

Discovering your SHAPE

God created each of us individually with a specific purpose in mind - to enjoy and love Him. He wants us to enjoy serving Him and serving those around us. Your "SHAPE" is a simple way of understanding a blend of five factors that make you wonderfully unique yet complimentary to others in your life. Prayerfully exploring your shape can greatly impact your life as you experience God growing you in life, love and ministry. SHAPE is a tool; it's not "the way" to understand how God has created you but it is a great place to start!

Spiritual Gifts

Spiritual gifts are special abilities given to each believer by the Holy Spirit. Their purpose is to minister to others and build up the Body of Christ. The quantity or type of gift is not the issue; what is the issue is that we each understand our spiritual gift is a special gift God specifically gave to us when we placed our trust in Him. Gifts differ from natural talents because gifts can only be used for God's glory and to build the Kingdom of God.

Here is a list of 21 gifts is by category (this list is not necessarily exhaustive):

- **Gifts that *communicate* God's Word** | preaching, evangelism, missions, apostle
- **Gifts that *educate* God's people** | teaching, encouragement, wisdom, discernment, knowledge
- **Gifts that *demonstrate* God's love** | service, mercy, hospitality, pastoring, giving
- **Gifts that *celebrate* God's presence** | music, arts and crafts, intercession, healing, miracles, praying with the Spirit
- **Gifts that *support* others** | leadership, administration, faith

A spiritual gift survey is available on the iSERVE page. Remember, these are just tools to help you begin your understanding of how God has gifted you. Prayer, spending time in the Word and seeking wise counsel are important ways to help you further understand and clarify how God has gifted you. Understanding your gifting will help you in finding the best place to serve the Body of Christ in ministry.

Heart

The easiest way to understand your heart is to ask the question, "What do I love to do!?" Your heart is the real you; it holds your deepest of passions in life and is the biggest driving force behind what you say, how you say it, and why you generally feel and act the way you do. And, your unique heartbeat will race when you encounter activities, discuss topics or experience circumstances that resonate within our passion.

The motivation behind seeking to understand your heart is to use this internal guidance system as a tool to serve and minister to others. People who are effective and enthusiastic in their life and ministry have most likely discovered their passion and have unleashed the joy serving - they have found their heart.

Abilities

Abilities are exactly that: the things you know and know how to do. As simple as that sounds, many adults are still discovering what they are capable of actually doing!

Everyone is born with natural abilities. Some are obvious and we seemingly start doing them without any thought while others still need to be discovered. Looking at your past accomplishments and successful experiences is a great way to gain better understanding of your abilities. Another is to simply look at the vocational skills you exercise on a daily basis and exploring how those skills might be used in ministry.

One of the most amazing perspectives of God's sovereignty, especially with respect to the local church, is this: God has brought every person with every necessary gift and skill to accomplish everything He wants to accomplish today. This is also true on the individual level - everything God wants to share with you, do in you and minister through you is already "in" you. He is absolutely amazing!

Personality

God has wired each of us uniquely. There is no other human being with our exact likes and dislikes, tastes and preferences, disposition and temperament. No one!

There are lots of ways personalities can be studied but to keep things simple, look at these five dynamics that may help you better understand how God made each of us unique:

- **Extroverted vs. Introverted** - do you feel energized (or re-energized) when you are with people or when we are alone?
- **Thinker vs. Feeler** - how do you tend to make decisions, by using objective facts or leaning on your intuition?
- **Routine vs. Spontaneous** - how do you plan your day and what types of tasks do you prefer: routine (planned, predictable) or variety (play things as they come)?
- **Self-Controlled vs. Self-Expressive** - are you more tend to hold your opinions and moods to yourself, limiting your reactions when "in the moment" or do you find yourself sharing your thoughts, feelings and opinion openly.
- **Cooperative vs. Competitive** - is your natural tendency to lead or be led?

Understanding your personality and behavioral tendencies can help you as you prayerfully consider the best ministry and role. The Body of Christ has many members, each member doing his/her unique role to make the Body function the way God desires.

Experience

God carefully and deliberating orchestrates our experiences to teach, train and correct us on our journey of faith. These life experiences build our character, develop our trust in Him, and ultimately accomplish His purposes in us and through us.

Some of the greatest life lessons are a result of our weaknesses and failures, taking time to reflect on our difficult and challenging experiences (as well as our successes) is a great way to get the bigger picture of what God might be preparing us for in life and ministry.

S.H.A.P.E.

Many Christians become overwhelmed when they start asking big questions like, "What did God design me to be?" or "How does God want me to serve Him?" or even "Where does God want me to join Him in His work in this world?"

The best (and easiest) thing to do is look at where you are right now. What is God doing or trying to do in you? Your family? Your work? Your neighborhood? Your kids sports teams? Your church? God isn't trying, nor does He want to make this difficult; He just wants to enjoy it with you.

To recap:

- What spiritual gifts God has given me?
- What do I really love to do?
- What natural talents and abilities do I possess?
- Do I know how my personality and temperament can best be used in ministry?
- What have I done before that might help me discover how God is preparing me for ministry today?