

Movement Into God

“I have always found the God depicted in the Old Testament to be hard to comprehend. He’s depicted as a Creator and a destroyer, as loving and graceful but also wrathful. Frankly, his actions at times seem pretty confusing and even contradictory.”

- Do you find God as presented in the Old Testament hard to understand?
- Do his actions seem confusing at times?

"You cannot be a Christian without being a Mystic. I was talking to a homeless man at a laundry mat recently, and he said that when we reduce Christian spirituality to math, we defile the Holy. I thought that was very beautiful and comforting because I have never been good at math. Many of our attempts to understand Christian faith have only cheapened it. I can no more understand the totality of God than the pancake I made for breakfast understands the complexity of me. The little we do understand, that grain of sand our minds are capable of grasping, those ideas such as God is good, God loves, God knows all, are enough to keep our hearts dwelling on His majesty and otherness forever." - Donald Miller

- What do you think of Donald Miller’s quote from *Blue Like Jazz*?

“God takes on human form in Jesus and reveals what God would be like if he lived on earth. In Jesus we can begin to com-

prehend what a relationship with the Creator of the Universe could be like.”

- In what ways does Jesus give us a different view of God?

Read John 14:6-7

- This one instance where Jesus claims to be God. Some people don’t think that Jesus ever makes this claim. Can you think of other instances where Jesus claims to be God?

“Ultimately, when we get to know God and begin following him we can't help but worship. We worship him not only in organized gatherings like this one but also through our lives of love, passion, obedience and service. Our lives are transformed by knowing and following Jesus and we serve him in our life as our spiritual act of worship.”

- Do you think that knowing and following God results in worship?
- How do you worship God?
- Do you do anything beyond going to a worship service as a part of your worship? If so, what?

Discover Spiritual Gifts

The Bible teaches us that every Christian has at least one spiritual gift; nevertheless, 80 percent of all Christians cannot name their gifts. What can be done about this situation?

Read 1 Corinthians 12:1-11

Step 1: Open your heart to God in prayer

- Are you open to all the spiritual gifts mentioned in the Bible?
- Are there certain gifts you would prefer not to have? If so, which?



Blue Like Jazz
Don Miller's book is subtitled Nonreligious thoughts on Christian spirituality. It's a great read for people searching for spirituality or Christians who want a deeper walk with Christ.

Step 2: Be ready to apply your gifts

Read 1 Peter 4:10

Spiritual gifts are imparted to us so that we may accomplish certain tasks. Whoever is seriously interested in discovering his or her spiritual gifts must be open to applying them in building up the church.

Step 3: Get informed

You will have difficulty determining which gifts are yours if you don't know what gifts exist.

Take and discuss the spiritual gifts quiz

It is important to study what the Bible says about spiritual gifts. Take home the spiritual gifts inventory to fill out this week and we'll discuss the results next week.

Step 4 : Begin with what you enjoy

There is an undying myth that a ministry is only a real ministry if the person ministering suffers in, through, and for it. This is simply not true. It has always been God's intention that using our spiritual gifts would bring us joy. Why? I believe it's because God knows that if we enjoy a certain task, we will naturally perform it much better.

- Which tasks have brought you the most joy to date?
- Which tasks have caused you the most dissatisfaction?

Step 5: Experiment as much as possible

How are you going to discover whether or not you enjoy using a certain gift if you've never tried it?

- How would you try out using spiritual gifts to serve at Damascus Road?
- Are you aware of any tasks in your church that are not getting done? If so, which ones?

Step 6: Verify your effectiveness

Spiritual gifts are given to produce results; thus, the evaluation of your effectiveness is a vital step in the gift discovery process.

Step 7: Seek the opinion of others

Other Christians, from your own church and beyond, should provide confirmation of your gifts.

- What should be the characteristics of people who can help others confirm their gifts?

Complete the spiritual gifts assessment this week and bring it back to discuss at next week's growth group.

Notes:

Spiritual Gifts Quiz

What do You know about Spiritual Gifts?

In your opinion, are the statements below true or false?

1. ___ God rewards faithful Christians with spiritual gifts.
2. ___ When a person receives a spiritual gift, it can be assumed that he or she will possess it their whole life.
3. ___ Most, but not all, Christians have a spiritual gift.
4. ___ Any Christian can receive any gift, if only he or she desires it
5. ___ There are always more Christians who don't have a specific gift than those who do have it.
6. ___ God endows each Christian with the same gifts; only the matter in which they are utilized varies from person to person
7. ___ Every Christian should do his or her best to exercise all of the spiritual gifts mentioned in the New Testament.
8. ___ In order not to become one-sided, Christians should be particularly active in those areas in which they do not possess any gifts
9. ___ Spiritual gifts are only present when there is no adequate natural explanation for an event.
10. ___ Spiritual gift assessments only need to be taken once; the results apply for a lifetime.
11. ___ The Bible clearly teaches that there are three categories of gifts that relate to the colors green, blue, and red.
12. ___ A Christian should exercise his or her gifts but should not talk about them.
13. ___ Anyone who holds a leadership position for which he or she does not have the corresponding gift should resign.
14. ___ The only reason God gives us spiritual gifts is to deepen our relationship with him.

Answers:

1. F
2. T
3. F
4. F
5. T
6. F
7. F
8. F
9. F
10. F
11. F
12. F
13. T
14. F