

INTRODUCTION

This weekend we wrapped up our study of the “S” in the SHAPE acronym—Spiritual Gifts. We learned that just like with our natural skills and abilities, we need to use and develop our spiritual gifts for them to grow. We also learned something startling—that we are responsible for the gifts we have been given. At the end of our lives, we will have to give an account to Jesus for the way we used our gifts. This is a sobering thought! In this week’s study, we will continue to explore these principles and how to put them into practice in our daily lives.

WEEKLY FOCUS

This week we will . . .

- **EXPLORE:** Matthew 25:14-30, 1 Timothy 4:14-15 & 1 Peter 4:7-11
- **READ:** *The Purpose Driven Life*: Day 4, “Made to Last Forever”
- **REFLECT:** On how to put our spiritual gifts into practice

EXPLORE

1) This weekend Pastor Michael retold Jesus’ famous Parable of the Talents. Read this short story for yourself in **Matthew 25:14-30** in *The Passion Translation* (TPT). (You can find this version on the YouVersion Bible app or at Biblegateway.com.) Then answer the following questions.

- Which servant do you relate to in this story, and why?
- If you were to stand before Jesus today, what do you think He might say to you (based on this parable)—and why?

2) This weekend we also read the challenge the Apostle Paul gave to Timothy in **1 Timothy 4:14-15**. Review this passage in the *New International Version* (NIV) and then answer the following questions.

- Have you ever (like Timothy) received any **new** spiritual gifts long **after** you first came to Christ? If so, what were

the gifts and how did you receive them?

- Paul challenges Timothy not to neglect his gifts. Can you think of any times in your life when you have neglected your spiritual gifts? If so, what impact did that have both on you and others?
- Paul tells Timothy to “be diligent in these matters” and to “give yourself wholly to them.” What do you think it would look like for you to “be diligent” and to “give yourself wholly” to your spiritual gifts?

3) Read **1 Peter 4:7-11** in *The Passion Translation* (TPT). Then answer the following questions.

- According to this passage, why is it important to begin using our gifts immediately (v.7)?
- Regardless of the type of gift we are given, what specific attitude should we take when practicing them?
- What is the ultimate goal of using our spiritual gifts?

READ

Read Day 4, “Made to Last Forever” (pp. 39-43) in *The Purpose Driven Life*. As you read, **jot down your favorite insights or quotes in your journal to share with your Life Group.**

REFLECT

- 1) This weekend we learned that spiritual gifts grow when we use them. Can you think of an example of one of your spiritual gifts that has developed and matured as you have used it?
- 2) Have you ever sensed God’s power and presence working through you when you’ve stepped out in faith and used your spiritual gifts?
- 3) We also learned that spiritual gifts come with great responsibility. Do you find this more motivating or intimidating (or both)? Why?

4) On Day 4 of *The Purpose Driven Life*, Rick writes,

*When you fully comprehend that there is more to life than just here and now, and you realize that life is just preparation for eternity, you will begin to live differently. You will start **living in light of eternity**, and that will color how you handle every relationship, task, and circumstance. Suddenly, many activities, goals, and even problems that seemed so important will appear trivial, petty, and unworthy of your attention. The closer you live to God, the smaller everything else appears.*

When you live in the light of eternity, your values change. You use your time and money more wisely. You place a higher premium on relationships and character instead of fame or wealth or achievement or even fun. Your priorities are reordered. Keeping up with trends, fashions, and popular values just doesn't matter as much anymore.

-*The Purpose Driven Life*, pp. 40

- What emotions does this quote evoke?
- Can you think of any examples of how your priorities and values have changed due to your growing awareness of the reality of the next life?
- Are there any changes you sense the Holy Spirit calling you to make in your life right now in light of the reality of eternity?

5) On page 41, Rick says that one of the most damaging things about living in our culture is short-term thinking. What are some examples of ways in which short-term thinking damages our culture? How has short-term thinking impacted your life?

6) Look back through your reading in *The Purpose Driven Life* this week. Are there any additional insights, thoughts or questions that you'd like to share with your Life Group?

7) Now take a moment to **think** about the last few weeks. Has the Holy Spirit given you any new insights about your spiritual gifts? If so, **jot them down** in your journal. Lastly, spend at least 2-3 minutes in **stillness** before God. Is there anything you sense Him telling you to do? Are there any "**Listen & Follow**" steps you need to take this week? If so, share them with your Life Group.