

SHAPE – Hand Out

Identifying your starting point

"For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." Ephesians 2:10

INTRODUCTION

Every person has been created by God with a specific calling and purpose. Our primary calling is to be a disciple of Jesus, our secondary calling is to service (this may differ over time). As Christians, we need to understand what our calling / purpose is and how we can further God's kingdom within our family, work place, local church and communities and see where He would have us serve.

We can do this by understanding our **S.H.A.P.E.** (Spiritual gifts, Heart, Abilities, Personalities, and Experience).

Spiritual Gifts:

- Spiritual Gifts are special God-empowered abilities given to those who follow Christ, for serving him. *How confident are you that you know what particular spiritual gifts God has given you?*

Heart:

- 'Heart' is the source of all your motivations: what you love to do and what you care about most. It is the sum of your desires, hopes, interests, ambitions, dreams and affections. Your heart is what gets you out of bed in the morning, what you live for. *How clear are you about your heart: what you care about most?*

Abilities:

- Abilities are the natural talents you were born with: not so much the things you can do, but the things you can't help doing! *How clearly could you describe your natural abilities?*

Personality:

- Your personality is how you are 'wired' and governs how you respond in different situations and how you relate to others. *How much do you understand your personality and what 'makes you tick'?*

Experience:

- Everything you experience in life, whether positive or negative, shapes who you are. *How much have you reflected on your experiences and understood how they have shaped you?*

In this session, we will look at three of these areas to see how God might want to use us:

Our God-given **Spiritual gifts** indicate **what** we should do.

God-given **Heart / Passion** indicates **where** we should serve.

Our God-given **Personality / Personal style** indicates **how** we should serve

Together, they indicate what we do best.

These notes are to assist us in our prayerful task of seeking where God is calling us to serve.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Many people are unsure of their spiritual gifts. Yet 1 Corinthians 7:7 reminds us that every Christian 'has their own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that'. Here is a practical way to begin to explore which gifts(s) God has given you.

- **Look up:** Ask God to show you what your gifts are. Be prayerful as you consider your gifts, and flexible as you explore his leading.
- **Look back:** Think about the past. Where would you identify God's blessing on you? Where have you seen unusual fruit in ministry? What have you enjoyed doing as a Christian? What have you found energising? When have you heard other people mention you're good or 'gifted' at something?
- **Look in:** As you look into yourself, what do you feel passionate about? What really excites you? If you were guaranteed success, the resources and gifts to achieve it, what one thing would you most like to do for God?
- **Look around:** As you consider your church, what are its needs? What openings are there for exercising your gifts? Do any of these opportunities interest/excite you even if you don't feel qualified or skilled? If you could choose one area of involvement in your church, what would it be? Then ask if you can have a go at some of these things as a way of experimenting with whether you have a gift.
- **Look at:** Read through a list of spiritual gifts from the Bible. The one below is not exhaustive, but may act as a good starting point. Using a pencil assess yourself on each one as follows:

A = definitely my gift

B = possibly my gift

C = unsure whether this is my gift or not

D = definitely not my gift

Leave the list a few days and then see if you agree with your initial assessment. Change where necessary.

- **Look out** Ask other people to suggest what they think your gifts are. Choose some people who know you well, and choose some who only know you a little. Be sure they are people who want the best for you. Encourage them to be honest and truthful. Give them a copy of the list below and invite them to assess your gifts.

Talk to your mentor about your findings, and once you've gained some clarity be sure to use the gifts God has given you. They are not trophies for the mantelpiece but tools for the job. Often the best way to discover whether you have a gift or not is to experiment, to have a go.

GIFT	MAIN EMPHASIS	DESCRIPTION	BIBLE REFERENCE	YOU	OTHER
Administration	To organize.	The person with this gift is able to organise information, plans and projects. He or she can work efficiently in the body of Christ for a particular task.	1 Corinthians 12:28		
Apostle	To perceive the big picture and pioneer new things	This gift enables a person to see the overall picture of how the purposes of God can best be furthered, normally leading to pioneering an initiative or providing what is lacking in an existing one. Adept at making decisions, envisioning outcomes, investigating new initiatives.	Ephesians 4:11		
Craftsmanship	Make stuff that glorifies God	The divine enablement to creatively design and/or construct items to be used for ministry.	Exodus 31:1-5 Exodus 35:30-35		
Creative Communication	Using the arts to glorify God	The divine enablement to communicate God's truth and usher people into God's presence through a variety of art forms.	Exodus 31:1-5 1 Chronicles 25:1		
Discerning spirits	To discern whether something is from God	This gift is used to discern whether a person ministering in God's name is really acting out of another source, human or satanic.	1 Corinthians 12:10		
Evangelist	To effectively communicate the good news to people who aren't Christians	Whilst all Christians are called to share in evangelism and to communicate their faith in appropriate ways at appropriate times, the person with the gift of an evangelist will frequently and naturally talk about the gospel with non-Christians and will often see them coming to faith in Jesus Christ and becoming full members of the church. The gift may be used in one-to-one settings, in evangelistic groups or in preaching, it may be used locally or itinerantly or in missionary use abroad.	Ephesians 4:11 Asdfsadfsd asdf		
Exhortation	To encourage others	This gift leads to encouragement, comfort, confrontation, challenge and instruction through the application of scriptural truth, leading to growth in faith, hope and love.	Romans 12:8		
Faith	To confidently trust in God for particular things	This is not the same as saving faith (which all Christians have and which is given by God) but is a special faith that a need or needs within the Christian community will be met, according to God's purposes and for the growth of his people.	1 Corinthians 12:9		

GIFT	MAIN EMPHASIS	DESCRIPTION	BIBLE REFERENCE	YOU	OTHER
Giving	To determine physical needs and provide physical resources.	Giving money or resources responsibly is part of normal Christian life but the person with the gift of giving has a special ability over and above what is required of the average Christian and will do so with 'liberality and cheerfulness'. The person with this gift may not possess the resources, but is motivated to pray and to see that the needs are met.	Romans 12:8		
Healing	To call on God to heal supernaturally	This gift brings God's power to bear on sickness, be it emotional, physical, or mental.	1 Corinthians 12:9, 28		
Helps	To aid others	This gift is a remarkable ability to work alongside another and help that person complete the task God has given them, through a whole variety of practical service.	1 Corinthians 12:28 Romans 12:7		
Hospitality	To welcome others	The divine enablement to care for people by providing fellowship, food and shelter	1 Peter 4:9-10 1 Timothy 3:2 Romans 12:13		
Intercession	To pray for others	The divine enablement to consistently pray on behalf of and for others; thus seeing frequent and specific results.	Colossians 4:12		
Interpretation of tongues	To interpret an unknown language	This gift enables a person to understand and communicate the meaning of an unknown language, often in corporate worship.	1 Corinthians 12:10		
Knowledge	To know God's way forward	This gift enables a person to discern, both through spiritual and practical means, God's insights into a particular situation that leads to a proper course of action. It may be exercised to help individuals or churches as a whole.	1 Corinthians 12:8		
Mercy	To empathise with those who suffer	The capacity both to feel sympathy with those in need (especially those suffering and miserable) and to manifest this sympathy in some practical helpful way with a cheerful spirit so as to encourage and help those in need.	Romans 12:8		
Miracles	To call on God to do supernatural acts	A miracle is 'an act of God intended as evidence of his power and purpose'. This gift is to be distinguished from the gifts of healing. Biblical examples are Peter's dealings with Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5 and Paul's with Elymas in Acts 13:4-12.	1 Corinthians 12:10, 28		

GIFT	MAIN EMPHASIS	DESCRIPTION	BIBLE REFERENCE	YOU	OTHER
Pastor	To care for the growth of believers	The pastor cares for the spiritual needs of a group and oversees their growth in Christ through modelling maturity, nurturing faith, protecting from error and teaching the faith.	Ephesians 4:11		
Prophecy	To correct	The capacity to deliver in public a truth (of a predictive nature as well as a situational word) from God in order to exhort, edify or console believers and to encourage non-believers of God's truth.	1 Corinthians 12:10 Romans 12:6		
Leadership/ruling	To set a vision for others and motivate others to fulfil it	The capacity to discern God's vision for a group of people and to exercise influence so as to lead the group towards the fulfilment of that vision.	Romans 12:8		
Teaching	To understand and communicate the truth of God in a clear and relevant way.	The gift of teaching enables members of the Christian community to learn effectively. It may be used in large groups, small groups or with individuals. It may be verbal or it may be used through written material; it may be didactic teaching or it may be more participative.	Romans 12:7		
Tongues	To speak an unknown language	The capacity spontaneously to give a message from God in unknown words to a group of people, to enhance the worship and help build up the Christian community. It needs to be accompanied by the gift of interpretation. It can also be used in private prayer.	1 Corinthians 12:10		
Wisdom	To discern God's way forward for complex situations.	The capacity to know the mind of the Spirit in a given situation and to communicate clearly the situation, facts, truth or application of facts and truth to meet the need of the situation.	1 Corinthians 12:8		

How do we use our gifts? (1 Corinthians 12)

We are called to use our gifts in a way that glorifies the giver, builds the body and extends the kingdom.

Remember the source 'There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them' (1 Corinthians 12:4). We can't boast or be proud, we can only humbly and gratefully receive them as gifts.

Develop a right attitude 'There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord' (1 Corinthians 12:5). Gifts are not about status but about service. Sadly churches are riddled with people seeking status, which is why we must model ourselves on the servant character of Christ.

Recognise your dependence on God 'There are different kinds of working...' (1 Corinthians 12:6). Each gift is given through grace and used in God's strength. That's why Paul only ever boasts about his weakness.

Focus on the common good Gifts are not about self-glorification but building the body (1 Corinthians 12:7-11).

Function as a body Verses 18-20 are a watershed in the passage. Verses 14-16 identify the problem of those who downplay their gifts, verses 21-24 the problem of those who deny others' gifts. Verses 18-20 stress the interconnectedness of the body, welded together by love. We need everyone to use their gifts if we are to function well as a body.

HEART / PASSION

There are seven indicators that may be helpful in the identification of a person's passion.

- 1 Imagine that you are meeting a Christian for the first time. In the course of the conversation you talk about a variety of topics. You then turn to a new subject. As you are talking about it you start speaking a little faster. You lean forward. You become increasingly animated. Your voice goes up a little. Your passion may be indicated by more active body language. You are talking about a subject that could keep you up late at night. It's the topic that would cause you to jump out of bed in the morning. What are you talking about?

- 2 Sometimes our dreaming or reflection allows us to imaginatively explore the desire of our heart. In these times, we may visualise or find ourselves being drawn toward something that heightens our feelings and enlarges our capacity for action. The image that we see will hit an emotional chord. When you are alone, do you wonder, "What if....?" Does your response to that question create emotional energy? What is it?

3 Make a list of your greatest achievements, but be sure that they are things that you enjoyed doing. These achievements may be accomplishments that others do not find particularly impressive, but are important to you. Are there similarities in your list of enjoyable achievements? What themes can you see?

4 What kinds of things are you doing? What topics are you involved in, in which do you lose track of time? When you are moving in the direction of your passion, time can easily slip away. Our passion can make us less aware of what is going on around us because we become so focused on what we care about the most. What might that be?

5 People who are fulfilling their passion are making a purposeful difference. (Even though you are making a difference, it doesn't necessarily mean you are serving in the area of your passion). Those who are expressing their heart's desire will find greater energy and focus as they positively impact those around them. The process of fulfilling your passion will not always be easy or fun. But in the midst of moving toward your passion, there is an inner confidence that you are doing what God wants you to do in the way he wants you to do it. There is an assurance that you are where he wants you, and that he is using you according to his divine purposes. Whether subtly or overtly, you are making a difference. Where is it happening? In what area would you like to see it happen?

6 Your passion will energise you. Not only will you become more alive emotionally, but the activity or thoughts about your passion will actually give you energy. This is God's way of moving you toward those people, roles, or causes that are his created agenda for your life. His will for you is partly revealed in your God-given passion. What energises you?

7 Whatever your passion is, it needs to be submitted to a twofold test:
(a) Does it glorify God?
(b) Does it edify others?

If your passion and its expression do not meet this test, you have not identified your God-given passion. You may have expressed a desire of *your* heart, but it is *not* from God. Does your passion glorify God and edify others? When you are abiding and delighting yourself in him, what desires do you have?

Reviewing your responses from above, how might you summarise your passion in a word or a phrase?

PERSONALITY / PERSONAL STYLE

The question of personality is huge. There are loads of online resources that can help us explore how our personality affects how we relate and interact with others. One that we found particularly useful/fun/time-wasting(!) is 16 personalities (www.16personalities.com). Here is a very brief set of questions that help us look at our personal style using both the online resources and these brief questions might be a good way of seeing how God has made you and how you prefer to relate to the world around you. As with all these SHAPE areas inviting others that we know well to comment and encourage is a great part of the discerning process.

God-given Personal Style: *What is my personal style?*

Your God-given personal style is the way you prefer to relate to the world around you.

How are you energised?

- I'm more comfortable doing things for people **or** being with people:
- When doing a task, I tend to focus on the goal **or** focus on relationships:
- I get more excited about advancing a cause **or** creating community:
- I feel I have accomplished something when I've got a job done **or** built a relationship:
- It is more important to start a meeting on time **or** when everyone is there:
- I'm more concerned with meeting a deadline **or** maintaining the team:
- I place a higher value on action **or** communication:

Answers indicate whether you are energised through **tasks or** through **people**.

How are you organised?

- While on holiday, I prefer to be spontaneous **or** follow a set plan:
- I prefer to set guidelines that are general **or** specific:
- I prefer to leave my options open **or** settle things now:
- I prefer projects that have variety **or** routine:
- I like to play it by ear **or** stick to a plan:
- I find routine boring **or** restful:
- I accomplish tasks best by working it out as I go **or** by following a plan:

Answers indicate whether you are organised being **unstructured or** **structured**.

S.H.A.P.E

Where We Serve in the Body of Christ: *Your Servant Profile*

Put together your Spiritual Gifts, Heart/Passion, Ability, Personality/Personal Style and Experiences to see where to serve.

S Spiritual Gift(s)

H Heart/Passion

A Abilities (list here your natural abilities)

P Personality / Personal Style

E Experiences (you may want to list some of the experiences, either negative or positive that have shaped you as a person).

Looking at these altogether can help form an idea of where God may be calling you to serve.