Session 32: Strengths, Gifts, and Service: Recovery That Gives Back

Duration: 60 minutes • Recovery education group. Ensure all participants are seated and ready

Materials: Program service-needs list (from Program Director); index cards; the Session 32 handout (My Gifts and First Service)

Learning objectives — by the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Inventory strengths and gifts with evidence from their own history and this program
- Match one gift to one act of service available within two weeks
- Explain service as relapse protection, identity practice, and community repair — not as earning worth

Opening (3 minutes)

Newcomer bridge (60 seconds): This is Phase 4 — Living Free. The one idea today is that gifts inventoried on evidence are matched to one real act of service within two weeks. You are welcome here without earlier sessions; everything you need for today is in this session. The question in this session is never whether you have something to give — it is which gift, and where it gets spent first. We inventory strengths and gifts on evidence, match one gift to one real act of service within two weeks, and schedule it like everything else that saves us: specific, sized, and supervised.

Check-in prompt (8 minutes)

Name, craving 0–10, one word for your week — then: “What do people reliably ask you for help with — the thing you do that has always come easier to you than to others?” Log every craving score on the roster.

Passing is honored — you may pass any question, prompt, or practice without explanation, step out and rejoin, and choose a partner-only option where one is offered.

Teaching (20 minutes)

Week 5 inventoried work strengths; today goes further, into gifts — the capacities (teaching, encouragement, leadership, hospitality, helping, giving) that show up whenever this person is at their best. The inventory method is evidence-based in the plain sense: compliments received across a lifetime, tasks that energize rather than drain, what the house already asks of them, what they did in Sessions 9 and 18 that lit them up. Then comes the turn that protects recovery itself: deployment. Service moves a participant from consumer of the program to contributor to it — rides given, newcomers welcomed, chairs set, meals helped, testimonies offered in the right rooms — and every study and every old-timer agrees on the mechanism: it is hard to relapse into a life where people are counting on your gift this Saturday. Service is scheduled like everything else that saves us: specific, sized, and on the 90-day plan.

- **Gifts survived the addiction** Buried, misused, or dormant — but the inventory almost always finds them intact enough to name. Naming them is often the session's tears: 'I forgot I was ever the person who…'

- **Service, not performance** What we have been given is managed for other people's benefit. That frame kills both pride ('look at me serving') and false humility ('I have nothing') in one move.
- **Service must be sized and supervised** Early, grandiose commitments (mentoring newcomers in week one of their own stability, taking on everyone's crises) endanger the giver. The Program Director and coaches approve service roles; zeal gets a leash made of love.
- **Giving back repairs the public story** Communities watch recovery through its returners. Every graduate serving visibly in Senath is the program's most credible witness.

Sources & Evidence — Facilitator background — do not teach

Purpose — meaningful daily activity, work, and service — is one of SAMHSA's four dimensions of recovery, and recovery capital research links work, relationships, and community resources to sustained recovery (SAMHSA, 2012; Granfield & Cloud, 1999). Key sources for this session: SAMHSA (2012); Granfield & Cloud (1999); Bandura (1977); Riessman (1965). Evidence strength: Moderate. Spiritual practice: Service and helping others — correlates with the helper-therapy principle and behavioral activation; evidence: Moderate (Riessman, 1965; Kelly et al., 2020). Full citations: Appendix H. The session's Scripture material is in its optional handout (Appendix I), as theological foundation, quoted from the King James Version.

'Evidence strength' grades the correlated mechanism, not the spiritual practice itself

Pause midway through teaching: ask, "What part of that sounds most like your life right now?" Take two or three answers, connect them to the teaching, and continue. Teach in your own words — the bullets are your map, not a script to read aloud.

Discussion questions (10 minutes)

1. Complete the sentence with evidence: 'I am the person people call when they need _____.'
2. Which gift — helping, encouragement, teaching, hospitality, leadership, giving — fits your evidence best?
3. What service is available to you within two weeks, sized for your actual stability? Who approves and schedules it?
4. Where is your over-service line — the point where giving becomes hiding from your own work?

Skill practice (12 minutes)

Gifts Auction (facilitated, no real bidding): each participant writes their top gift on a card; the facilitator reads cards and the group brainstorms one concrete service match per person from the program's current needs list (prepared with the Program Director). Each person leaves with one named service, one start date within 14 days, and one supervisor contact written in their workbook — and it is entered on their 90-day plan draft.

Personal application — homework (5 minutes)

Complete your first service act before Session 34, or have it firmly scheduled with the supervisor's confirmation. Write two lines afterward: what it cost, what it gave back. Participants write it in their workbook before leaving. Facilitator: name the homework again at the door as people leave.

Facilitator notes and cautions

Facilitators guard two failure modes: participants volunteering for service involving money handling, keys, medications, or unsupervised access to vulnerable people before the Program Director clears it — enthusiasm never overrides safeguarding — and service used to dodge a participant's own plan work, which coaches name kindly and directly.

Closing (2 minutes)

It is hard to relapse into a life where people are counting on your gift this Saturday. Complete your first service act, or have it firmly scheduled, and write two lines: what it cost, what it gave back. Next session: telling your story safely.

Fidelity check for this session: objectives named at the start ☐ craving scores logged ☐ skill practice completed in full ☐ homework written down by participants ☐ session note filed today ☐