

SUMMER 2020

MASTERWORK[®]

ESSENTIAL MESSAGES FROM GOD'S SERVANTS



Lessons from

YOU ARE GIFTED **by Ken Hemphill**

THE POWER OF PURPOSE **by Michael Catt**

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LifeWay | Adults

A STEP OF FAITH

In your opinion, what does it take for a person to get to heaven and have eternal life? The Bible answers this question in one word—**FAITH**.

F Is for Forgiveness

- Everyone has sinned and needs God's forgiveness: *"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23).
- God's forgiveness is in Jesus only: *"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace"* (Ephesians 1:7).

A Is for Available

- God's forgiveness is available for all: *"God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life"* (John 3:16).
- God's forgiveness is available but not automatic: *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord!' will enter the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 7:21).

I Is for Impossible

- It is impossible to get to heaven on our own: *"You are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift—not from works, so that no one can boast"* (Ephesians 2:8-9).

T Is for Turn

- Turn means repent. Turn away from sin and self and turn to Jesus alone as your Savior and Lord: *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me"* (John 14:6); *"If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. One believes with the heart, resulting in righteousness, and one confesses with the mouth, resulting in salvation"* (Romans 10:9-10).

H Is for Heaven

- Here . . . Eternal life begins now with Jesus: *"I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance"* (John 10:10).
- Hereafter . . . Heaven is a place where we will live with God forever: *"If I go away and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to myself, so that where I am you may be also"* (John 14:3).
- How . . . How can a person have God's forgiveness, eternal life, and heaven? By trusting Jesus as your Savior and Lord. You can do this right now by praying and asking Jesus to forgive you of your sins and inviting Jesus into your heart.

Accepting Christ is just the beginning of a wonderful adventure with God! Follow Christ's command in baptism. Join a church where you can worship God and grow in your faith. Get involved in Sunday School and Bible study. Begin a daily personal worship time in which you study the Bible and pray.

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S U M M E R 2 0 2 0



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We believe that the Bible has God for its author; salvation for its end; and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter and that all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. To review LifeWay’s doctrinal guidelines, please visit www.lifeway.com/doctrinalguideline.



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GETTING THE MOST OUT OF MASTERWORK

Here are a few suggestions to help you get the most out of this resource:

Group Members

1. Read the daily assignments prior to attending the group time. Complete the personal learning activities in bold type. Record your notes and questions.
2. Review your notes and questions a few moments prior to the group time as a means of preparing to be an active part of the group.
3. In the margins of this book, record insights gained during the group time.

Group Leader

1. Complete step 1 above.
2. Identify the one main idea and goal for the lesson. The main point of the lesson and the goal are printed on the teaching plan pages at the end of each lesson. (See p. 17.) Focus on the session goal as you lead the session.
3. Read and study the key Bible passages listed in the margin of the teaching plan. Supplemental Bible commentary and Bible background articles are available in the MasterWork Leader Supplement. (See below.)
4. Develop a group time plan. Two options are offered in this book. One option is to follow the teaching plan at the end of each lesson. A second option is to use the discussion questions in the margins of the lessons. Some group leaders use a combination of both group time plans.
5. Customize the electronic versions of the suggested teaching plans, available on the Internet at <https://masterworkbylifeway.wordpress.com>, to fit your group.
6. Review and refine your teaching notes as you move toward the group time.
7. Arrive early, praying for the group time.

MASTERWORK LEADER SUPPLEMENT

Bible commentary on key passages used in *MasterWork* lessons and related *Biblical Illustrator* articles are available for download at lifeway.com/masterwork. Look for “MasterWork Leader Supplement - Summer 2020.”



You Are Gifted

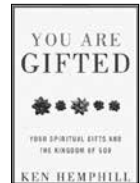
Spiritual gifts should never be studied in a vacuum as if they are a curious phenomenon to be discussed, debated, then dissected and discarded. The topic of gifts should never frighten the believer since our Father can only give good gifts. But gifts should never be sought with selfish desire for self-aggrandizement as if they are evidence of spiritual ascendancy. They are not an end in themselves. We are to seek the Giver and not the gift.

Gifts prove nothing about the *spirituality* of the believer but everything about the *graciousness* of the Giver. Gifts have a singular purpose. They enable us to participate in the advancement of God's kingdom to the ends of the earth in preparation for the King's return.

Spiritual gifts are always given and exercised in the larger context of the church. They enable us to edify other members of the body of Christ and to evangelize those still waiting to enter the kingdom. Gifts are the manifestation of the grace of God and thus distributed by His royal design. Gifted persons are the gift of the resurrected King to His church, enabling it boldly and effectively to advance His kingdom. They are the ministry of the Holy Spirit, who enables us to advance the kingdom through His supernatural empowering.

Gifts are an expression of God's love and thus are to be studied, sought, and used with His eternal purpose in mind.

It is critical for us to study spiritual gifts in the context of the emerging New Testament church. We will begin with one of the earliest churches founded by Paul and move sequentially as we study the churches at Corinth, Rome, and Ephesus. I pray that you will find the study enlightening, inspirational, and transformational.



ABOUT THE WRITERS

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An Insider's View of the Emerging Church



DAY ONE

A Study of 1 Thessalonians 5

Discussion Question

What provisions are needed to keep your home and family going?

Our pilgrimage to understand better the role of spiritual gifts in the church takes us to Thessalonica, the largest and most important city in Macedonia. First Thessalonians is among the earliest Letters of Paul. From it, we can gain understanding about the structure and function of the developing early church. One of the most important features of this letter is the provision Paul made for the ongoing life of the community. Paul knew the future of Christianity in Thessalonica depended on the ability of believers to encourage and minister to one another. All the problems that would be faced by this community could best be met by the mutual encouragement of one of another and by the loving recognition of leaders who had charge over the brethren in the Lord.

Let's underline a few basic principles we find in this community ministry passage. First, the community of believers is designed for mutual encouragement. Every believer is competent and responsible for ministry to others. Second, some members of the community are gifted to provide spiritual and administrative oversight. Third, when gifted leaders and gifted members work together in harmony, the church functions with maximum potential.

One of the dangers inherent in spiritual gifts is that they can create introverted and selfish desires. *The discovery and employment of spiritual*

gifts must always be anchored in the context of Christian community. God gives spiritual gifts with the good of the community in view. Therefore we must remain biblically and practically anchored to the local church in our use of gifts.

1. Being honest with yourself, do you believe you are competent and responsible for ministry to others?

___ Yes, and ...

___ Sometimes, but ...

___ No, because ...

___ I'm not sure, because ...

Spend time talking with God about your response.

The Overarching Value of Relationships

Paul concluded 1 Thessalonians with a passage focusing on the proper functioning of the Christian community (1 Thess. 5:12-22).

2. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22 in your Bible. Summarize these verses by describing the properly functioning Christian community in two or three sentences.

Paul's first remarks have to do with the proper relationship between the "brethren" and "those who ... have charge over you in the Lord" (v. 12). The concept that all members of the body are gifted for service does not conflict with God's design for pastoral leadership in the church. They are not conflicting but complimentary ideas. The relationship between leaders and gifted members is foundational for proper kingdom ministry in the body.

Notice that the result of healthy relationships between leaders and brethren is the ability to "live in peace with one another" (v. 13). This phrase is the unifying theme of this entire letter. Paul's desire was to establish harmonious relationships within the community so individual members could encourage one another in the face of persecution, and the community could command the respect of those outside the church (4:12). Our unity is critical to our witness.

The first step in gift discovery is identification with a local church where healthy family relationships can be developed. In a healthy church you will

The relationship between leaders and gifted members is foundational for proper kingdom ministry in the body.

receive teaching by example as well as instruction. Leaders model attitudes and behaviors they call for in others' lives. The context of love and mutual esteem will provide the natural climate for gift discovery and employment.

Discussion Question

Can believers discover and develop their spiritual gifts in isolation? Explain your reasoning.



DAY TWO

The Ministry of Gifted Leaders

What is the role of leaders in the life of the church? How does their gifted ministry enable other members of the body to discover and develop their own gifts? In 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 we will find several foundational truths Paul would build upon in later passages.

The church in Thessalonica needed to embrace their leaders for numerous reasons. Hostility to Paul's ministry resulted in his premature departure, leaving the church in need of further instruction. Paul's absence, coupled with the harassment from Jewish leaders, created a need for stability and clear direction—a need for leadership. Paul considered the mission of the church to be so central to the evangelization of the world that the healthy relationship between leaders and members of the church could not be taken lightly.

Paul used three different phrases—"labor among you," "have charge over you," and "give you instruction" (5:12)—to describe both the identity and the scope of the work of authentic church leaders.

Discussion Questions

What is the role of leaders in the church? What does that role require of them?

Labor Among The term translated *labor among* underlines the magnitude of the intense physical exertion required of those in leadership. Paul used this same phrase in several contexts to speak of the manual labor by which he maintained himself while doing missionary service (1 Thess. 2:9; 1 Cor. 4:12; 2 Thess. 3:8) and for his evangelistic activity (1 Cor. 15:10; Gal. 4:11; Phil. 2:16). Paul's point is clear: the work of ministry is hard work.

Paul's emphasis on the hard work of ministry would make clear which leaders should be given respect. Today we find church members who like positions of leadership for the honor and prestige they bestow, but they are unwilling to fulfill the heavy commitment of work that authentic leadership requires.

1. Read in your Bible 2 Corinthians 11:28-29. What would be the more difficult work required of authentic leadership?

- ☐ **Intense physical exertion?** **OR**
☐ **Intense emotional and spiritual exertion?**

The term *labor among* also suggests what we refer to as the pastoral function of the leader who works among and alongside his flock. He nurtures the flock placed under his care. Like a shepherd he gently leads and protects those in his care. He leads by example and encouragement. A unique aspect of the nurturing ministry of the pastor is the enabling of members in the discovery and employment of their giftedness through the church for eternal impact.

Have Charge Over. One of the primary functions of the pastoral leader is that of leading or managing. The Greek term Paul employed has two meanings—“preside or lead” and “protect or care for.” In 1 Timothy 3:4-5 Paul mentioned the administrative work of the pastor by comparing it to the function of the father as head of the home. In the home a father leads his family and protects them. We should conclude that both administrative leadership and pastoral protection are in view in each of these texts. Pastoral leaders who are biblical and effective will lead in such a manner that they provide protection and care for all the members of the church.

Recently we have seen a healthy and biblical emphasis on the shared ministry of all church members. The outdated concept that the paid pastor is the only one qualified or required to provide ministry is quickly becoming extinct. Yet we must not allow the discovery of shared ministry to cause us to depreciate the work of those called by God to “have charge over” the church. Like parents in the healthy family, these persons will care for the congregants, oversee the work of the church, and give instruction.

Give You Instruction. The final term used to describe the work of the pastoral leaders indicates a teaching function. The term used for instruction includes the idea of warning and correction. The pastor as teacher seeks to influence the mind and disposition of the church family by appropriate biblical instruction, wise counsel, warning, and correction. We don’t like the suggestion that warning and correction may be required, but they are as essential to healthy church relationships as they are to healthy family relationships. Warning directs people away from destructive behavior, and correction moves them toward positive personal growth.

Confrontation with the purpose of bringing constructive warning and correction may be painful, but it is necessary to enable the church family to fulfill its mission and the individual members to discover their giftedness.

Some churches have ignored the corrective aspect of biblical teaching because it can be difficult and unpleasant. Confrontation with the purpose of bringing constructive warning and correction may be painful, but it is necessary to enable the church family to fulfill its mission and the individual members to discover their giftedness.

The goal of all instruction is the health and welfare of the body. When there must be correction, its goal must always be healing and restoration. While the pastor may provide most corrective teaching, all the members of the church must be willing to invest the time and energy required to assist in the healing of those who have received correction. The goal of ministry is to equip the members of the body for effective kingdom service.

The giftedness of every member of the church ensures that the church can meet the needs of the growing congregation and still provide the pastor with adequate time for prayer and preparation for teaching.

2. Read again 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13. Identify responsibilities of people in the church toward those who labor, lead, and instruct. How specifically can you fulfill each responsibility?



DAY THREE

The Shared Ministry of the Body

Paul began this section (1 Thess. 5:12) by requesting that the “brethren” appreciate their leaders. In verse 14 he repeated “brethren,” this time with a slightly stronger appeal: “We urge you.” He used the repetition of the word *brethren* to draw attention to the responsibility for ministry that is applicable to every member of the Thessalonian church. He was no longer looking at the responsibility of a small group of leaders, but turned his attention to the privilege and responsibility of every member to participate in the life and ministry of the church.

1. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:14-15. List some challenges the church at Thessalonica may have been facing, based on Paul's commands to them. How do these compare to challenges churches face today?

Admonish the Unruly. The specific issues Paul mentioned here are tailored to the unique needs in Thessalonica, but they establish a mandate for “every member ministry.” They are as relevant today as ever. The brethren were first urged to “admonish the unruly” (v. 14).

“Unruly” members in Thessalonica were in special need of warning. They are “standing out of rank,” refusing to work, and thus their idleness has created a burden for the community. Refusal to work may have been related to their mistaken conviction that the Lord would return with such haste that earthly labor had little meaning. In 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15 Paul gave specific directions concerning the ministry to these persons. He first exhorted those who were behaving properly not to become weary in their own work. He then instructed them not to associate with those behaving in an undisciplined manner. They were not to regard the person as an enemy, “but admonish him as a brother” (v. 15).

Encourage the Fainthearted. Next Paul urged them to “encourage the fainthearted” (1 Thess. 5:14). This term may refer to members distressed by persecution, discouraged by the death of a community member, or confused by the delay of the Lord. I mention these three items together because they may have been interrelated in the thinking of the “faint-hearted.” Paul devoted a portion of chapters 4 and 5 to a discussion of persons “who have fallen asleep in Jesus” (4:14) and speculation concerning “the times and the epochs” (5:1). Paul ended his discussion of the day of the Lord with a similar call to mutual encouragement. “Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing” (5:11).

Persons who are disconsolate and discouraged for any reason must be consoled and encouraged. These persons do not need to be admonished, but they need to be encouraged. When we attempt to correct those who are discouraged, it compounds their problem and further alienates them from the life of the church.

Help the Weak. Community members are to “help the weak” (1 Thess. 5:14). The “weak” may refer to members whose faith has become shaky and unsettled. The word *help* is too weak a translation. These persons must be “clung to.” People who are “weak” easily slip through the cracks of our church fellowship. They are often too frail and hurting to ask for help. They may drop out of church activities and become isolated, leading to an even greater need. Those who are stronger may inadvertently give the impression that these weak members need to suck it up and get on with life. The apparent strength of others can actually serve to further discourage those who are struggling in their faith.

Be Patient with Everyone. The call to patience is not so much a ministry activity as it is an attitude for community. Patience is an essential element in all ministry. “Unruly,” “fainthearted,” and “weak” believers are not always easy to work with, and therefore patience is the indispensable element for the ministering community. As our study of spiritual gifts progresses through the various community ministry passages, you will see a demand for patience in every passage where the life and ministry of the community are in view.

While we must show patience to all the brethren, we cannot allow those who feel called to criticize every program to disrupt the mission and ministry of the church. Thus we must remember that this section began with the instruction that we admonish the unruly. Church members must show patience and express love, but we must keep before us the preeminent mission of the church to advance the kingdom.

2. Read Galatians 6:1-5 in your Bible. Identify other attitudes that are essential for church members to restore one another and advance the kingdom.

Never Repay Evil with Evil but Seek the Good. The community of faith is no place for someone to return evil for evil. First, we would hope evil would never rear its ugly head in the church, yet tragically it does. Christians have not yet reached a state of perfection. They are simply forgiven and moving toward conformity to Christ. When evil does manifest itself, we pray that it would not be returned in kind.

When you think about the church in terms of family, we can see why working with “unruly, fainthearted, weak” believers can create situations where someone responds in an evil manner to those who are members of the family. But this evil cannot be nurtured by allowing someone to repay evil with evil. That is how the world responds, not the church. We put an end to the cycle of evil by always seeking “after that which is good for one another and for all people” (1 Thess. 5:15). Notice that Paul not only prohibited getting even, he required that we go the additional mile and “seek after that which is good.” Redemptive behavior requires that we take the initiative to minister good to those who do evil to us.

Redemptive behavior requires that we take the initiative to minister good to those who do evil to us.

The pastoral leader(s) may be called to provide for caring, teaching, and administrating the church; but all members of the church are called by God, and gifted by the Spirit, to build up the fellowship of the church by ministering to one another.



DAY FOUR

The Inner Resources for Ministry

First Thessalonians 5:16-18 links together three brief exhortations: “Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks,” indicating these are “God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” The quality of inner life provided by these three related activities will enable one to live and minister effectively in the context of community.

Rejoice Always. This is an imperative, “be joyful.”

1. What would it take for you to obey the imperative command, “Be joyful” each day?

Discussion Questions

What are specific responsibilities of every member of the church? What do those responsibilities require of us?

Our experience of grace enables us to manifest joy in the midst of every circumstance of life.

Discussion Question

What empowers and enables each of us to live and minister effectively in our church community, and why?

Joy does not refer to our natural attitude, the natural response of happiness we easily manifest when things go our way. Joy is the undergirding strength of our life produced by the Holy Spirit and is unrelated to our circumstances, personality type, or natural ability. Joy comes from the same Greek stem as *grace*. Our experience of grace enables us to manifest joy in the midst of every circumstance of life. Joy is based on our understanding of the majesty of God who is at work in every circumstance of our lives, working for our good and conforming us to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:28-29). It is the firm assurance that nothing and no one can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (8:31-39).

Pray Without Ceasing. The three commands are all interrelated. The abiding prayer life of the believer provides the undergirding resource of joy. The word Paul used here is a general word that would include all forms of prayer. Notice that prayer is not an activity of set times and places. It is not confined to buildings of worship or liturgical calendars. It is our attitude toward life itself. It is the breath of Christian existence. Nothing can be accomplished for God that is not bathed by prayer, and thus it is the life of the Christian.

Here is the question I want to pose. Do we pray with the intimacy of a child who must stay in constant contact with the Father? Do we live consciously in His presence, or do we only address Him when we have tried everything else?

In Everything Give Thanks. We are looking at an attitude of life that comes from the understanding of grace and issues from our constant state of prayerfulness. In Romans 1:21 Paul indicated that a lack of gratitude is characteristic of unbelief. Christians, on the other hand, are marked by their attitude of gratitude.

When we understand that we deserved death because of our sinful rebellion but that we have been granted life as a free gift of God's grace, we are compelled to give thanks in every circumstance. We not only give thanks for our redemption, but we give thanks for our assurance that God is at work in all our circumstances to conform us to the image of His Son.

2. Compose a prayer giving God thanks for the good and difficult things in your life.

Father, thank You ... _____



DAY FIVE

Five Imperatives for Spirit-Empowered Ministry

Paul concludes this section with five interrelated imperatives addressed to the entire community. Since these verbs are in the imperative, they are not suggestions but commands for community ministry.

Do Not Quench the Spirit; Do Not Despise Prophetic Utterances. The first two negatives—“Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances” (1 Thess. 5:19-20)—may indicate that Paul had in mind specific practices already in existence in the community. In other words, someone in Thessalonica was guilty of quenching the Spirit by ignoring the teaching of authentic prophecy.

These two negative imperatives make clear that Paul desired the church to allow for freedom in the exercise of spiritual gifts, particularly prophecy. Each Christian has received the Holy Spirit (1:5,7; 4:8). The idea that all are gifted for ministry is clearly implied in 5:14-15. To prohibit gifted members of the body from exercising their God-given abilities in ministry would quench the Spirit. The image of quenching the Spirit suggests the putting out of a flame or light.

The only gift Paul mentioned specifically in this context is prophecy. We are not looking at a *predictive gift* that provides new revelation. Rather we are looking at an intelligible message, whose content is from the Lord, spoken with the purpose of *edification and exhortation and consolation*.

The word translated *despise* is a particularly strong word and suggests Paul had in mind the “prophetic utterances” of the authentic leaders in Thessalonica that were being ignored (1 Thess. 5:20). It is equally possible Paul had in view the “unruly” persons who were ignoring his commands (2 Thess. 3). Paul linked “do not despise prophetic utterance” with “do not quench the Spirit” (1 Thess. 5:19-20) to underline the divine necessity of listening to those who speak an authentic word from the Lord.

Discussion Questions

What are ways churches quench the Spirit? What are ways churches can set the Spirit loose to work mightily?

1. How can you indicate you have really listened to Christian brothers and sisters who have spoken authentic words from God?

Examine Everything Carefully; Hold Fast to That Which Is Good. The next two imperatives—“But examine everything *carefully*; hold fast to that which is good” (1 Thess. 5:21)—are positive. Rather than despising prophecy, they must “examine everything *carefully*.” Paul feared the disastrous results of a wholesale rejection of prophetic speech, but he was equally aware that the possibility of spiritual fraud existed. Thus the unquestioned acceptance of all prophetic speech would be unsatisfactory. After careful examination of the attitude of the prophet and the content of the prophetic speech, they must “hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil” (vv. 21-22).

Abstain from Every Form of Evil While believers are to hold fast to the good, they must “abstain from every form of evil” (1 Thess. 5:22). “Evil” here might mean *spurious* and thus refer to false prophetic utterances. This principal could be applied to the use of any spiritual gift. We must not accept uncritically anything and everything that is presented as the work of the Spirit. On the other hand, we cannot reject spiritual manifestations because some may prove to be inauthentic. We must cling to those which are good with the same tenacity that we reject charlatans.

2. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:23-28 in your Bible. What is your hope and motivation for living out all the encouragements and commands Paul gave every member of the church community?

LEADER GUIDE



During the Session

1. Ask: *When it comes to giving and receiving gifts, do you feel excited, inadequate, unworthy, pressured, honored, other descriptors? Why?* Guide the group to analyze how believers might have positive and negative feelings about receiving and using spiritual gifts. Use the Introduction (p. 5) to add to the discussion. State: *This study can help us gain a greater understanding of spiritual gifts so we can positively affirm the truth that all believers are gifted, and take proactive actions to discover and employ our gifts for the pleasure of our King and the advancement of His kingdom.*
2. Use the first Day One paragraph (p. 6) to summarize Paul's purpose in writing Thessalonians. Invite volunteers to identify basic principles about community ministry from paragraph two. Ask adults if they agree with the italicized statement (paragraph three, pp. 6-7) and why. Discuss Day One, activity 2 (p. 7). Consider reasons the author began this study on spiritual gifts by focusing on relationships in the church.
3. Summarize the founding of the Thessalonian church from Acts 17. Note Paul was only in Thessalonica for three weeks, so the church had a great need for strong leadership. Request adults identify from 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 three phrases that describe the work of church leaders. Invite a volunteer to read 1 Thessalonians 2:7-9. Ask: *Did Paul mean all ministers should be bi-vocational and workaholics? What did he mean?* Explain Paul indicated in 2 Thessalonians 3:7-9 that church leaders deserve support, but in this situation Paul chose to support himself to provide the right example for idle church members. Invite a volunteer to read 1 Thessalonians 2:11-12. Analyze how a father illustrates the leading and managing function of a pastoral leader. Request adults with different Bible translations to relate the final responsibility of pastoral leaders that Paul emphasized in 5:12. Ask: *What kind of instruction do many church members tend to want from their leaders? What kind of instruction must faithful church leaders provide?* Read and discuss the Day Two pull quote (p. 10). Ask: *What is the goal of every*

The main point of this lesson is:

God gives spiritual gifts for the care and ministry to the church, the community of believers.

Focus on this goal: To help adults recognize how they have received and can extend the benefits of spiritual gifts within their church

Key Bible Passage:

1 Thessalonians 5:12-22

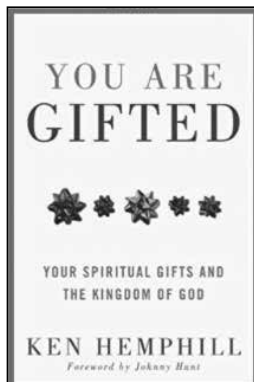
To the Leader:

Read and be prepared to summarize Acts 17:1-10.

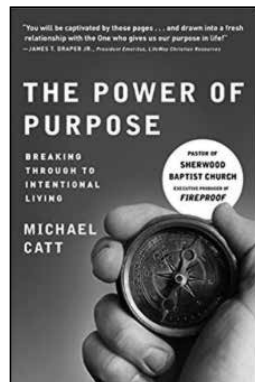
leader's labor, leading, and instructing? Is any leader going to fulfill all their responsibilities perfectly? Does the church body still have a responsibility toward imperfect leaders? Discuss Day Two, activity 2 (p. 10).

4. Discuss Day Three, activity 1 (p. 11). Ask: *What might many church members tend to do about those problems?* Request a volunteer identify the first way Paul urged the Thessalonians to address their challenges. Ask a volunteer to read 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13 to provide the context for Paul's command to admonish the unruly. Evaluate what obeying that command might look like for churches today. Ask: *Why might it be difficult to determine whether someone is being irresponsible or is discouraged? Why must we put forth the effort to make that determination?* Read the Day Three paragraph (p. 11) that begins "Persons who are disconsolate" Examine what it really means to help the weak and what that might require of church members. Ask: *What attitudes are absolutely essential to meet the challenges that arise in every church body, and why?*
5. Point out Paul gave believers very tall orders for ministry. Thankfully he also indicated the inner resources we have for ministry. Invite a volunteer to read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. Analyze how obeying these commands empower church members to do what Paul commanded us to do in verses 12-15. Invite responses to Day Four, activity 1 (p.13). Evaluate what it looks like practically to pray without ceasing. Read the two questions the author posed at the conclusion of the "Pray Without Ceasing" section (p. 14). Ask: *What's the difference between giving thanks in everything and for everything? How is it possible to rejoice always and give thanks in everything? Why is it so essential that we do so?*
6. Request a volunteer identify from 1 Thessalonians 5:19-20 the first two imperatives Paul gave for Spirit-empowered ministry. Explore how those two imperatives are related. Determine from these commands what Paul wanted to occur within the church. Invite responses to Day Five, activity 1 (p. 16). Request adults identify the positive imperatives that correlate to the two negatives Paul gave. Explore how believers can examine everything carefully without being critical or judgmental. Discuss Day Five, activity 2 (p. 16).
7. Remind adults of the specifics mentioned during the group discussion of Day Two, activity 2 (p. 10, Step 3). Urge them to live out at least one of those specifics this week, and to reflect on Day Four, activity 2 (p. 15). Close in prayer.

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