

What makes it difficult to forgive someone when you've been treated wrong?

Forgiveness may be more difficult if it is a habitual problem—you know, if the person keeps offending you over and over again.

Read Matthew 18:21-22. What point was Jesus trying to make?

What if the person's behavior does not change?

In response to Jesus' teaching on forgiveness, Elisabeth Elliot said, "If God forgave us the way we forgive those who trespass against us sometimes, we'd all be in big trouble, wouldn't we? Because we don't necessarily forgive those people completely, freely, and forever. Sometimes we don't forgive them at all."

What makes her statement powerful is that she practiced forgiveness. She forgave the Auca Indians who savagely killed her husband (Jim Elliot) in Ecuador, then returned to share God's love with them. Because of this, many people in Ecuador, including her husband's killer, came to experience forgiveness and salvation through Jesus.

Be willing to be an example of forgiveness so others will want to know Jesus. Your life, in the midst of conflict, can be a testimony to others.

My Prayer

Father, teach me how to forgive others as many times as You have forgiven me.

Grudge or Grace?

If you have siblings, you HAVE experienced conflict! What if your siblings were so jealous of you that they threw you into a well, then sold you as a slave to foreigners, then while working as a slave, the wife of your boss lied about you and caused you to end up in jail. How would you feel in such a situation?

Why would you find it difficult to forgive them?

Joseph faced this situation. After many years his brothers came to him seeking food. So much time had passed that they didn't even recognize Joseph. His brothers stood before him and Joseph could have done anything he wanted to them.

What would you have done if you were in Joseph's situation?

Read Genesis 50:20. How was Joseph able to have this attitude?

Joseph focused on the end result that God had used him to save his family, so he was quite happy. He could have spent years focused on anger toward his brothers and become a very bitter old man. Instead, he became a gracious giver of forgiveness.

Sometimes when wrong things happen to us or are done to us, it is easy to feel we have every right to be angry, hold a grudge, and be in conflict with someone. What about you? Do your reactions to being hurt lead to bitterness or grace? Commit yourself, this week, to being a person who responds with forgiveness.

My Prayer

Father, give me a gracious spirit to lead others into peace and away from conflict.