

English Transcript

Discover How God Has SHAPED You for Ministry

Lesson 1: Introduction – God’s Design for His Church

Welcome to our GTN course, Discover How God Has SHAPED You for Ministry. This is one of our twelve core courses in our GTN curriculum for pastors and leaders in Senegal and Gambia. As you begin this self-paced study, please be sure to download, and if possible, print the course handout and supplemental handouts. These will be helpful for you as you listen to the course and complete the discovery activities. The handouts are available in English, French and Seereer.

The transcripts of each audio lesson may also be helpful for you. These are currently available in English, French, and Wolof.

As we begin all our training, we emphasize two important points.

Head – Heart - Hands

First, we always teach to the Head, Heart, and Hands. When we think of the Head, this is where we take in biblical truth. We will call this **Information**. Biblical truth should impact our hearts through deeper belief and conviction. We call this **Inspiration**. This Information and Inspiration should impact our lives. We should put these truths into practice. This represents our hands leading to **Transformation** into the likeness of Christ.

So, head equates with Information, the heart means Inspiration, and hands lead to Transformation.

2 Timothy 2:2

This also relates to the key verse for all GTN training, 2 Timothy 2:2. The apostle Paul was teaching Timothy, who was responsible for teaching others, who would be responsible for teaching others, and the cycle would continue.

So, as we consider this training, the goal is not just to impact your head, but it should impact your heart, which would then ultimately impact your life. You will be moved to train others in your church and community, who would then have a motivation to train others.

Course Overview

Turn with me to page 2 in your handout, the Table of Contents. You will notice that there are two parts to this course. Lessons 1 and 2 will provide you with a biblical theology for spiritual gifts as well as an understanding of how believers are meant to function within the church, the Body of Christ. Every member is a minister and God has blessed us each with specific gifts, abilities, passion, personality traits, and life experiences to be used to glorify God and build up the church.

Lesson 3 includes a series of discovery learning activities to help you assess how God has shaped you uniquely for ministry.

In Lesson 4 we will begin the process of helping you apply your learnings and take steps of faith to serve in your areas of giftedness.

Before we jump into Lesson 1, here are a few questions to consider.

1. What do you already know about what the Bible teaches related to Spiritual Gifts?
2. Do you already know how God has gifted you for ministry?
3. If yes, how did you discover this?
4. How would you rate your current level of knowledge on this topic?
 - a. Limited to no knowledge
 - b. Some knowledge
 - c. Good level of knowledge but I am not putting this knowledge into practice
 - d. I have taught on this topic and I know my gifts and I am serving in my areas of giftedness.

Let's begin Lesson 1 on page 3 in your handout.

This first lesson focuses on God's design for His church.

God has given every believer certain gifts to help us effectively share His love and make our unique contribution to His kingdom. The apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12:1.

Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant.

God wants us to be informed, so we can use the gift(s) He has given for His glory and the building up of the Church. Every member of the church is a minister. Ministry is not limited to pastors, elders, deacons, ministry leaders, and missionaries.

God stresses the importance of spiritual gifts as evidenced by the focus on this topic throughout the New Testament. God designed the church to grow as each member of the church does their part. This objective can be summarized in one verse, Ephesians 4:16.

From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Allow me to break this verse down and focus on a few key points.

1. The Church's Identity: The Body of Christ

First, the Church, or the Body of Christ, is a living organism made up of many different parts under the leadership of the Head, Jesus Christ. Out of amazing diversity comes powerful unity. We are one in Him.

2. The Church's Objective: "grows and builds itself up"

Next we can see that the Church is intended to be growing numerically through new converts and qualitatively with one another – reaching out but also building one another up in the Lord.

3. The Church's Purpose: "in love"

The greatest evidence of our maturing faith is that we will be growing in our love for God and others. Here are a few verses that highlight the significance of Love.

Love, the greatest commandment according to Jesus and so over all the different virtues we must "put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity" (Col 3:14).

We "live a life of love, just as Christ loved us" (Eph 5:1-2).

We "do everything in love" (1 Cor 16:14).

We "serve one another in love" (Gal 5:13) and "speak the truth in love" (Eph 4:15).

Above all, we are to "love each other deeply" (1 Peter 4:8) and "increase and overflow" in that love (1 Thes 3:12).

In John 13:34-35, Jesus gave us a new command to love each other as He has loved us.

Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 13 are two chapters that show us that love is more than just a feeling but it is an act of obedience and worship in response to God's love for us.

4. The Church's Design: "as each part does its work"

Next in this verse we see what God's design or plan is for within the Church. The church was made to best function as an interdependent unit. All parts are needed which we read in 1 Cor 12:21-26. Every believer has something to contribute.

²¹ The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" ²² On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³ and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, ²⁴ while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, ²⁵ so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. ²⁶ If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

Let us expand our focus beyond just verse 16 of Ephesians chapter 4. As I read verses 11-16, what other observations can you make from this passage related to God's design for His Church and the unique and significant role for every member of the Body of Christ.

Ephesians 4:11-16...God's goals for the Church and plans for achieving them...

¹¹ So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

¹⁴ Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. ¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶ From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

What can we observe from this passage?

We see that Jesus gave gifted leaders to the church for a purpose. Not to do all the work but to rather equip the rest of the church to share in the work of service.

We are all called to serve the Lord Jesus. We are all called to be growing toward maturity in Christ. We are not just to be concerned about our own spiritual growth but also the growth and maturity of the other members of our body.

This growth and maturity will help us stand strong in the face of opposition, false teachers and spiritual attack.

Every member of the body has a part to play much like every part of our physical body works together with all of the other parts.

5. God's Goals: Unity, Maturity, Christ-likeness

All of this points to God's plan and ultimate goal: Gifted leaders and teachers speak the truth in love and are used of God to grow and equip believers to carry out the work. Notice that the leaders do not do all the work. They are equippers.

1 Corinthians 12 provides an excellent description of the Church functioning like a physical body. This may be the chapter in the Bible that provides the clearest context and description of spiritual gifts. Allow me to first read verses 1-13 to set the context for how God has designed the Church like a body. I will make a few comments and then we will continue reading through the rest of 1 Corinthians 12.

1 Corinthians 12:1-13

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. ² You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. ³ Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says “Jesus is accursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit.

⁴ Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵ and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; ⁶ and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. ⁷ To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸ For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

¹² For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

Observations

In this first section of the chapter we learn that the apostle Paul did not want the Corinthian believers to be uninformed or ignorant about spiritual gifts. He makes it clear that there are a variety of gifts and ways these gifts can be used but it is God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) who is directing the gifting within the Body of Christ for the common good of the Church. And he introduces the concept that just like our physical bodies have many parts that form one body, this is how the Church is to function as well. And every believers has been baptized into the body of Christ at the point of salvation through the Holy Spirit.

Let us continue reading through the chapter and I will provide a summary statement for each section we read. This will provide an excellent overview for the lessons that will follow.

1 Corinthians 12:14-17

¹⁴ For the body does not consist of one member but of many. ¹⁵ If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell?

Observation: The key point is that within the Church there is unity out of diversity.

1 Corinthians 12:18-20

¹⁸ But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. ¹⁹ If all were a single member, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

Observation: Each person's part or role within the Church or the Body of Christ is determined by God. God is the designer or architect

1 Corinthians 12:21

²¹ The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."

Observation: Each member of the Church is interdependent not independent.

1 Corinthians 12:22-25

²² On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³ and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, ²⁴ which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, ²⁵ that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.

Observation: There must be a recognition of each believer's value and giftedness within the Church. There is not meant to be any divisions within the Church but rather an appreciation for one another.

1 Corinthians 12:26

²⁶ If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

Observation: Each member of the Church must truly care for one another.

1 Corinthians 12:27-29

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. ²⁸ And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. ²⁹ Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰ Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? ³¹ But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

Observation: The chapter closes with the reminder that each believer in Corinth was a member of the body of Christ. Paul introduces a partial list of some of the spiritual gifts and the questions he asked is to imply that not every believer has all of the gifts. He ends the

chapter hinting at the primary source of the problem that existed within the Corinthian church related to spiritual gifts. He will provide the answer in chapter 13.

Just as we have read through this chapter, you might do the same with Romans chapter 12. I'll share this brief outline and as you read this on your own, see what observations you can take away from each section of the chapter. In general, the focus of the chapter can be summarized as *"Behavior that reflects God's design."*

1. A committed life to the Lord (Romans 12:1-2)
2. A contrasted life to the world (Romans 12:3-8)
3. A connected life to the Body (Romans 12:9-21)

Pause the audio recording now and take a few minutes to read Romans 12 on your own and make observations related to the church, spiritual giftedness, and how love seems to be the evidence of a transformed life in service to God and one another. When you have completed your reading, restart the audio for some closing comments for this introductory lesson.

Welcome back!

So far we have introduced God's design for His church looking at Ephesians 4:11-16. We have also read through 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12 and received clear teaching from God's Word on how the Body of Christ has been organized and how it is to function in love. 1 Peter 4:10 offers a nice summary for us.

Each one should use whatever gifts he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.

Every member of the church has been gifted to serve others while reflecting the character of God in the process and bringing glory to Him alone.

We will close Lesson 1 with a summary of just some of the key points that will be discussed throughout this course related to spiritual gifts. You should recognize that many of these points come directly from the Scripture passages we referenced in this lesson.

- Spiritual gifts are for the common good of the church. (1 Cor 12:7)
- Spiritual gifts are for the building up of the church. (Eph 4:11-16)
- Spiritual gifts are for serving one another. (1 Peter 4:10-11)
- Every believer has been uniquely gifted by God for ministry. (1 Cor 12:11)
- We receive our giftedness at the time of salvation. (This appears to be true)
- Spiritual gifts can be abused and neglected, but if they are received at salvation, it would appear that they cannot be lost.
- Spiritual gifts are not the same as the fruit of the Spirit and natural talents and abilities. (Galatians 5; 1 Cor 12 and Romans 12)

- Ever member of the body of Christ is commanded to minister in many of the gifted areas, whether we possess that particular gift or not. For example, all believers are to demonstrate faith, be wise, encourage, show mercy, give generously, serve faithfully, witness boldly, etc.
- Spiritual gifts are useless if not exercised in love. (1 Cor 13:1-8, Romans 12:9-21)
- Beware when spiritual gifts are used as a means of manipulation, power or control in personal relationships.
- Beware when any gift is made a universal evidence of spirituality, salvation or spiritual blessing.
- Beware when the focus of a church service, ministry or event is on spiritual gifts and their manifestation rather than the Giver of the gifts and His agenda.
- Beware of comparing spiritual gifts with others. (1 Cor 12:15-26)
- Beware of using spiritual gifts in the flesh to fulfill personal needs or to impress others.
- Beware of confusing spiritual gifts with spiritual fruit as the evidence of spiritual growth and maturity.

We will discuss many of these points in the following lessons and learning activities.

This brings Lesson 1 to a close. When we continue with Lesson 2, we will start with a teaching that I call Spiritual Gifts 101. We will start with the basics and then build from there.