

Help for *LifeKeys* Leaders

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LifeKeys is an organized approach for people to discover who they are, why God made them, and what they do best—making sense of all the ways God has gifted them. However, the expectations of participants in our *LifeKeys* seminars often vary widely. When we polled one class, we received the following list of expectations:

- Improved self-awareness—increased ability to recognize sources of stress and to discern healthy and unhealthy emotions
- Better husband-wife communications
- Learning to appreciate the gifts I have, mourn those I do not have
- Develop a framework for all that is “rumbling around” inside of me
- Stop being mismatched with church and other jobs
- Develop better ties between my vocational gifts and my spiritual gifts
- Decide what I want to be “when I grow up”—in the next season of my life
- To be recharged spiritually
- Discern the difference between what I want to be and what God wants me to be
- To kindle joy
- To overcome a fear of using a gift—or having to step out in unknown territory
- To discover new gifts

Because *LifeKeys* enables people to discover themselves with new, deeper meaning, it brings to the surface many issues and is used by God in many different ways. Consequently, it is important to create a caring atmosphere when you lead participants through this material. Prepare small group leaders to help people with the

process and establish prayer support because people will explore the very core of their being.

As a practical help to you, we have provided these guidelines to give you a structure for using the *LifeKeys* materials. Our suggestions fit an eight-week class or small group offering, though you can easily modify our suggestions to fit other formats.

Format Options

Eight-Week Course

In our experience, an eight-week course is the most successful format. The eight-week time frame allows time for processing the many discoveries people make about themselves along the way. Each session needs to be at least 90 minutes long to allow time for topic introduction, small group interaction, and questions.

The first classes at our church were just 60 minutes long—and we ended up holding midweek help sessions to answer individual questions. Over half the class attended the help sessions, which led us to expand our class time to at least 90 minutes.

Two-day Seminar

LifeKeys could be taught in a retreat setting or as a two-day seminar. If you decide on this option, we recommend assigning some of the materials in advance of attendance to allow more time for questions, small group experiences, and applying what each person has learned to possible next steps in their lives. Advance work could include reading over the sections on *life gifts* (pages 37-47) and *personality types* (pages 133-147) It may also be helpful to pre-read the entire chapters on *passions* and *time management* to give time to incubate on the concepts introduced in those chapters.

By now you have realized that we are suggesting participants pre-read almost all of the materials! This is because so much of *LifeKeys* is *processed over a period of time*. It might be better to focus the retreat on one or two topics that benefit the most from lecture and small group exercises, such as life gifts, spiritual gifts, and personalities. You could then address the topics of life choices and service during chapel times or evening inspirational talks.

Using LifeKeys in Established Small Groups

Ongoing groups of all shapes and sizes can follow our design for the eight-week format. Assign both reading and exercise completion before the small group meeting time.

Highlighting Individual Modules

Each of the discovery modules (life gifts, spiritual gifts, personality types, values and passions) can be used by itself for more intensive study. The chapters are designed to be stand-alone pieces and have been used for training, team building,

adult education classes, marriage enrichment, and other areas. We suggest concentrating on one unit at a time, with the following recommendations for these uses:

- New member assimilation—We suggest using *life gifts*, matching them with volunteer opportunities. Studies suggest that many new members are not yet ready for the deeper topic of spiritual gifts.
- Leadership development—We suggest using *spiritual gifts*, encouraging leaders to envision ministries that align with the gifts they have.
- Marriage enrichment—We suggest using *personality types* and *values* to foster communication and understanding by gaining insights into how others function and choose to live.
- Team building—We suggest using *life gifts* and *personality types* to understand how each team member will function best. The *passions* chapter can lend insights as to the motivations and expectations of those who will be working together.

Before You Begin—Team Formation

If you plan to offer *LifeKeys* in its entirety in a class setting, we recommend forming a project team to handle class preparation and implementation. A sample schedule for team formation could be as follows:

Three months in advance

1. Pull together a team that is interested in using gift identification to empower people. Team size may vary from two to eight individuals, depending on the members' interests, time availability, and life gifts. The following roles may be needed:

Team leader

Teachers—Seek people from your congregation or organization who might have experience in vocational counseling, human resources development, MBTI practitioners, and others who may have completed a process similar to *LifeKeys* (see 3 and 4 below).

Publicity manager—Publicize the course, answer questions

Registration and administration manager—Coordinate registration, possibly handle classroom arrangements and setup

Small group coordinator—Train small group leaders and instruct them for each class time¹ (We highly recommend that each member of the project team also serve as a small group leader for the course.)

Volunteer liaison—Compile a listing of various volunteer or service opportunities available in the church or organization for participants

who are ready to act within the church on what they have learned about themselves.

2. Set dates and locations for the class to be held. Order *LifeKeys* and other supplies and reserve any needed audio-visual equipment.
3. Review the curriculum. Ideally, the team will journey through *LifeKeys* together, scheduling sessions to cover each unit. Knowing the book's content and intent as well as each person's own gifts and experiences with each *LifeKey* will allow them to be of maximum help to others. And, doing these exercises together can help with teambuilding.
4. Decide who will teach which units. The *LifeKeys* of life gifts, spiritual gifts, and personality types may require more background reading and preparation.

Life gifts are based on the same theory as the Strong Interest Inventory™ (SII), but we do not offer the Strong as part of our classes. The person assigned to teach this unit may want to check the suggested reading list (page 283) for background resources. If you have a person who is qualified to give the SII you may want to offer this additional service to participants.

We *do*, however, routinely allow people to take the MBTI®, although it is not necessary to do so. While the materials contained in Chapter 4 are a sufficient introduction to type theory for most people to apply type to discovering the places or atmospheres that have the most appeal to them, many of our participants appreciate the opportunity to take the actual inventory. Because the MBTI is so widely used, check with members of your congregation to see if anyone is a qualified user. If not, you can prepare a more thorough presentation with extra study of *LifeTypes* by Sandra Krebs Hirsh and Jean Kummerow, or *Work It Out*, by Hirsh with Jane Kise (see suggested reading).

5. Begin to work with the congregation's or organization's staff on how class participants can connect with service opportunities after completing *LifeKeys*. Some organizations have systems in place for matching people with positions. For other organizations, you will need to begin this process. It may be sufficient to identify positions and the types of work involved, enabling people to review "job descriptions."

If you are using *LifeKeys* within a church, identify both positions within the church as well as those with outreach or parachurch ministries that the church supports or works with regularly.

It is our experience that while not all participants are ready to make service commitments at the end of the course (and some are already extensively involved in volunteer work), most want to have an understanding of how their own church will aid them in finding the opportunities that fit them best.

Set-up for Class Meeting Time

From the first meeting on, we suggest that participants be assigned to a small group of six to eight people and that the small groups be seated at round tables if possible. The small groups help establish a sense of community and an avenue for seeking help.

Note: As you graduate a class of *LifeKeys* participants, ask for volunteers to be small group leaders for subsequent sessions. These volunteers receive the added benefit of taking the class again and usually gain new or extra insights from a second or even third exposure to the materials. *We* have learned so much each time we've taught the class. Also, watch for potential project team leaders and potential teachers to expand the opportunities for more people to take the class.

- Have pre-made name tags available (large-print for first names only to ensure readability) that can be reused each week. Put the person's group number on the back of the tag so they can easily find their group each time. Collect the name tags at the end of each session.
- Place group numbers on the tables. Small group leaders should try to be the first to arrive to make it easier for others to find their spots.

SESSION 1—INTRODUCTION TO LIFEKEYS

During the first session we want to make sure we establish:

An atmosphere of affirmation. With each exercise, we want people to feel good about themselves and about what they will discover. Because participants are dealing with self-identity, self-esteem issues do surface throughout the course. Many of the objectives and exercises we recommend for this first session are aimed at creating the right atmosphere so that participants like what they learn about themselves.

A sense of community. Have people enrolled in the class think about it as being on an adventure together where everyone learns from each other.

A process which focuses on people. The small groups play a crucial role in keeping the focus on the needs of the participants rather than on the intricacies of various inventories.

Classime Flow

1. Welcome 30 minutes

Distribution of materials, introduction of leadership team

Be sure to cover the following five points:

- The schedule and class exercises assume participants have pre-read the assigned chapters and have completed the exercises in advance.
- Instruct participants to set aside 1-3 hours per week to read the materials and complete the exercises in order to benefit fully from the next class session.

- Some of the exercises—especially those for passions—cannot be rushed. Participants may even need several weeks to reflect on their answers.
- Clarify how participants can learn of assignments or get help if they miss a class. For our classes, participants may contact their small group leaders for assignments, questions, etc.
- Participants may need help as they work through these very important aspects of their lives. Clarify how individual help beyond class time can be sought.

Class “rules of operation”:

- Things shared within the small groups are to be kept *confidential*.
- There are no *right or wrong answers* for much of this material.
- There is no such thing as a stupid question.
- We will start and end on time.
- We will try to give equal “air time” to each participant and the small group leaders will facilitate to make sure this happens.

2. **Class expectations**

10 minutes

Ask the entire group for expectations they have for the class. Or, in table groups, discuss expectations. After 5-10 minutes, ask each table group to name one expectation; continue the process several more times until all expectations have surfaced. Record the expectations on a flip chart or blackboard so that everyone can see them. Be sure to copy them and keep them so the project team can refer to them throughout the course for refining class time and to remind participants at the conclusion of the class what was on their minds and hearts when they started.

3. **Small group time**

20 minutes

Objective: Getting acquainted. Most participants do not come ready to share at a deep level, so start with questions that people can share at the level they find comfortable. List (at most) three of the following questions, allowing each participant to choose the one they prefer to discuss:

- Tell us the history behind any part of your name—first, middle or last. How did your parents choose that name for you?
- Did you have a favorite nickname growing up? How did you come to get that name?
- Some people would rather rename themselves if they had a chance—what name would you give yourself? Why?

- As a child, was there something you wanted to be when you grew up? What was that? Have you stuck to that dream? If not, what made you change your mind?
- Share one of your favorite experiences. This experience could be a project at work, a committee on which you participated, a school activity, a social club, a hobby, a vacation or social gathering you helped plan, or a service or volunteer experience. What made it so enjoyable?

4. **Introductory lecture**

30 minutes

Refer to Chapter 1 to formulate your lecture. The main objectives for the lecture are:

- This class is the beginning of a process. Most people continue to work on what they have learned long after the last session.
- Participants will vary in how they approach the materials. Some people will breeze through the exercises, some will want to savor each one, and others will need time and encouragement to get through. Still others may wish to use outside resources available to them.
- There are no ungifted people! The Bible promises us that. If anyone does struggle with discovering how they are gifted, ask them to come to the leadership team for help.
- God has created us for a purpose, according to a plan. In this class we will begin the process of discovering what God would have each of us do, the places or atmospheres where we best use our gifts, and the causes or situations where we would most like to put them to use.

Be sure to allow time for general questions about the class.

SESSION 2—LIFE GIFTS

We chose to begin with life gifts because they fit well within the Richard Bolles mission paradigm (page 29). Everyone can successfully identify at least one interest pattern. Life gifts also fall into neutral territory (in contrast with spiritual gifts) for those who are struggling with the idea of whether they are indeed created with gifts from God.

Classtime Flow

1. **Introductory Lecture**

20 minutes

Refer to Chapter 2, pages to plan your lecture. The key objectives are

- To explain life gifts and to make the point that every individual has special interest patterns.
- To introduce the life gifts exercises. Allow time for questions and provide participants with sufficient directions to complete the exercises on their own.

2. **Large Group Exercise** 20 minutes

A fun way to introduce the six interest themes is by having the group self-select their top interest theme as they hear each description.

- In advance assign one of your small group leaders to each of the six interest areas. Make signs for each of the interest areas and post them in the room (or give one to each of the small group leaders to hold), following the hexagon order (Realistic—Investigative—Artistic—Social—Enterprising—Conventional).
- Inform the group that they will be constructing a “living hexagon.” Have everyone gather around the Realistic sign as you describe that area, using pages 48-49 of *LifeKeys*.² People who feel this description best describes them can stay at that sign; others move on as you describe Investigative, and so on around the hexagon of interest areas. Tell the participants that they can move to a new interest area later if they feel that it describes them better.
- If you are doing *LifeKeys* in a church setting, as you discuss each interest area, ask what people with these interest patterns might enjoy as volunteer opportunities:
 - Realistics—maintenance, out-of-doors experiences, transportation, building or other hands-on service
 - Investigatives—research, apologetics, computer systems design, long-range planning
 - Artistic—music, creative efforts, bulletin design, drama teams, decorating
 - Social—teaching, counseling, organizing social gatherings, small group leadership, hospitality
 - Enterprising—leadership, building campaigns, member involvement, new ministry development, evangelistic efforts
 - Conventional—office tasks, finance, standing committees, establishing procedures, record-keeping, ushering
- When you have finished describing each of the six interest areas, people will be grouped in the areas that are of most interest to them. Have them

sit down in these groups to discuss the life gifts found in their particular interest area.

3. **Small Group Exercise** (with interest area groups) 30 minutes

Within the interest area groups formed above, have each group discuss and prepare to report on the following:

- What elements of the description of the interest area best fit each participant?
- What would we like the other groups to know about us? Have each group develop a list to report to the other groups.
- Which of the life gifts have the participants used?

4. **Closing** 20 minutes

- Have each of the interest area groups report on what they'd like the others to know.
- Explain the life gifts exercise pages, using directions on pages 45-47. Ask people to come to the next class with their possible life gifts highlighted on their summary hexagon of interest areas (pages 70-71)
- Allow time for questions.

5. **Optional small group exercise to affirm life gifts** (Could be used in an help session or to open a later class) 15 minutes

Ask groups to discuss *one* of the following questions:

- The church's 50th anniversary [or a community event] is coming up and a huge celebration is planned. With which part of the celebration would you like to be involved? (Decorations, program planning, refreshments, publicity, finances, child care, entertainment, clean-up, etc.) Which life gifts would you be using?
- Which people in the group have similar life gifts? How diverse are the places or settings where you use those gifts?
- Which is one of your favorite life gifts? When did you first become aware that this was one of your life gifts? How have you developed it? How are you currently using it?
- Have each participant discuss the life gift they most enjoy using. Have them try to describe it in one sentence and give an example of when they have used it.
- List six volunteer opportunities available in your church or organization during the next three months. Identify the kinds of life gifts that might be needed for each.

SESSION 3—INTRODUCTION TO SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Participants vary widely on how much exposure they have had to spiritual gifts. Our approach to spiritual gifts is meant to help “beginners”—those who have never had sufficient exposure to spiritual gifts to feel comfortable with the concept and ready to identify possible places of giftedness. George Barna’s survey says that only 31% of adults who have heard of spiritual gifts are able to identify even one that they possess.³ In contexts that emphasize spiritual gifts, our approach may seem basic, but research shows that the majority of Christians lack depth of knowledge in this area.⁴ You may want to push the depth of each description if your environment has more experience in this area.

1. **Introductory lecture on spiritual gifts** 20 minutes

Refer to Chapter 3 to prepare your lecture. Key teachings:

- To understand what spiritual gifts are and how they differ from life gifts. Unlike life gifts, spiritual gifts are given to further God’s purposes.
- To have participants know that spiritual gifts are not given based on our merit but graciously given to meet the needs of the Church. There are no “superior” gifts.

2. **Lecture on specific gifts** 50 minutes

We find it beneficial to “teach through” each of the gifts, allowing for individual questions and, after a gift has been explained, asking for a *show of hands* from participants as to who might possess each gift.

We also *consistently* find ourselves short of time for this lecture, because of participants’ great interest in the subject. While the entire next week is devoted to personality types, it is possible to shorten the exercises in week 5, Values, to allow more time for spiritual gifts. By that point, people have also read through the descriptions and hopefully identified their gifts. This is a good time to come back and answer questions.

Hint: you will want to be ready to address the differing theologies concerning the more sensational gifts such as speaking in tongues and healing. Many people have questions about them. Also make sure that you are clear on the differences among the gifts of knowledge, prophecy, discernment, and wisdom as these can be confusing.

3. **Optional small group exercise** 15 minutes

Have participants read the scenario on pages 84-85 and respond to the first question by themselves.

Leah and Rob Hunter are members of a local church. They have two daughters, ages five and two, and are expecting their third child in three months. Rob's job requires sporadic travel. In addition, Rob has sole responsibility for the care of his elderly grandmother, now in a nursing home. Leah has just been informed that to prevent early delivery, she must be hospitalized for the next 4-8 weeks, with total bedrest and intravenous drugs prescribed. The drugs they will give her to prevent the premature birth of the child could damage her own internal organs and might not successfully prevent early delivery. Her previous pregnancy ended in a stillborn child and she is extremely anxious over the health of this baby.

If the baby is delivered successfully, Leah has been told to expect a lengthy recovery time for herself and the newborn.

- a) As you listened to the story, did you think of specific needs this family would have? Which one or two of these needs might you feel motivated to act on?
- b) Share your responses as a group. How do the various responses reflect your differing spiritual gifts? Your life gifts?
- c) You might wish to list everyone's responses. Did anyone have an idea that no one else thought of? How do your answers reflect the biblical image of the body of Christ?

SESSION 4—PERSONALITY TYPES

Within our framework for *LifeKeys*, we now turn from the question of what we *do* (life gifts and spiritual gifts) to understanding the types of *atmospheres* where we might choose to do those things.

Personality type does not explain everything about people. It does, however, do an excellent job of helping you understand yourself, appreciate others, know the work/volunteer setting that is best for you, and make sense of some of your life choices.⁵ Personality type can be used for many other purposes, but with the time available, it will be important to stick to using type *to guide participants to the places that are the most appealing to them.*

Note: We administer the MBTI before this class session, reserving the last few minutes of the previous class to administer the MBTI. While the chapter on personality type allows people to gain an approximation of their type, many find the MBTI a helpful affirmation. Many people are qualified to administer the MBTI; if no one on your staff is qualified, check with other members of your congregation. You may also call the Association for Psychological Type (816-444-3500) to find people in your area.

Classime Flow

1. **Lecture on preferences** 30 minutes

Refer to Chapter 4 to prepare for your lecture. Key points are:

- Everyone has a distinct personality type—most likely determined before our birth but subject to modification by environmental influences.
- Understanding our type gives us insights into people and the work settings and styles with which they are most comfortable, as well as insights into their relationships.
- Personality types are God-given. There are no “good” or “bad” types. Each has a unique contribution to make.
- Discuss each of the eight preferences, allowing people to self-select the preferences that seem to fit them best.
- Discuss how preferences influence the settings in which we choose to work.

2. **Large group exercise—“Living Type Table”** 30 minutes

Divide the room by placing a piece of masking tape across the floor. Designate the front of the room as the “top” and the back of the room as the “bottom” of the Living Type Table. Have those with a preference for Introversion move to the front of the room and those with a preference for Extraversion move to the back. Then, divide the room again, this time with “left” and “right” sides to represent the left and right sides of the type table. Ask everyone to stay where they are in regard to the top and bottom of the room, but have those with a preference for Sensing move to the left side and those with a preference for Intuition move to the right side of the room. This now creates four quadrants. While you will want to add your own comments to the description of each quadrant (see Suggestions for Further Reading, page 283) you might mention the following:

- Those in the IS (top left) quadrant enjoy settings that honor past experience: “What has worked for us before?”
- Those in the EN (bottom left) quadrant enjoy settings that honor change and innovation: “We’ve already done it that way; let’s try something different this time.”
- Those in the IN (top right) quadrant enjoy settings where they can develop and promote ideas that call for change: “What is the nature of the change?”
- Those in the ES (bottom right) quadrant enjoy settings that are action-oriented, seeking to change or improve on something: “Let’s just do it.”

With the masking tape, divide the room into four “columns,” with two on the right and two on the left side of the room. Then have those with a preference for Thinking move to the outer left or right columns; those with a preference for Feeling are to move to the inner columns.

- Those in the ST column concentrate on the present and on the specific facts: “What do the facts tell me about how to fix the problem in the most practical way?”
- Those in the SF column also concentrate on the present and specific facts: “How can I use this information to help the people around me feel better today?”
- Those in the NF column concentrate on the future and the big picture: “How can I use this information to help people realize their potential?”
- Those in the NT column also concentrate on the future and the big picture: “How does this help me understand the system, its structure, or grasp a universal truth?”

Divide each of the top and the bottom portions of the room into two rows each with the masking tape. Have those with a preference for Judging move to the very bottom and the very top rows, where they can help “keep order.” Have those with a preference for Perceiving stay in the middle two rows. This last division of the type table forms type-alike groups.

3. **Small group exercise** 15 minutes

Have people sit with their “type-alike” group. If there are types with just a sole representative, ask that individual to be a group of one so that he or she can report to the rest of the group about the characteristics of that type. Using pages 148-163, the type descriptions, allow them to discuss what insights their types give them in choosing environments or settings.

If there is time, let each group briefly report to the large group three things that they would most like the other types to know about them.

Caution: Class time is very short. Most MBTI practitioners prefer three hours to introduce the concepts. If you administer the MBTI, you may want to schedule additional time for this session.

SESSION 5—VALUES

The subject of values helps many participants turn from focusing on how God has gifted them to how they might use their gifts for God’s purposes. Not all will be ready to make that turn; some will still be preoccupied with trying to accept and validate what they have learned so far about themselves.

Classroom Flow

1. **Introduction and card sort instructions** 10 minutes

Use Chapter 5 to prepare for the introduction. Key points:

- Everyone has a set of values which affect how they spend their time and use their energy and resources.
- Christians can legitimately hold different values. Some things in the Bible are crystal clear, but many are disputable (Romans 14:1 is a good reference).

2. **Values card sort** 30 minutes

Give the participants room to spread out their cards. Using the instructions on page 186, explain how to set up their prompt cards and the frame of mind with which they should approach the card sort.

Warn them in advance that it may be hard to limit their top values to no more than eight—but gently force them to do so.

When they have completed the sort, have them record their values on the Values Summary Sheet (page 187)

Hint: We find that people enjoy sorting their cards while interacting with the members of their small group. People approach the task in a variety of ways and the group atmosphere adds encouragement to what can be a difficult task for some.

3. **Small group exercise** 15 minutes

Discuss question 4, page 190, of the values exercise. Explain your top 2-4 values and how these affect the work or volunteer settings you would choose. What are the values of your work or service place? How congruent are they to your own values? What new insights did you gain by prioritizing your values?

4. **Lecture on values** 30 minutes

- Being aware of their values helps people understand their priorities, clarify their choices, and discern what will give meaning to their lives.
- God wants to influence our values. Values are not given to us by God in the way we are given spiritual gifts and personality type.
- Awareness of their top eight to ten values helps people work through conflicts and understand the nature of the situations that trouble them the most. Values become most evident in conflict situations.

5. **Closing** 10 minutes

Allow time for questions. Emphasize that participants should choose to answer just a few of the questions in the values exercises (pages 189-191), whichever best fit their situation. The values questions are suggested for different circumstances such as:

- Facing the next season of life
- Evaluating work/service environments
- Evaluating whether current lifestyle reflects values

This can also be an opportunity to discuss drafting a personal mission statement. Suggestions for doing so are given on pages 251-253. Consider scheduling a help session for those who are interested in pursuing this.

SESSION 6—PASSIONS

We now move to specifically identify those good works which God prepared in advance for each individual (Ephesians 2:10). For many, this can be the most frustrating part of the course. Our society traps so many people in the bustle of day-to-day pressures that to dream about possibilities and future actions aimed at helping others or improving society seems burdensome rather than a route to fulfillment.

The passions introduction seeks to give positive examples of people whose passions arose out of their current activities or who were easily able to find a channel through which they could act on their passions. This approach helps participants to be open-minded to finding out what God has put in their hearts, be it large or small in scope.

Classime Flow

1. Introduction 30 minutes

Ask two or three members of your congregation or organization to explain one of their passions to the class. Interview them regarding how they live out a passion or dream—what it is, how it developed, and what they see as their next steps. Make sure that small as well as large passions are described, ranging in scope from collecting toys for the church nursery to a city-wide food drive, for example.

As an alternative, we sometimes use an outside resource for this introduction.

Wrestling with Angels, a six-part video series from Zondervan Publishing House, has a wonderful interview with Tony Campolo, noted Christian author, on the subject of knowing God's will⁶.

Refer to Chapter 6 to prepare your lecture. Key points:

- Passions can be described as a strong devotion to a task, an excitement about something, or a willingness to stand up for a cause or belief.
- Sometimes God places passions in our hearts. These passions may be broad or narrow in scope and long-term or short-term in commitment.
- Passions readily shift and change over the course of a lifetime.

- Passions surface in many ways—out of our gifts, out of people we encounter, or out of life events. We find (and our exercises are built around that experience) that people sort into four different approaches in finding their passions:
 - **The “Dreamers”**—those who can easily think of places to act *en theos*, with God. Joseph might be a biblical example.
 - **The “One-Talent” people**—those who are passionate about using a single life gift or spiritual gift in many arenas. The craftsmen who built the tabernacle in Exodus 30-31 might be an example.
 - **The “Make-Me-An-Offer” people**—those who are willing to help people with their passions once they hear of their needs. Stephen and the other deacons of the early church in Acts 6 might be an example.
 - **The “Right-Under-Your-Nose” people**—those who can serve right where they are. Dorcas in Acts 9 might be an example.

2. **Small group time**

20 minutes

Have each participant talk about a possible passion they identified. Have they been chewing on it for a long time or is it a new thought? Can they begin to act now or is it a passion for the future? What do they need to do now to get ready to act on this passion? How does it mesh with what they have discovered about their gifts and talents?

If some people seem stuck or uncertain of specific causes, people, or places that might energize them, have them look at their life gifts or spiritual gifts for information on what they might like to do.

Hint: Some participants may not think that their passions are “big enough.” Small group leaders may need to assume a teaching role on how God has big and small needs, each just as important as the others.

Others may not have surfaced any passions. Sometimes the group can see patterns if the person shares their life gifts, spiritual gifts, and values. One recent retiree shared that she didn’t seem passionate about anything but baking bread, her current hobby. Her small group encouraged her with ways she could share her bread with others—for communion, with shut-ins, etc. The woman was encouraged that doing little things, not devising some grandiose plan, may be just what God intended for her.

3. **Lecture—How God Makes Dreams Happen**

30 minutes

Consider using the story of Joseph as a framework for this lecture. (see “*Off-the-Job Training*,” an article by Jane and David from *Discipleship Journal* at

<http://www.navpress.com/Magazines/DJ/ArticleDisplay/102.15/>)
Nehemiah (see page 194) is also a good example. Key points are:

- Dreams often need tempering and developing.
- Dreams often change over time.
- The *dreamer* may often need to be refined before being ready to act.
- It is seldom a straight line from where you are to your dream—your course may meander.
- Sometimes dreams are shattered, but God has the power to reshape them into something else.
- At times it seems that a dream or passion could never come true, but it may be important to stay open and remember that life has many seasons and the time may not yet have come.

SESSION 7—LIFE CHOICES

There are *many* time management tools available. Our purpose is to highlight some of the biblical concepts of time and the choices we make. This session often legitimizes the doubts people have about the next steps they might take and lets them talk through their concerns with others who are struggling with similar issues. The topic of life choices also puts into perspective how God might help people take those next steps.

Classime Flow

1. **Opening exercise** 10 minutes (as people gather)

Have people answer one of the following questions:

- As you look back through your list of top values (page ____), what activities are missing from your current life that would make a tremendous impact on your ability to live out your values?

Hint: This could be used as a small group discussion question if the groups have grown fairly close.

- Think over your activities during the past week and figure out what percentage of your time went to the following activities:

Time for work

Time for self

Time for God

Time for leisure activities

Time for family

2. **Lecture** 30 minutes

Refer to Chapter 7 to prepare your lecture. Also, turn to the suggested reading list (page 283) for other background materials. Key points:

- Start by emphasizing that it takes time just to internalize what is being learned in the *LifeKeys* class. Ask participants to think about how far they have they progressed through:
 - identifying their gifts
 - knowing where they might put them to use
 - confidently seeking God's purposes.
- While there are seasons of life that force us to be overly busy, God did not intend for us to be so busy that we have no time for what is truly important in life.

- Remind participants to be honest with themselves about what keeps them from getting to the things they have identified in *LifeKeys* as being of utmost value.

1. **Small group exercise** 30 minutes

Break participants into four groups to discuss the first four biblical principles of time management, assigning a small group leader to each group. (The fifth, on using time for others, will be discussed at length in the final session.) Each person should join the group discussing the principle they believe they handle *best*.

Have each group record on overhead sheets or large flip-chart pages any hints or methods that proved beneficial to them as they learned to manage this area of their lives.

Allow 20 minutes for the groups to brainstorm together. Then gather again as a large group and allow a spokesperson from each of the four groups to share their insights. Encourage participants to record some of the suggestions for the areas where they have the greatest needs and make a commitment to try at least one or two of the ideas during the next month. We suggest collecting the lists to develop a handout of all of the suggestions. (One of these lists is shared on pages 225-227 as part of the exercise.)

2. **Closing** 20 minutes

Refer people to pages 286-287, “My *LifeKeys* Notations” and encourage participants to complete these pages before the final session. Allow for questions and emphasize that people generally fall into one of three categories at this stage in the class:

- Some feel that they have much more self-discovery to do. They may be interested in retaking the class or working with someone one-on-one to complete what they have started. Some just may want to know more about resources available to them to continue this process.
- Others believe they have a much better understanding of themselves and want to learn about how they can apply this self-awareness to their current relationships and in their work, at home, or volunteer settings.
- Others are ready to make a commitment to some new service opportunity or to make other changes, based upon their gifts and passions.

Reassure the participants that each stage is fine—so much depends on where they started from.

SESSION 8—SERVICE

We hope that *LifeKeys* has allowed participants to come to a new understanding of what the Bible means by “service” or “servanthood.” For many, this will be a breath of fresh air as they grasp that fulfillment can come through the purposes God has chosen for them.

This session is designed to inspire participants to take their next step. Many of our participants wish that we could meet a few more times. You may even want to schedule a follow-up reunion time as we have done occasionally.

Classime Flow

1. **Small group time, questions** 15 minutes
 - Allow people time to complete “*LifeKeys* Notations.”
 - Inform people of any choices they have for continuing to process what they have learned. Many participants want to sign up for some one-on-one counseling. Some may want to meet further with the leadership team, a previous *LifeKeys* graduate, a spiritual director, or volunteer coordinator. Outline how they might learn of available opportunities in your organization. Share what some others have done as a result of being in a *LifeKeys* seminar.
 - This is also a great time to get a list of possible volunteers for the next offering of a *LifeKeys* class.

2. **Lecture on service** 30 minutes

Review Chapter 8 to plan your lecture. Key points:

 - Serve from a place of fullness, not emptiness.
 - Biblical servants ensure that their own needs are met so they can focus on the needs of others.
 - Finding ways to use our giftedness for God requires conscious commitment. God leaves the choice of serving or not serving in our hands.
 - As we open our hearts to God’s purposes, we become available to move to the places God wants us to be.
 - Following God’s leading does not always result in the world’s approval. What will result is your own fulfillment as an instrument of God.
 - The right place to serve is where God calls you to serve, whether far away or right where you are.

3. **Closing service** 30 minutes

As they finish this class, many participants will be ready to commit to a significant change in how they view who they are, why they're here, and what they do best. Finishing the *LifeKeys* class with a prayer and commitment service met the needs of our participants to confirm their desire to step out in faith and act on their commitments.

We suggest moving the class to a chapel or other worship environment for the service. What follows is our format. Feel free to use our ideas, but your own creativity may produce a better idea.

- Share the list of expectations collected at the first session. Relate that many of these were high, broad, and complicated.
- Read *A Tale of Three Trees*⁷ a folk tale about three trees who thought their dreams were crushed, only to discover that God had better plans for them. You could also read aloud “A Final Note of Encouragement,” pages 245-247, to set this same tone, or
- Show the film clip from *The Wizard of Oz* where the Wizard gives the Scarecrow his brains, the Tin Man his heart, and the Lion his courage. *The message affirms that the characters already had those things within them.*
- Give everyone a chance to fill out a “commitment slip” as described on page 248. They need not put their names on these. What they write may be a commitment to a service opportunity or something that will help them better understand themselves or God. Some special music could be played during this time. Leave a few minutes of silence for those who think best that way.
- Have each small group come forward together and place their commitment slips in an offering basket.
- At this point, we give each participant a certificate that could read as follows:

Your leaders for *LifeKeys*

Desire to officially confirm that

(participant's name)

Has successfully begun the identification of

Life Gifts, Spiritual Gifts, Personality Type,

Values and Passions

Given by God

And hereby commits to move forward in faith

to do those good works which God has prepared in advance for each of us.

- Close with prayer

¹ We recommend a minimum of one-two hours of basic training on how to lead small groups, using a curriculum such as *People Together* by David Stark and Patrick Kiefert, available through Church Innovations (612) 646-7633.

² For extra special help, purchase *Strong Interest Inventory Resource: Strategies for Group and Individual Interpretations in Business and Organizational Settings*, by Sandra Krebs Hirsh, available from Consulting Psychologists Press (800-624-1765). While written for the Strong Interest Inventory™, it has many reproducible masters and exercises to enrich your presentation of this material.

³ Barna, p. 1.

⁴ For more on this research, request the October 3, 1995 press release from Barna Research Group, Ltd., entitled, “Most Christians are Oblivious to Their Spiritual Gifts,” (818) 241-9300.

⁵ For a fuller treatment of psychological types, you can read and/or refer others to *LifeTypes* by Sandra Krebs Hirsh and Jean Kummerow and *People at Work* by Sandra Krebs Hirsh and Jane A. G. Kise (see suggested reading list).

⁶ *Wrestling With Angels*, Zondervan Publishing House, 1994.

⁷ Angela Elwell Hunt, *The Tale of Three Trees*. Batavia, IL: Lion Publishing, 1989.