

Early Signs of God's Design



A Spiritual Gift Assessment: Nurturing Children's Gifts As They Emerge

*Written and Illustrated by Miriam Campbell
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A Child's Spiritual Gift Assessment Tool



When Jesus looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat? One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?" Jesus said, "Make the people sit down...." So they sat down, about five thousand in all. Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, "Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost." So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. John 6: 5-13

The Feeding of the Five Thousand is often used to characterize Jesus' amazing ability to perform miracles. In doing so, it also celebrates God's intent to engage people of all ages in God's mission and ministry. As Jesus empowered the young boy to share his fish and loaves, the boy's faith and God-given gift of service enabled something pretty ordinary to become amazingly extraordinary when Jesus blessed his meager offering to be a blessing for many.

In Holy Baptism, members of God's family are called and equipped to become actively involved in God's church on earth. Even as the youngest children are welcomed as members of God's family and workers with us in the kingdom, we are privileged to provide age-appropriate opportunities for them to discover and nurture their emerging gifts for leadership and service.

We are known for our ability and ongoing commitment to

- nurture a child's knowledge and understanding of Bible stories and characters and
- enrich the development of a child's character as we model faith for daily living.

Even so, our task essentially goes beyond informing the child - to helping form them an understanding of their place God's story and a desire to embrace the unique role they've been called to play.

To do so, Christian education must be perceived to be an entry point for children, youth and adults to discover

- God's love and forgiveness for all people
- God's call to follow God's lead
- God-given gifts for leadership and service as they grow in faith and community.

And so, the story must go beyond the boy with his fish and loaves to embrace all children who are listening, waiting and wondering when their meager and emerging gifts will be blessed to be a blessing for many.



We
welcome
you
into the
Lord's family.
We
receive
you
as
fellow members
of the
body of Christ,
children
of
the same
heavenly Father
and
workers
with us
in the
kingdom
of
God.



Early Signs of God's Design

This resource is devoted to discovering and nurturing a child's spiritual gifts as they emerge. It is designed to honor

- God's handiwork long before it reaches its full potential.
- Jesus' regard for children in Luke 18:16.
- Our baptismal intent to welcome children as members of God's family and workers with us in the kingdom, right from the start.
- A seamless lifelong journey in faith

(With all due respect to the many interests, talents and abilities that God provides, this resource will tend to a child's call to discipleship, leadership and service in faith community.)

Twelve spiritual gifts are recommended for your consideration as children grow. Other spiritual gifts will become more evident and appropriate to explore as youth and adults develop and mature. Each of the twelve gifts have been given a child friendly phrase for easy reference.

..... Spiritual Gifts

Administration:	"I love to plan and organize things."
Creative Faith Expression:	"I love to draw and do crafty things"
Encouragement:	"I love to encourage people who are having a hard time."
Evangelism:	"I love to tell people about Jesus and invite them to know him, too."
Faith:	"I love to follow Jesus and look for things that God is doing in my life."
Giving:	"I love to share what God has given me."
Hospitality:	"I love to greet people and make them feel welcome."
Intercessory Prayer:	"I love to pray for people and their needs."
Leadership:	"I love to take the lead."
Mercy:	"I love to take care of people in need."
Service:	"I love to do things for others."
Teaching:	"I love to teach."

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Several resources have been designed to help children discover and develop their spiritual gifts as they emerge.

"That's My Story" - A story-based assessment tool entitled which includes:

- "That's My Story" Spiritual Gift Scenarios
- "That's My Story" Scenario Illustrations
- "That's My Story" Child Indicator
- Gifts to Share and "I'm a Helper, Just Ask Me!" sheets

Early Signs of God's Design: Early Indicator Form - A record for parents, teachers and other leaders to track preferred learning styles, potential talents, interests and abilities, faith perspectives, emerging gifts, along with occasions for nurturing them.

"I'm a Helper, Just Ask Me!" - A Biblical reference for each spiritual gift and a list of opportunities for nurturing each them.



"Let the
little children
come
to me,
and
do not
stop them;
for
it
is to
such as these
that
the
Kingdom
of
God
belongs."

Luke 18:16



"That's My Story" Assessment Tool

Description:

This tool is story-based. It gives children the opportunity to identify with a characterization of a gift rather than a title or description. It describes an activity or situation that may be commonly associated with each gift. The **scenarios** are written in the first person so that a child can identify with a person as well as the story that describes a specific gift. A specific **gift design/illustration** is also associated with each scenario so that younger children can identify their emerging passions or abilities by highlighting the gift on their **Gift I.D.** sheet that matches the **illustration** displayed for each scenario. **Child Indicator** sheets may be used by older children to indicate their particular interests. Parents, teachers and other leaders might also wish to use this sheet to record the names of younger children indicating an interest in a specific gift. (In this case, you may wish to invite a show of hands along with your request for a verbal response. See directions below.)

Directions for use:

- **Distribute Gift I.D. sheets or Child Indicator sheets to each child.**
- Inform children that God gives us many gifts. Some gifts we can see, e.g., food, homes and families. Other gifts we can't see, but we can feel; like love, joy or a delight in doing certain things. Tell them that today you are going to help them discover some things they love to do, e.g., teaching, doing things for others,
- **Point to the gift design/illustrations that match the gifts on their Gift I.D. or Child indicator sheets.**
- **Encourage them to listen carefully to the story** and watch for the gift you display. **If they discover a passion** for doing the activity described in a story, **instruct them to shout "That's my story, too," and invite them to highlight the gift on the Gift I.D. sheet or the Child indicator sheet.** (They may also place an "X" in the blank next to the kid-friendly phrase.)
- **Begin each scenario with the following intro,** "Here's another friend with a story to tell. This gift (display illustration) goes along with this story. Do you see it on your sheet?" And, **end each scenario with this question,** "Does that sound like something you'd love to do?" If so, then shout, "That's my story, too."
- You may choose to have various children portray the characters in the stories and read individual scenarios.
- When you have read through all the scenarios, display each gift illustration and review the highlights of each story to give your children an opportunity to review their choices.
- You may wish collect the Child Indicator and Gift I.D. sheets to record their preferences. (See Early Indicator Form.)
- You might also wish to reproduce copies of the gift illustrations and invite children to color their favorite gift/scenario.



There
are
different kinds
of
gifts
but
the same
Spirit.

There
are
different
kinds
of
service,
but
the same
Lord.

1 Corinthians
12:4-5



Early Signs of God's Design: Early Indicator Form

This resource is designed to be used "in place of" or "in addition to" a Sunday School registration form. **It maintains a key reference for each child throughout their involvement in Christian Education.** The second page may be reproduced to provide space for teachers to record their insights and observations to keep "on file" from year-to-year. It can be an asset to have the notes from past teachers about **preferred learning styles, potential talents, interests and abilities, faith perspectives, emerging gifts, and along with specific occasions for nurturing them.**

You might also nurture the partnership between the church and the home by providing parents with a copy of the teacher's notes and requesting parents comments, too, from year-to-year.

Scheduling occasions for parent-teacher conversations might also be beneficial as you work together to nurture children's growth in discipleship, leadership and service.

"I'm a Helper, Just Ask Me!"

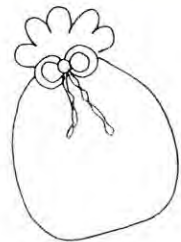
Engaging Young Children in Opportunities for Leadership and Service

This resource provides a **Biblical reference** for each of the twelve Spiritual Gifts identified. It also **suggests some to ways to nurture** each gift as you engage children of all ages in opportunities for leadership and service. Consider the following ways this resource might be used.

- It can be used as a **reference for parents, teachers and other leaders** as they strive to nurture the gifts identified by children on their "That's My Story" Child Indicator and Gift I.D. sheets.
- Identify some opportunities you might be willing to implement, if they are not already being offered. You might also **check with parents and other classroom teachers and assistants to discover their interest in coordinating some activities** as classroom or intergenerational/family programs or events. **Share these activities with children of all-or-specific ages and ask them to indicate their interest in involvement.**
- Distribute *children's response forms* and have children draw or print ways they would like to be involved in leadership and service in your congregation or faith community.

Gifts to Share and "I'm a Helper, Just Ask Me!" Child Response sheets

These sheets may be used as a response to the "That's My Story" Assessment Tool. (The questions are open ended and so children can use their imaginations and well as their actual impressions of and for ministry in your congregation.) It may also be used as a response to opportunities outlined on the "I'm A Helper, Just Ask Me!" sheet.



Each one
should
use
whatever gift
they
have received
to
serve others,
faithfully
administering
God's grace
in its
various
forms.

1 peter 4:10



Things to Keep in Mind:

- Please do not use the “Early Signs of God’s Design” resources to permanently define a child’s spiritual gifts. Children will explore many gifts as they grow and discern their skills and abilities for leadership and service.
- These resources might be used every year to confirm initial spiritual gift preferences and note changes and additions. Feel free to adapt the stories to provide fresh, similar scenarios.
- Though individual preferences are noted, spiritual gifts are not meant to be thought of as products of our own choosing. They are found within us and urged by God’s Spirit to find expression.
- There are no age limitations or requirements attached to spiritual gifts. They may emerge at any age as people are given opportunities to discover and nurture them.
- Be mindful of a child’s need to model a balance between Mary and Martha’s priorities for living, e.g. learning vs. serving.
- Consider the significance of engaging parents, teachers and other leaders in identifying their own spiritual gifts. Finding Your Gifts and Dancing with Your Gifts are available online in this same web page. A print and electronic version is provided. Become familiar with their gifts so you can honor them as your congregation recruits people to lead and serve in specific areas of ministry.
- Give children an opportunity work side-by-side other children, youth and adults. Rich relationships can be nurtured as they mentor and support one another.
- Pray for God’s lead in nurturing the lives of children as they grow in faith and community,
 - Pray that the motivations of those leading, serving and learning in your congregations will be focused on God’s glory and not their own.
 - Pray for your teaching ministry – that it will go beyond head knowledge to inspire a deep love for God and a genuine desire to use their gifts in service to God and others.
 - Pray that your congregation will adapt their ministries to include age-appropriate opportunities for children to nurture their sense of call and their gifts for leadership and service.

