

FAMILY TOOLBOX



SERIES

SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND YOUR CHILD



Children's Ministry

Golden Hills Community Church

2401 Shady Willow Lane

Brentwood, CA 94513

925-516-0653

A Note to Families

The Children's Ministry of Golden Hills Community Church exists to "*Glorify God by helping families develop age-appropriate disciples who impact their world for Christ*".

In order to accomplish this task, we at GHCC have attempted to describe the discipleship of a believer, which includes these three elements:

- **Worship**
- **Grow**
- **Serve**

We believe that children, as followers of Christ, can also participate in the discipleship process. We have further identified twelve specific spiritual growth issues within these three elements of discipleship.

It is our desire in Children's Ministry, to create a balanced program, which addresses all of these spiritual growth issues, helping to produce a healthy, age-appropriate disciple.

However, statistics tell us that the national average for children attending Sunday school is 26 hours each year (that's only half of the time). And our church is no exception to this. Our average Sunday attendance is roughly half of our total registration. What does this mean? Well, we could have the best programming, the best teachers and staff (which, by the way, I think we do) and we would still have a very hard time in accomplishing the goal God has set before us. But there is a way.

The way in which we can realize the goal of making age-appropriate disciples is stated in our purpose: "...by helping *families* develop age-appropriate disciples..." In fact, the best approach to aiding your child's faith development is *not* in the formal setting of the church, but in the informal, everyday life of your home. God's Word clearly reminds us of this in Deuteronomy 6:4-7:

"Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. The commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress (teach) them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home, and when you walk along the road, when you lie down at night and when you get up."

We encourage you to take advantage of every opportunity to "impress upon your children" spiritual truth. Use dinner conversation, driving in the car, bedtime routines and getting ready each morning as times to reflect and teach about God and his faithfulness.

To help you in these discussions, we have developed a series of tools for you to use. These tools are series of booklets (**THE FAMILY TOOLBOX SERIES**), each addressing the spiritual growth issues. In them you will find information, discussion questions and activity suggestions to help you guide your children on their spiritual journeys.

Dear Parents,

Understanding our spiritual gift(s) is key to our service to the Lord. This booklet in the **FAMILY TOOLBOX SERIES** is dedicated to this endeavor.

We will first look at some questions to gain a general understanding regarding spiritual gifts. Then we will look at how families can help kids in their own spiritual discovery.

God's best to you as you journey together with your children.

Pastor Mark

Spiritual Gifts and Children

What are spiritual gifts?

Spiritual gifts are supernatural empowerments given by the Holy Spirit to followers of Christ so that they can do the work of building up the body of Christ (the church) and further the Kingdom of God around the world. The Apostle Paul reminds us several times in 1 Corinthians 14 that these gifts were given by God to build up and strengthen the believers.

Spiritual gifts are not the same as natural abilities, such as an ear for music, ability to draw, but are empowerments that the Holy Spirit gives to a believer to minister to other Christians in ways that would not be possible apart from the Holy Spirit. In the book of Acts, we see the apostles performing miracles, healing people, and preaching in power that they would not have been able to do apart from Christ.

Who can have spiritual gifts?

The Holy Spirit is the one who owns and dispenses the gifts (1 Corinthians 12:7, 11). Every believer can expect The Holy Spirit to minister through him or her with spiritual gifts. “*Now to each one the manifestation of the Holy Spirit is given for the common good...*”(1 Corinthians 14:24-25).

How do spiritual gifts work?

There are several passages in the New Testament that list a variety of spiritual gifts, the principal ones being 1 Corinthians 12:8-10; Romans 12:4-8; Ephesians 4:11 and 1 Peter 4:10-11. Some gifts in this list are not easy to fully understand, others may

be self-evident. The Bible is not clear if these lists are exhaustive. The number of gifts is not important. What is important is that we understand what they are and how they are to be used.

Spiritual gifts should work together, complimenting each other. Since the purpose of spiritual gifts is to build up the church, they should never be used to exalt an individual or feed an immature desire for attention. The gifts must be used in love (1 Corinthians 13; Romans 12:9; Ephesians 4:15; 1 Peter 4:8).

Is one spiritual gift more important than another?

No. All the gifts are needed in the body of Christ. All gifts are equally valued. In 1 Corinthians 12:12-26, the Apostle Paul instructs us that no one should despise his or her own gift by comparing it to the gifts of others. Some gifts are more apparent than others, but each one is just as important to the life of the church.

How can I discover my spiritual gift(s)?

Since it is the Holy Spirit who dispenses the gifts, your discovery of your gift will, by nature, be a spiritual experience. When we walk in obedience, the Holy Spirit will reveal His gifts in our lives. However, there are some indicators that might help us in our understanding.

What kind of ministry do you enjoy and shows the most fruitfulness?

Have you taken a “Spiritual Gifts Test”? These types of aptitude

tests help give you indicators as to what your spiritual gift may be.

Where does church leadership see your fit in ministry? You do not have to announce or advertise your spiritual gift. It will be recognized in the church. Of course, this requires you to take a step of faith as you serve and can be observed in ministry. The gifts of the Holy Spirit operate through obedient disciples.

Spiritual gifts and your children

Read through those key Bible passages on spiritual gifts and you will find that spiritual gifts are not age based. Every believer, including children, has at least one spiritual gift.

In young believers, these gifts may be difficult to detect or not yet developed because of their life stage. If given a spiritual gifts test, for many the results will be inconclusive. This does not mean that your child doesn't possess gifts. Just remember that they need to understand who they are in Christ and help them identify and develop that which He has given to them. We need to provide them with tools to discover their spiritual gifts and a plan to help them mature in the use of their gifts.

Here are some ideas to guide your children into discovery and understanding of their spiritual gifts:

1. *Provide teaching about spiritual gifts and God's design for the church.* Help your kids understand God's purposes for the church and for their lives, which include serving in His church. Help them realize that they have apart to do right now, not just when they are older.

2. *Provide opportunities for them to serve.* Children need to develop a base of experience in ministry so they can begin to identify how they may be gifted. It would be a great idea for your family to serve together as a team. Some ideas might be:

- Take them on ministry trips to nursing homes, children's hospitals and the like. You will soon see those with the gift of mercy blossom.
- Get involved with work projects around the church to see those with the gift of service.
- Consider serving with your family in a short-term mission trip and you may soon hear your child answer the call to be a missionary or evangelist.

A word of caution: be careful that you do not use coercion or a reward system to get them involved. They need to learn to serve out of love and obedience. They need to see that serving is a worthy calling in itself and they do not need to be bribed in order to do it. (For more ideas on service, see *Christian Service* in the **FAMILY TOOLBOX SERIES**)

3. *Provide affirmation and feedback.* When Jesus sent out His disciples to minister, He took the time to discuss how it went with them. We should do the same with our kids. Before embarking on a service project, be sure to give your child the proper preparation. Next, they should be affirmed in what they are doing. Tell them when they are doing well. Then provide feedback afterwards. Evaluate with them what happened, both positive and negative. Offer suggestions how they might improve. If a particular type of ministry didn't seem suited for them, help them find something that might be a better fit.

4. *Provide a role model.* Adults ought to be setting a good example to kids in all areas. Do you know what your spiritual gift is? Are you employing your spiritual gift to build up the body of Christ?

5. *Provide Prayer support.* The following are suggested prayer topics, which can be personalized to your family:

- Pray that teaching ministry to your children goes beyond mere head knowledge and develops into a real love for the Lord, which in turn translates into a true desire to serve Him.
- Pray that GHCC will find ways to involve kids in its ministry.
- Pray that God will use opportunities to serve, even the small ones, to grow a passion in their hearts to follow His purposes for their lives.
- Pray they will discover early in life how God has equipped them to serve and follow His design their whole lives.
- Pray they will learn the balance of sitting at Jesus' feet and serving. (See the story of Mary and Martha in Luke 10:38-42 and John 11:17-45).
- Pray for their walk with the Lord.

The Spiritual Growth Issues:

Worship

- Salvation
- Worship

Grow

- Bible knowledge/Application
- Bible Memory
- Stewardship
- Healthy Relationships
- Using Gifts, Talents and Skills
- Church Commitment

Serve

- Outreach
- Missions Involvement
- Christian Service