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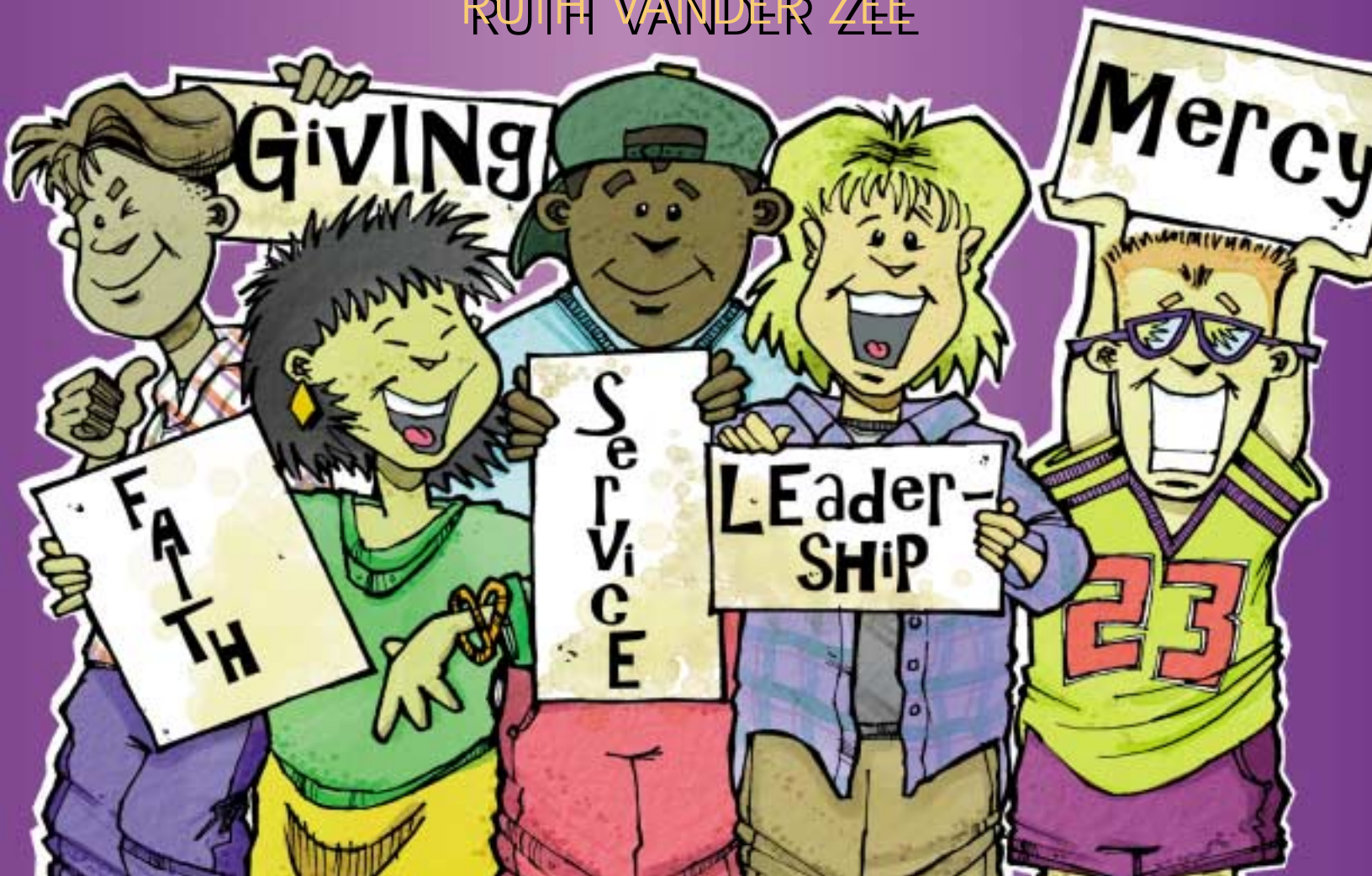
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LEADER'S GUIDE

# YOUTH Discover Your Gifts

and learn how to use them

RUTH VANDER ZEE



LEADER'S GUIDE

**DISCOVER**  
**YOUTH**  
**your**  
**GIFTS**  
**and learn how to use them**

RUTH VANDER ZEE

CRC Publications  
Grand Rapids, Michigan

CRC Publications thanks Ruth Vander Zee for writing this course. A teacher at Timothy Christian Middle School in Elmhurst, Illinois, Vander Zee adapted part of her course from the adult version of *Discover Your Gifts*, written by Alvin J. Vander Griend. © 1996, CRC Publications.

Vander Zee is a member of Lombard Christian Reformed Church, Lombard, Illinois, where her husband, Vernon, serves as pastor.

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# How to Use This Course

For many years now, adults in many denominations have been using the original *Discover Your Gifts* course by Alvin J. Vander Griend. But teens too need to discover their gifts and learn how to use them. Doing so is an important and affirming part of discovering who they are and what they have to contribute. The entire body of Christ is enriched when its young members use their gifts to serve the Lord and to help others.

That's what motivated Ruth Vander Zee to write this course for junior and senior high students. She bases her course on much experience with teaching Christian day school students how to discover and use their spiritual gifts. You'll want to read her personal comments on page 7 of this leader's guide.

## Goals of This Course

- to understand the biblical concept and purpose of spiritual gifts
- to define and give biblical and contemporary examples of fourteen spiritual gifts
- to discover our “working gifts” and “waiting gifts” by interacting with others in small group activities and by completing the spiritual gifts questionnaire
- to learn how to use our gifts in a way that honors God and builds up the body of Christ
- to grow in our faith

## Audience and Settings

This six-session course is aimed at junior and senior high school students. Most of its activities can be applied successfully to this entire age range, although at times we may suggest that an activity is more appropriate for younger or older teens.

*Discover Your Gifts* can be taught wherever you can gather young people for six one-hour sessions. Settings could include

- **Church school classes:** Take a break from your regular curriculum for just six weeks. You won't be giving up Bible study (this course is built around it) but

you will be adding an exciting hands-on dimension that kids will see as affirming and useful.

- **Youth groups:** Use this course to help prepare kids for participating in one or more service projects that you've scheduled. Yes, it will take more meeting time than required by most youth group Bible studies. But it's very practical (and fun!) and will make your service projects much more meaningful for you and the kids.
- **Christian day schools:** That's the setting in which author Ruth Vander Zee originally developed and used her ideas for this course. Many Christian school teachers have attended Ruth's workshops and have tried *Discover Your Gifts* in their classrooms. The Christian school setting is a natural for this material.
- **Retreats:** Picture a bunch of teens going off to a camp or other retreat setting for a weekend, having a great time together, and coming home charged up to put their newly discovered gifts to work! A retreat setting is perfect for the kind of small group work this course features. Supplement the six hours of programmed time with fun and games and food, and maybe with a motivational speaker or video, and you've got the makings of a great retreat.
- **Midweek meetings:** If your church has a mid-week “family night” or education night, think about offering *Discover Your Gifts* for adults *and* for kids at the same time. Build in opportunities for sharing among all age groups and for using gifts in joint service projects.

## Materials

The **student book** offers a spiritual gifts questionnaire and scoring key, descriptions of fourteen gifts, Bible studies, a prayer journal, and other activities. This leader's guide tells you when the student book will be used in the sessions. Order one student book for each person in your group, including yourself. Keep the student books in the classroom between sessions. After the course is over, encourage kids to keep the book and to refer to it from

time to time as a reminder of what they discovered about their spiritual gifts.

This **leader’s guide** gives you detailed plans for six sessions. You’ll probably want to glance through all six sessions to gain a sense of where the course is headed. Each of the six sessions offers

- a focus statement that summarizes the main point or theme of the session.
- a list of the Scripture references used in the session.
- a list of goals that you and the group should achieve during the session.
- an overview of the entire session.
- a list of materials you’ll need to lead the session (notecards and a pad of newsprint are necessary for some of the sessions).
- a session background that gives you insights into the content of the session.
- step-by-step suggestions for reaching the session goals, including an opening time of prayer for each other, a Bible study, a variety of interactive activities, and a closing prayer time.

### Summary of the Sessions

- **Session 1** introduces the concept of spiritual gifts. Then we define the fourteen spiritual gifts studied in this course, giving a biblical and contemporary example of each. We conclude by praying for each other and starting our prayer journals, which are used at the beginning of each subsequent session.
- **Session 2** looks at what 1 Corinthians 12 says about spiritual gifts. Working in small groups, we “build a city” out of notecards. Afterwards, we talk about what gifts we saw being used in the city-building project.
- **Session 3** uses selections from Ephesians 4 and 1 Peter 4 to discover the purpose of spiritual gifts. Working in small groups, we complete one of several fun interactive activities, again identifying the spiritual gifts we saw at work in that process.
- **Session 4** returns to 1 Corinthians 12 to emphasize the importance and necessity of each gift. We then complete a questionnaire that helps us identify our top “working” and “waiting” gifts.
- **Session 5** focuses on using our gifts in a loving way (1 Cor. 13). We create a profile of the top working gifts of the class as a whole. We are affirmed in our top two working gifts, and we reflect on their uses

and misuses. We conclude by pairing off and giving thanks for the gifts God has given us.

- **Session 6** motivates us to use our gifts, as instructed by Paul in Romans 12:1-13. We make a “business card” that advertises our gifts and the ways we’re willing to use them. We also explore specific ways that students can serve, in a large group or in smaller groups. The course concludes with a time of celebration and recognition.

As with any prepared curriculum, you’ll naturally want to adapt our teaching/learning strategies to your own situation. For example, you may find your group needs more time than we estimated for a given activity. Or you may not have a full sixty minutes of class time each week. Or you may be more comfortable using your own approach rather than one we’ve suggested. Be flexible—consider this a resource, not a recipe.

For additional background information on spiritual gifts and for other useful information, you may want to consult the newly revised adult version of *Discover Your Gifts* by Alvin J. Vander Griend. Perhaps your church has used this material with adults and still has the material available. If not, you can order it from CRC Publications.

### Letter to Church Leaders

The success of this course rests largely on the freedom of your teens to use their gifts in the life of your church. It is important that your pastor, elders, and other church leaders be “on board” in this regard. They can do much to help gifted teens find ways to serve. The “Letter” on page 40 tells your church leaders about this course and solicits their cooperation and prayers. As you plan this course, be sure to photocopy the letter, sign it, and give one to each church leader in your congregation.

Please feel free to contact me at CRC Publications with your questions or comments about this course. Let me know if I can be of service to you. Thank you.

Bob Rozema  
Curriculum Editor  
CRC Publications  
1-800-333-8300  
ROZEMAB@CRCNA.ORG

# A N o t e f r o m t h e A u t h o r

*Dear Leader,*

*Congratulations on deciding to explore spiritual gifts with the teens God has given you to lead! It's exciting to me to think that God has already begun equipping these young people and that you are soon going to help them discover their spiritual gifts.*

*I've had the opportunity to use this material with middle school students in the day-school classroom. These kids come in all shapes and sizes and are eager to be affirmed for who they are. I've found them to be full of potential but often not sure of who they are and where they are going. In choosing to explore spiritual gifts with your students, you are addressing the very core of their identity. If in the next few weeks your students discover what their gifts are, you will have enabled them to understand themselves and their place in God's world a little better. And you will have helped them begin to understand God's purpose for their lives.*

*That word "discover" is an important one in this course. The Bible studies, the small group activities, even the prayers are aimed at helping students explore what God has done and is doing in their lives. If you create an atmosphere of openness where you become a co-learner and discoverer with your students, you will have been a blessing.*

*I strongly believe that discovering their gifts is critical to the spiritual growth of young people. Knowing that God has paid special attention to them, equipped them with spiritual gifts, and given them ways to use those gifts so that their lives have a sense of purpose is, to me, overpowering and awesome.*

*I encourage you to pray with your students. Learn with them. Discover together what God is doing in their lives. Point them in the direction of meaningful service. There's no higher calling for a teacher than that!*

*God bless you,*



Ruth Vander Zee



# Session 2

## Observing Our Gifts in Action

### Session Focus

The gifts the Spirit gives to each believer are evident in the ordinary, day-to-day activities of our lives. This is where the work of God is done.

### Scripture

1 Corinthians 12:7-31

### Session Goals

- to continue praying for each other
- to say what 1 Corinthians 12 teaches us about spiritual gifts
- to identify the spiritual gifts that we used in completing an activity

### Session at a Glance

**Step 1:** We use the prayer journals to pray for each other. (5 minutes)

**Step 2:** We read 1 Corinthians 12:7-31 and deduce what it says about spiritual gifts. (10 minutes)

**Step 3:** Working in small groups and using 3" x 5" notecards, we build a “city.” (30-35 minutes)

**Step 4:** Remaining in small groups, we use a page from the student book to identify the gifts we saw being used in the city-building activity. (10 minutes)

**Step 5:** Remaining in small groups, we give thanks for the gifts God has given us. (3 minutes)

### Materials

1. student book (this session uses p. 10)
2. Bibles
3. one pack of 3" x 5" cards for each student (students should provide their own cards, but leader can bring extras for those who forget)
4. pens/pencils
5. chalkboard/chalk or newsprint/marker or overhead projector

### Session Background

In sessions 2 and 3 you will be leading students through a few activities that may, at first glance, seem quite unre-

lated to discovering our gifts. In this session, for example, the students will work in small groups to build a “city” out of notecards. However, during this process they will interact extensively with each other and—without realizing it—use their spiritual gifts. Some may act as leaders, others as encouragers and servants, still others as administrators and creative builders. Afterwards, we’ll reflect deliberately on the gifts we used during the activity. Together we’ll discover that what we do quite naturally in our interaction with others is precisely what the Spirit uses to build up the church and to bring in the kingdom.

It’s important to recognize that gifts are not usually put to work in spectacular ways and settings, nor are they limited to offices or activities of the church. Rather, we typically employ our spiritual gifts in rather ordinary ways and places, in the pushes and pulls of daily living at home, at school, at church, at play, at work. When our students realize that they can use their abilities in daily interactions for the purpose of serving others, building up the cause of Christ within the church and outside the church, and honoring God, they will have come a long way in discovering God’s will for their lives.

If you have students who

- feel unsure of themselves
- feel insecure
- feel inferior to others
- feel that they do not have a purpose for their lives
- feel unimportant
- feel that their friends have a lot more going for them than they do
- feel that they do not have a place
- feel uncommitted

then you have a wonderful opportunity in this course to help them discover that

- God does not make mistakes
- God does not make inferior beings
- God does not withhold gifts from some and lavish them on others
- God does not make carbon copies of people

- God does not wish for us to live as defeated people who do not understand their place in the kingdom.

We humans need an incredible amount of affirmation to accept the fact that we are gifted by God. It's somehow easier to listen to the devil's lies and believe that we are inferior beings unable to do the work God has given us. We tend to forget that the Holy Spirit equips us and empowers us to do that work. Our young students need to be affirmed, cheered on, encouraged, built up, freed up to know that God has a unique job description and place for each of them.

So loosen up, get out your pom-poms, and cheer your students on as they begin to discover their gifts!

## 1. Praying for Each Other

Begin today's session by returning the students' books and asking everyone to turn to the prayer journal on pages 8-9. Remember that the purpose of this prayer time is to provide an opportunity for building community. Your students who have the spiritual gift of intercession will likely be the ones who take this time most seriously.

Ask group members if there have been any answers to the prayer requests made at your last meeting. Encourage everyone to keep praying for each other! Then ask for any new prayer requests and have the students enter them into their prayer journals.

Lead the group in prayer or invite the students to take turns praying aloud for each other.

## 2. Bible Study: 1 Corinthians 12

Distribute Bibles and have the group locate 1 Corinthians 12. Take turns reading verses 7-31 with the group. You'll recognize, of course, that some of the chapter was read last time. The review is intentional.

Do what you can to help your students understand that Scripture reading is an important part of these sessions. For instance, you might

- say, "This is the Word of God. Listen up! This is important for us today."
- encourage volunteers to read as if their lives depended on it—with sincerity and expression! Sometimes I tell my kids to "read like a preacher!"

- have students stand when they read. This may not be for you, but sometimes I've asked middle school students to stand on their chairs as they read!

After the reading, go to your board or sheet of newsprint or overhead projector and ask the group to help you list whatever the passage teaches us about spiritual gifts. Give the students time to think of their own answers. A sample list:

- All gifts come from the Spirit.
- The Spirit gives gifts to each one of us. No one is without a gift.
- Gifts differ from person to person.
- All gifts are given for the spiritual benefit of others.
- All gifts are of value and are essential in the church.
- Some gifts are greater than others (Paul, for instance, valued prophecy more than speaking in tongues—see 1 Cor. 14:1-2). But no one should ever say that another's gift is unimportant.
- When we work together, we are stronger than when we work alone.
- All gifts should be exercised with love. Love is not a gift in itself but is the "most excellent way" that Paul describes in chapter 13.

Conclude by reiterating, if necessary, that each person in the group has been given at least one gift by the Holy Spirit, and that all these gifts are essential to the functioning of the church, the body of Christ.

## 3. Activity: Building a City

The purpose of this activity is to give your students an opportunity to work together in small groups and to use their gifts to perform a task that's fun, purposeful, and challenging. The task is to build various sections of a city, using 3" x 5" notecards, then to connect the sections, and finally to create a song, poem, or cheer about the work that was done. There will be constraints that will make the work more challenging.

Begin by clearing your room of all chairs and tables, so that you have an empty floor space.

Then have students unwrap the 3" x 5" cards they were supposed to bring to class today (give your extra cards to anyone who forgot).

Next, divide into small groups of four or five persons each. For this activity it's probably best not to let the students choose their own groups. Instead, ask them to number off from 1 to 3 (or more if you have a large

group). Send all the “ones” into one corner, the “twos” into another, and so on.

Explain that each small group will use its cards to build a section of a city. Ask one group to build city hall, another a shopping center, another the civic center, another churches, another schools, another the homes and high rises. Give the following rules, which are to be strictly followed by all groups:

1. Your structure should use up almost all the cards you have. It must be more than one story high and it must be strong enough to stay standing until the end of our meeting.
2. As you build your section of the city, no one may talk! You may communicate, but not with words.
3. When you have completed your section of the city, send one of your group members to make a path to all the other sections of the city (save enough cards for this!).
4. When you have completed all this *without talking*, get together in your small group and make up a song, a poem, or a cheer about your section of the city and how you worked together to build it (you can talk when you do this part). A sample (to the tune of the refrain of “Battle Hymn of the Republic”):  
We are builders of a city.  
We worked hard to make it pretty.  
Although it’s kind of hard  
We used every little card  
Co-op-er-a-tive-ly.  
(I didn’t say this had to be Shakespeare!)
5. You have twenty minutes to build your section of the city. I’ll give you a five-minute warning for completing your construction. I will also tell you when you should begin working on your song, poem, or cheer.
6. All groups will perform their song or poem or cheer for the other groups. You’ll have ten minutes to create and present it.

Don’t let them ask for too many instructions. Life doesn’t work that way! Just tell them that you expect their end product will be the best they can do.

When you have given all the instructions, say “You may begin.” If people begin to talk, quiet them immediately in a friendly but firm way. Do not disturb the silence by talking or giving any instructions other than saying when they should begin their path and when they should begin their song.

Observe carefully what your students are doing and how they are interacting. You should be able to spot leaders, encouragers, servers, administrators, creators, teachers. As the groups are formed, watch for those who display hospitality, who help everyone feel included. As the groups work on the song/poem/cheer, watch especially for creativity.

As my groups were working, I clearly saw their personalities emerge. One creative boy caught on very quickly how to make the cards stand firmly and how to build his towers quite high. However, he continually overdid it, and his part of the building would collapse. The administrator in his group would signal to him to rebuild and quickly caution him when he was building too high. Another student, after seeing the first student’s section tumble twice, began helping him (the encourager). Someone else picked up after him each time his section crashed (the server).

Be sure to give the groups warnings about the amount of time left to complete their construction project and create their song or cheer (or they may become unnecessarily frustrated). If a little encouragement is needed, give it, but do not assist too much. What you are trying to do is give your students a taste of what it would be like to complete a project at home, school, work, or church. All tasks are not clearly defined. All tasks do not have a complete instruction booklet. Interacting with each other when completing a task can sometimes be difficult, but it can also be very rewarding. Together we can do a better job than we could by ourselves. Our gifts can be very helpful to the group. Each group will accomplish its task in slightly different ways depending on the gifts available and how they are used.

## 4. Identifying the Gifts of the Group

Ask students to remain in their small groups for this step. Have them all turn to page 10 (“A City on a Hill”) in their student books. Give them a minute to fill in the date, place, their name, and the names of their “city group” members.

Next, the small groups should attempt to identify some of the gifts they observed in the members of their group. Ask them to think especially about who showed these gifts: administration, encouragement, creativity, hospitality, service, teaching. They can refer to the definitions of the

various gifts on pages 4-7 of their student books if they need to. Have the small groups attempt to list a gift behind each person's name. Some of the gifts may be repeated, of course (for instance, several members of the group may have served as encouragers).

Take a few minutes to debrief the activity with the whole class. Perhaps you could have them name the people in their group and the gifts that person displayed during the activity. Compliment all groups on their work and note the different end results.

## 5. Closing Prayer

For your closing prayer, ask the various groups to pray together. Those group members who wish to do so may pray aloud, thanking God for the gifts that the group members have and asking for God's guidance in developing those gifts in the future.

As students leave, collect their books for use next time.

Before trying any alternate activity, you'll want to review next week's session, which also suggests an activity for small groups.

### **Gift Check**

Last week students listed on page 7 of the student book the gifts they might have been given. Today they discovered which gifts others saw in them. You may want to suggest that students compare the two. Did others see in them what they saw in themselves, or not? Encourage further reflection on this at home. You might also suggest that kids ask their parents which gifts they see them using.

## Options

### **Scripture Poster**

Here's a little art project for those of you who may want to extend the session (or have an additional session).

Challenge the students to work in small groups to invent their own picture of the church of Jesus Christ. In today's Scripture passage, Paul uses the image of a human body, which, like the church, has many parts but is one entity. What are some other ways to picture the church? Perhaps as a wheel with a hub and spokes? Perhaps as a tree with branches and leaves? Let the small groups invent their own metaphor and illustrate it by making a poster.

### **Alternate Activity**

If for some reason you don't have the space for the building project described in step 4, you could substitute another project for small groups. For example, the art project described above could be used to observe how students work together and use their gifts. Or, for senior high students, try writing a "case study" on a controversial topic, letting students work in small groups to decide what to do. A good source of case studies is the course *Decisions* published by CRC Publications.