

Discovering What You Are Designed To Do

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

HEART PASSIONS

ABILITIES

PERSONALITY

EXPERIENCES

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SESSION ONE – GETTING IN S.H.A.P.E

1. GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

Select an object in the room that symbolizes one of your major interests or what is important to you in life. Put it on the table and share with your table group why you chose it, as you briefly introduce yourself. (Where were you born? What was your biggest challenge as a child? What did you want to become when you grew up?)

2. GETTING STARTED FROM THE RIGHT PERSPECTIVE. *Read carefully the following verses.*

Learning Task: Reflect on the verses below. What insights do you see about God’s plan for your life and your life contribution? What are the typical ways most people define their purpose in life? How should a Christian define his or her life purpose?

“For we are what He has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.” Ephesians 2:10 (NIV)

“Make a careful exploration of who you are and the work you have been given, and then sink yourself into that. Don’t be impressed with yourself. Don’t compare yourself with others. Each of you must take responsibility for doing the creative best you can with your own life.” Galatians 6:4-5 (MSG)

“Oh yes, you shaped me first inside, then out; you formed me in my mother's womb. I thank you, High God—you're breathtaking! Body and soul, I am marvelously made! I worship in adoration—what a creation! You know me inside and out, you know every bone in my body; you know exactly how I was made, bit by bit, how I was sculpted from nothing into something. Like an open book, you watched me grow from conception to birth; all the stages of my life were spread out before you, the days of my life all prepared before I'd even lived one day.” Psalms 139:13-16 (MSG)

3. INTRODUCTION

Each member of God’s family has special gifts, talents, and abilities necessary for the church to fully achieve what God has intended. Not only are those gifts, talents, and abilities necessary for the church, but as individuals we grow and are fulfilled as we exercise them, and as a result, bring glory to God, our Creator.

Our goal at Trinity Episcopal Church is to help you find the right ministries where the unique blend of your **S.H.A.P.E.** can best be used. Only you can be you and your life and contribution are one of a kind and vital to our faith community and beyond. In the next few sessions we want you to look carefully and prayerfully at the following categories:

S=Spiritual Gifts	What gifts has God given me to serve others?
H=Heart (passion, desire)	What do I love to do and find meaningful?
A=Abilities	What natural talents and skills do I have?
P=Personality	Where does my personality best suit me to serve?
E=Experiences	What wealth of experiences have I had - pleasant and painful that have equipped me to serve?

4. THE PURPOSE OF S.H.A.P.E.

God created us for His glory. So what God made you to **BE** enables you to **DO** what He intends, therefore bringing Him glory, and also bringing you joy. Understanding the person God made you to be will enable you to understand his purpose for you. He would not give us in-born talents and personalities, spiritual gifts, and all kinds of life experiences and then not use them! By reviewing and studying these components, you will discover how you might fit into ministries that God has for you.

We will focus on **five personal factors** that have been combined to discover your shape. By identifying the specific traits you possess in each of these areas, new awareness of your own uniqueness and how God can use and develop you will become more apparent. In our final session we will then focus on how God guides to those assignments or good works that he has called us to fulfill.

One suggestion, as we begin this process of self-discovery: *while this profile can help you in finding your best fit for ministry, the most effective way is still by participating in a variety of ministries to discover what fits best and what doesn't. So get involved!*

Finally, an understanding of your unique S.H.A.P.E. does not excuse you from serving in areas of need— but it does provide direction for where you should invest most of your energy. Your **S.H.A.P.E.** will direct and enable your ministry!

5. **A QUICK PERSONAL ASSESSMENT.** Where are you now in thinking about your ministry direction and how best to use what God has given you for His service? The list below can help you indicate your current status. Circle the appropriate number as you reflect on each aspect: 3=yes, 2=somewhat, 1=no, 0=not sure. When you have finished, add the numbers for your score.

My unique God-given purpose in life is clear	3	2	1	0
My spiritual gifts are being expressed	3	2	1	0
My passions are being utilized for God	3	2	1	0
My natural abilities are being used to serve others	3	2	1	0
My personality is helping me to serve others	3	2	1	0
My purpose capitalizes on many of my experiences	3	2	1	0
My life is completely surrendered to the Lord	3	2	1	0
My attitudes and actions reflect a servant heart	3	2	1	0
My accountability to others is consistent	3	2	1	0
My schedule shows how I'm investing in others	3	2	1	0
My plan to fulfill my purpose from God is set	3	2	1	0

Total: _____

6. **Expectations.** *What would you like to gain from this course? What would be helpful? What is the one thing you would especially like God to do for you in the next weeks through this course?*

7. **A Prayer**

“Holy Father, please show me just how special you have made me. Take me wherever you need to, so I can experience you like never before. Ignite my heart. Let it forever burn for the things you desire most—people. Align my dreams and desires with yours.

Lord, I long to be a difference-maker. Show me the way and your will, so I can follow. I fully acknowledge that I can do nothing without you. Please grant me continued grace, love, and wisdom as I walk this journey with you.

Fill me with your love. Make my motives pure and honorable. Teach me the things I still need to learn so I can truly honor you with all of my life. Grant me faith like never before. Help me move away from my comforts and closer to your callings.

Father, help me find and fulfill the specific purpose in life you created me for so I can do your work in my generation for your glory. Amen”

Session 2 – Unwrapping Your Gifts

PART I—UNWRAPPING Your SPIRITUAL GIFTS

- 1. What are Spiritual Gifts?** The New Testament makes clear that God has given to each believer a special capacity with which to strengthen and build up the Body of Christ and to share his or her love with others. These capacities or abilities are in addition to your natural talents, personality traits or acquired skills. Every Christian has at least one spiritual gift (*“Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.” 1 Cor. 12:7*). Or as the Message version puts it, *“Each person is given something to do that shows who God is: Everyone gets in on it, everyone benefits.”* So spiritual gifts are given to bless the Body of Christ but discovering them is not the ultimate goal – using them to bless others is!
- 2. Key scripture passages about Spiritual Gifts**

Read through the following verses. What are your observations about the function and appropriate use of spiritual gifts? What is their purpose and how should they be used?

1 Corinthians 12:4-7. “There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.”

Romans 12: 6-8. “We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.”

1 Peter 4:10-11. “Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.”

Ephesians 4:11-16. It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”

3. How can I know what my spiritual gifts are? How do I go about discovering them?

1. *Remember this.* Keep in mind that each of us as believes has at least one spiritual gift. You may not have discovered your gifts or begun to really use them, but you definitely have them! How many gifts you have is not as important as using the gifts God has given to you. When we use what God has graced us with, people are helped, God is honored, and you are fulfilled.
2. *Study and learn.* Check out the list of gifts from Scripture and see if any resonate with your experience or sense of enablement.
3. *Test it out.* Just start serving and experiment with different ministries. Giftedness is best discovered in the midst of serving and doing rather than just by reading.
4. *Look for confirmation.* Pay attention to the results of serving and feedback from those who know you and have seen you in action. Do others recognize a particular gift operating through you? Do you seem to be more effective in one area than another? Does one kind of service give you a deeper sense of joy and fulfillment?
5. *Be willing to be sharpened.* Your spiritual character should be sharpened along with your giftedness. All of us can practice and improve our ability in using our gifts.
6. *Remain committed to the ministry and to using your gift.* (Romans 12:6-8; 1 Timothy 4:15) “Habitually practice these duties and be absorbed in them so that your growing proficiency in them may be evident to all.”

4. A final word about Spiritual Gifts.

- Spiritual gifts are not the same as your personality traits. Your personality however does provide a natural vehicle for expressing your gifts.
- Spiritual gifts are not the same as natural talents. Talents depend upon natural power but gifts on spiritual endowment through the Holy Spirit.
- Spiritual gifts are not the same as the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). The fruit of the Spirit reveal Christ's contribution to our character, while our spiritual gifts reveal the contribution we make to God's Kingdom.
- Spiritual gifts may work with and enhance natural abilities or acquired skills but ultimately spiritual gifts are special abilities that enable us to do God's work.

5. What might the Gifts look like in action? See Appendix for a detailed description.

6. Transfer your top three Spiritual Gifts from your completed survey to your S.H.A.P.E. Profile.

Session 3 – Exploring Your Giftedness Further

PART 2—HEART

Heart refers to our emotional center and that which touches it. Heart speaks of our passions or desires that emerge on behalf of a cause or special need. We instinctively care about some kinds of things and not about others. When we are concerned for others or see a special need, we tend to respond in different ways in wanting to help. In other words, your giftedness, past experiences and personality will tend to make you respond to causes or needs that reflect the way God has shaped and equipped you.

Paying attention to your passions or heart concerns can help direct you to the right kind of ministries. The ultimate contribution God has for you to make will align with the passions he has given you for his kingdom. Identifying your passions reveals another aspect of how God has created you for the good works that he has prepared in advance for you to do. (Ephesians 2:10).

Learning Task. Reflect on the following questions. What are the causes or concerns that you feel passionate about and have a desire to help?

1. *Know what drives you*
 - What motivates me to take action and get involved?

2. *Know who you care about*
 - Who is God nudging me to help?

 - Who do I feel I can most profoundly influence?

 - What age range do I feel led to work with?

 - How could I impact them in a way that best uses my gifts?

3. *Know the needs you will meet*
 - What needs have been met in my own life through the help and/or intervention of others?

 - What are the top two needs I love meeting from the categories below?
 - physical needs
 - spiritual
 - emotional
 - relational
 - educational
 - vocational

4. *Know the cause you will help champion*
 - What cause or issues capture my attention and move me to action?
 - Where could I make the greatest impact for God and His Kingdom?

 - If time or money weren't an issue, where would I donate myself?

5. *Know your ultimate dream for God's kingdom*
 - What pursuit would release the passion in my life for God?

 - What God-centered dream can I identify that has been buried?

6. *What makes your heart beat? Circle those topics below*
 - Abortion
 - Homelessness
 - Drug abuse/recovery
 - Alcoholism
 - Marriage/family issues
 - Environment
 - Christ-centered parenting
 - Poverty/hunger
 - Financial stewardship
 - Deafness
 - Sexuality and/or gender issues
 - HIV/AIDS
 - Divorce
 - Abuse/violence
 - Law and/or justice system
 - Educational issues
 - At-risk children
 - Policy and/or politics
 - Ethics
 - Compulsive behavior issues
 - Sanctity of life
 - Health and/or fitness
 - Disabilities and/or support
 - Spiritual apathy
 - Missions
 - Other

Translate what you learned about your own heartbeat (passion) in your SHAPE Profile.

PART 3—ABILITIES

Our natural abilities are part of God’s gifting as well. Our talents as well as acquired skills are important in considering how God wants to use us and can help direct our ministry for the Kingdom. The abilities you do have are a strong indication of what God wants you to do with your life. They are clues to knowing God’s will for you. God doesn’t waste abilities; he matches our calling and our capabilities.

Take a few minutes and complete the ability survey below. God wastes nothing in our lives and works through our abilities as well as our spiritual gifts.

ABILITY	LOVE IT	IT’S OK	NOT ME
Artistic-ability to conceptualize, picture, draw, paint, photograph			
Administering-ability to govern, run, rule			
Analyzing-ability to examine, investigate, probe, evaluate			
Building-ability to construct, make, assemble			
Coaching-ability to prepare, instruct, train, equip, develop			
Communicating-ability to share, convey, impart			
Computing-ability to add, estimate, total, calculate			
Connecting-ability to link, involve, relate			
Consulting-ability to advise, discuss, confer			
Cooking-ability to prepare, serve, feed, or cater			
Coordinating-ability to organize, match, harmonize			
Counseling-ability to guide, advise, support, listen, care for			
Decorating-ability to beautify, enhance, adorn			
Designing- ability to draw, create, picture, outline			
Developing- ability to expand, grow, advance, increase			
Directing- ability to aim, oversee, manage, supervise			
Editing- ability to correct, amend, alter, improve			
Encouraging- ability to cheer, inspire, support			
Engineering- ability to construct, design, plan			
Facilitating- ability to help, aid, assist, make possible			
Implementing- ability to apply, execute, make happen			
Improving- ability to better, enhance, further, enrich			
Influencing- ability to effect, sway, shape, change			
Landscaping- ability to garden, plant, improve			
Leading- ability to pave the way, direct, excel, win			
Managing- ability to run, handle, oversee people , coordinate			
Mentoring- ability to advise, guide, teach			

Motivating- ability to provoke, induce, prompt			
Negotiating- ability to discuss, consult, settle			
ABILITY	LOVE IT	IT'S OK	NOT ME
Operating- ability to run mechanical or technical things			
Organizing- ability to simplify, arrange, fix, classify, coordinate			
Performing- ability to sing, speak, plan an instrument, act			
Pioneering- ability to bring about something new, original			
Planning- ability to arrange, map out, prepare, organize			
Promoting- ability to sell, sponsor, endorse, showcase			
Recruiting- ability to enlist and motivate people to get involved			
Repairing- ability to fix, mend, restore, heal			
Researching- ability to read, gather information, study			
Resourcing- ability to furnish, provide, deliver			
Serving- ability to help, assist, fulfill			
Strategizing- ability to think ahead, calculate, scheme			
Teaching- ability to explain, demonstrate, tutor			
Translating- ability to interpret, decode, explain, speak			
Visualizing- ability to picture, imagine, dream, conceptualize			
Welcoming- ability to convey warmth, greet, embrace, comfort			
Writing- ability to compose, create, record			

List what you think are your top five natural abilities

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Remember to transfer these abilities to your SHAPE Profile.

PART 4—PERSONALITY

Personality means the person God made you to be—the complex combination of characteristics that distinguish you as an individual, that affect the way you think, feel, and act. Our purpose is not to be just like each other but to please God, who loves the variety of the people He created!

The Bible gives us plenty of evidence that God uses all types of personalities. There is no right or wrong temperament for effective ministry. We need all kinds of personalities to balance the church and give it its flavor.

While there are many helpful temperament explanations such as the Myers-Briggs and the DISC, in the following basic assessment we will just focus on two things:

- How you relate to others: Your Kingdom Purpose is all about people, so it is important to discover you relate to others.
- How you respond to opportunities: You will encounter many serving opportunities throughout your life so understanding how you react to various situations will help you make the best choices.

In these character traits put an X on the line in the spot that best describes you:

A. Relating to others:

Outgoing _____ Reserved
(Do you prefer interacting with many people and tend to gain energy from being around them or do you prefer interacting with just a few at a time or may even one-on-one, and find your energy renewed through quiet, reflective time.)

Self-expressive _____ Self-controlled
(Do you tend to be open and verbal with your thoughts and enjoy sharing them with others, or do you tend to keep your thoughts to yourself and be described as more self-controlled)

Cooperative _____ Competitive
(Do you commonly accept the opinions of others without disagreement? Do you tend to avoid conflict or competitive situations if possible? Do you focus on making sure people around you are okay? Or do you enjoy winning, embrace conflict and asserting yourself competitively?)

B. Response to opportunities (my typical response when God brings me a new opportunity):

High risk _____ Low risk
(Do you seek out situations that involve risks and fresh challenges? Are you more motivated when you can overcome obstacles in order to achieve success? Or do you tend to avoid much change and thrive when risk is low?)

People Driven _____ Project Driven
(Do you get excited about opportunities that involve people or do you prefer situations that require behind the scenes work on projects that help people?)

Follow _____ Lead
(Do you feel more comfortable when you can follow someone else or do you find yourself often leading?)

Team _____ Solo
(Do you enjoy working within a team environment or do you work most effectively when alone?)

Routine _____ Variety
(Do you find fulfillment when you can complete one project at a time or do have a high capacity and look for multiple projects in which to be involved?)

It will be hard to fulfill your Kingdom Purpose if you take on ministry opportunities that don't align with the way God has fashioned you. Too often people settle for good opportunities when they should be embracing great ones for God. Attempting to conform to types and patterns that are outside your natural SHAPE creates frustration for ourselves and keeps us from achieving our God-given best. We honor God when we accept our distinct personalities and use them for his purposes; not grudgingly but joyfully live out the SHAPE God created within us.

“Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, ⁸ because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.” (Eph. 6:7-8).

Record your results on your SHAPE Profile

PART 5—EXPERIENCES

There is purpose to my past—life-shaping moments and experiences, both positive and negative, that make you unique and God can transform for life-giving ministry.

List several positive experiences in the categories listed below. These may be seemingly insignificant to others, but to you they are significant.

1. Personal (e.g. an award, a challenge overcome, a habit broken, goal set and achieved)
2. Vocational (significant achievements in a work related area)
3. Relational (e.g. a friendship, a marriage, a restoration, a break up, someone you influence, etc.)
4. Educational (formal, non-formal, or informal learning)
5. Spiritual (walk with the Lord, growth, service, milestones, sacred moments and events)

List several painful experiences from any of the above categories. What good has come out of them, and how might you see these experiences benefiting others in the future?

- 1.
- 2.

Transfer information to your SHAPE Profile.

“Listen to your life. See it for the fathomless mystery it is, in the boredom and pain of it no less than in the excitement and gladness; touch, taste, smell your way to the holy and hidden heart of it because in the last analysis all moments are key moments, and life itself is grace.” Frederick Buechner, from Listen to Your Life.

MY S.H.A.P.E. PROFILE

Spiritual Gifts: How the Holy Spirit has gifted me to function

The spiritual gifts I believe God has given me are:

I feel I could use these gifts in the following way to serve others:

Heart: Passion

Who I love to serve:

The needs I love to meet in another person's life:

The cause I feel God wants me to align with and support for Him:

Abilities: Where I naturally excel

My top abilities are:

Personality: How God has wired me

I tend to relate to others by being:

Outgoing_____Reserved

Self-expressive_____Self-controlled

Cooperative_____Competitive

I tend to respond to opportunities that are:

High risk_____Low risk

People Driven_____Project Driven

Follow_____Lead

Team_____Solo

Routine_____Variety

Experiences: Where I have been, what I have done

Some of my positive experiences include:

Areas in which I feel I could help another person include:

Some of my painful experiences include:

Areas God has helped me through that I feel I could help another person through:

Session 4

Discerning a God-given assignment

“And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ” (Phil 1:9-10).

Christian service at church or ministry in our communities is all about changing things and building things. It’s about turning vision into reality; and about translating God’s purposes into changed lives, changed structures and changed environments. However, ultimately service is not about fulfilling our dreams but fulfilling our God-given assignments. Our role is to follow the Lord of the Harvest and as the Apostle Paul put it, to serve “... as the Lord has assigned to each his task.” (1 Cor.3:5). The big challenge, however, is in discerning what are truly God-given assignments and then pursuing those and not just our own ideas.

We’ve been looking carefully at how God has created and gifted each of us. As we have seen, our SHAPE is very helpful in giving us direction for our service. At the same time, there are multiple opportunities or needs that theoretically we could meet. The question is, how do I know which to choose or where at any given time should I invest my energies?

Our need as we grow and mature as Christians is to be able to discern the best from the good and to be able to filter out those things which may be useful or needful but not necessarily God’s best for us at this point. The following are some guidelines for guidance in discerning our God-given assignments.

A. A good starting point

- We begin with a strong confidence that God has a plan for our lives
- We believe that He will guide us in discerning His best for our lives
- “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)
- “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.” (Hebrews 12:1)

B. You decide. *How then do we identify the good works that God purposes for us or discern our particular lane? Here are some suggested ways of discerning God’s guidance. Read them through and consider which approach seems to fit best with your understanding of how God guides. What are the strengths or weaknesses of each?*

- **The “to-do list” approach.** God has good works for us to accomplish. God reveals the where, when and how through prayer, Scripture, godly counsel and circumstances. God has a specific plan for my life and I must discover and do it in order to be in God’s will. My task is to find God’s “to-do list” for my life, and then at each junction pursue it.
- **The “godly wisdom” approach.** We have freedom to make choices as long as they are in the moral will of God. God has revealed all that we basically need to know to live out the Christian life. As we make choices consistent with his revealed purposes and values in Scripture, we are thus within God’s will. Our role is to be good stewards of all the gifts, resources and opportunities put before us.
- **The “partnership with God” approach.** Paul describes us in 1 Cor. 3:9 as God’s fellow-workers. Paul writes, “...for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.” (Phil 2:13). God does not treat us merely as robots at the end of a remote control. Rather there is a divine synergy between God and each of us individually in working out His plan for our lives.

C. **The example of Titus may give us insights to how God guides.** “I thank God, who put into the heart of Titus the same concern I have for you. For Titus not only welcomed our appeal, but he is coming to you with much enthusiasm and on his own initiative.” (2 Cor. 8:16-17). *How does this verse help us to understand our partnership with God?*

- God put into the heart of Titus the same concern, coupled with Titus’ own personal desire to serve “with much enthusiasm” and “on his own initiative”.
- This indeed is a mysterious blending of the divine working with the human will.
- Here is a blending of the subjective with the objective in providing the sense of guidance for both Titus and Paul.
- “...for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.” (Phil 2:13).

D. **Another example.** “With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith. (2 Thess. 1:11). The initiative seems to come from us. After taking the first step in faith, God works to fulfill it. Here is the mystery of partnership with God. What are your observations or applications to discerning God’s guidance?”

E. **Guidelines for deciding.** The following guidelines may help steer our thinking through this important decision-making process of discerning a God-given assignment.

1. Assignments that apply to all

- The Apostle Paul reminds us, "...to live a life worthy of the calling you have received." (Ephesians 4:1). *What does this imply for each of us?*

2. **Assignments just for you.** Assignments that express our unique giftedness and basic function in the Body of Christ have priority. In 1 Peter 4:10 Peter says, "Each one should use whatever spiritual gift he has received to serve others, faithfully ministering God's grace in its various forms". *How does this give direction to your primary service and assignments?*

3. **Assignments that respond to needs and opportunities.** The New Testament is filled with exhortations for God's peoples to engage in "good works" (e.g. 2 Cor. 9:8; Gal. 6:9-10; Eph. 2:10; Titus 2:7, 14). Each of us is to respond to needs and opportunities for doing good and by doing so we are fulfilling God's redemptive purpose or calling for us.

What do you think? *Discuss the following quote and share your conclusions:*

"In my daily priorities and choices, any action or response that flows naturally from life's circumstances or demands and looks like, smells like and talks like a good work, becomes a God-given assignment to me at that point. Whatever best expresses the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) in a situation, qualifies automatically as God's assignment and thus God's call or will for me." Is there a need or opportunity you need to respond to?

4. **Assignments that come from a God-given burden or concern.** God also works in our hearts so that a vision, burden or concern to meet a need begins to emerge and then gives us a conviction that there is something we need to do. *What can we learn from Paul's following statement, "I thank God, who put into the heart of Titus the same concern I have for you. For Titus not only welcomed our appeal, but he is coming to you with much enthusiasm and on his own initiative" (2 Cor. 8:16).*

5. **Assignments that come from organizational requirements.** *What does Scripture say about God's will for us when we are a part of an organization as an employee or even as a volunteer?* "Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not

men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.” (Ephesians 6:5-8). *What are the implications?*

F. In summary.

- Guidance seems to be a process that involves both subjective and objective elements.
- Scripture portrays this dynamic as a partnership with God
- Guidance involves being a good steward of our gifting and unique opportunities.
- God promises to lead us and will find appropriate ways and means to do so.
- Much of his will has already been revealed in Scripture and now God expects us to follow.
- In the end, however, we are all called to walk by faith and not sight.

G. Mapping your assets. God has both equipped and called us for His service. You might be surprised to realize all that God has actually put into your life to enable you to respond to God-given opportunities and needs. Here is a simple suggestion for your next steps in determining how best to discover your ministry.

1. **Examine your total assets.** Review your SHAPE and what you’ve seen thus far but also look carefully at what else is part of your life. What kind of material and economic resources do you have? What are your associations and connections with people or institutions that you might be able to call upon to help meet a need or solve a problem? Once you’ve started looking, you’ll be amazed at just how much you have available to use in service.
2. **Connect the dots.** Start looking at opportunities or needs around you. Is there a person who is struggling? Is there something you can make or do that would contribute to a project? Ask God to open your eyes to specific needs and then pay attention when things come into focus or appeals are made. Look then to connect the dots between how God has equipped you and a particular challenge or need that appears and appeals. Look also to see if anyone else has a similar sense of calling.
3. **Vote with your feet.** Finally, take the first step and offer yourself. Follow your heart with discerning eyes and turn good intentions into actions. In time you’ll find yourself gravitating to forms of ministry or particular projects that best fit your SHAPE and thus bring glory to God.

DESCRIPTION OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Administration

Definition: The supernatural ability to direct the efforts of a group of people through careful organization and oversight as it related to the purposes of God (I Corinthians 12:28)

Traits: objective, responsible, organized, goal-oriented, efficient, conscientious

Distinctives: People with this gift:

- Develop strategies or plans to reach identifiable goals
- Assist ministries to become more effective and efficient
- Create order out of organizational chaos
- Manage or coordinate a variety of responsibilities to accomplish a task
- Organize people, tasks, or events

Cautions:

- Be open to adjusting your plans, so you don't stifle a leader's vision
- Be careful not to use people simply to accomplish your goals without being concerned for their growth in the process
- Focus on the fulfillment of God's purposes in the process of meeting a goal

Apostleship

Definition: The supernatural ability to create, build, and implement a formalized structure for church planting. "Missionary" or "sent one," not the Office of Apostle (I Corinthians 12:18)

Traits: Adventurous, entrepreneurial, persevering, adaptable, culturally-sensitive, risk-taking, cause-driven

Distinctives: People with this gift:

- Pioneer and establish new ministries or churches
- Adapt to different surroundings by being culturally sensitive and aware
- Desire to minister to unreached people in other communities or countries
- Have responsibilities to oversee ministries or groups of churches
- Demonstrate authority and vision for the mission of the church

Cautions:

- Be aware that misusing your authority can quench the spirit in others
- Don't be demanding and pessimistic
- You must be affirmed and sent by the church

Discernment

Definition: The supernatural ability to distinguish between the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. (I Corinthians 12:10)

Traits: Perceptive, insightful, sensitive, intuitive, decisive, challenging, truthful

Distinctives: People with this gift:

- Distinguish truth from error, right from wrong, pure motives from impure
- Identify deception in others with accuracy and appropriateness
- Determine whether a word attributed to God is authentic
- Recognize inconsistencies in teaching, prophetic message or interpretation

- Are able to sense the presence of evil

Cautions:

- Work on learning how to express perceptions, feelings, or insights appropriately
- Be careful not to be harsh when confronting others; instead, speak the truth in love
- Be sure to confirm your prospectations with scripture and others before speaking

Encouragement/Exhortation

Definition: The supernatural ability to present truth so as to strengthen, comfort, or urge to action those who are discouraged or wavering in their faith. The supernatural ability to come alongside to help, to strengthen the weak, reassure the wavering, buttress the buffeted, steady the faltering, console the troubled, encourage the halting (Flynn). (Romans 12:8)

Traits: Positive, motivating, challenging, affirming, reassuring, supportive, trustworthy

Distinctives: People with this gift:

- Come to the side of those who are discouraged to strengthen and reassure them
- Challenge, comfort, or confront others to trust and hope in the promises of God
- Urge others to action by applying biblical concepts
- Motivate others to grow
- Emphasize God’s promises and have confidence in His will

Cautions:

- Avoid being overly optimistic or too simplistic
- Take time to understand where others are and what they really need
- Sometimes confrontation is necessary—you may not be able to say only positive things

Evangelism

Definition: The supernatural ability to communicate the gospel in terms that are clearly understood and relevant to the unbeliever (Ephesians 4:11)

Traits: Sincere, candid, respected, influential, spiritual, confident, commitment oriented

Distinctives: People with this gift:

- Communicate the message of Christ with clarity and conviction
- Seek out opportunities to talk to unbelievers about spiritual matters
- Challenge unbelievers to faith and to become fully devoted followers of Christ
- Adapt their presentation of the gospel to connect with the individual’s needs
- Seek opportunities to build relationships with unbelievers

Cautions:

- Remember that the Holy Spirit, not guilt, is the motivator in a person's decision for Christ
- Avoid becoming critical of others by remembering that we are all witnesses but we are not all evangelists
- Listen carefully, because the same approach is not appropriate for everyone

Faith

Definition: The supernatural ability to recognize God's plan in a given situation and believe with unwavering confidence that He will accomplish it. Different from saving faith or general faith found in every believer. (I Corinthians 12:9)

Traits: Prayerful, optimistic, trusting, assured, positive, inspiring, hopeful

Distinctives: People with this gift:

- Believe the promises of God and inspire others to do the same
- Act in complete confidence in God's ability to overcome obstacles
- Demonstrate an attitude of trust in God's will and His promises
- Advance the cause of Christ because they go forward when others will not
- Ask God for what is needed and trust Him for His provision

Cautions:

- Act on your faith
- Remember that those who speak with reason and desire to plan do not necessarily lack faith
- Listen to and consider the counsel of wise and spirit-filled believers

Giving

Definition: The supernatural ability to joyfully and freely contribute money and resources to the Lord without ulterior motive (Romans 12:8)

Traits: Stewardship-oriented, responsible, resourceful, charitable, trusts in God, disciplined

Distinctives: People with this gift:

- Manage their finances and limit their lifestyle in order to give as much of their resources as possible
- Support the work of ministry with sacrificial gifts to advance the Kingdom
- Meet tangible needs that enable spiritual growth to occur
- Provide resources, generously and cheerfully, trusting God for His provision
- May have a special ability to make money so that they may use it to further God's work

Cautions:

- Esteem your gift, remembering that giving money and resources is a spiritual contribution to the body of Christ
- Remember the church's agenda is determined by leaders, not the giver's gift
- Guard against greed

Helps/Serving

Definition: The supernatural ability to assist, support, or enable another (I Corinthians 12:28)

Traits: Available, willing, helpful, reliable, loyal, dependable, whatever-it-takes attitude

Distinctives: People with this gift:

- Serve behind the scenes wherever needed to support the gifts and ministries of others
- See the tangible and practical things to be done and enjoy doing them
- Sense God's purpose and pleasure in meeting everyday responsibilities
- Attach spiritual value to practical service
- Enjoy knowing that they are freeing up others to do what God has called them to do.

Cautions:

- Esteem your gift, remembering that doing practical deeds is a spiritual contribution to the body of Christ
- Work at being able to say "No"
- Don't set your own agenda; be responsive to the priorities of leadership

Knowledge/Wisdom

Definition of Knowledge: The supernatural ability to search, systematize and summarize the teachings of the Word of God (Flynn) (I Corinthians 12:8)

Definition of Wisdom: The supernatural ability to apply knowledge to difficult situations, to weight their true nature, and to exercise spiritual insight into the right or wrong of a complex state of affairs (Flynn) (I Corinthians 12:8)

Traits: Inquisitive, responsive, observant, insightful, reflective, studious, and truthful

Distinctives: People with this gift:

- Receive truth that enables them to better serve the body
- Search the scriptures for insight, understanding, and truth
- Have an unusual insight or understanding that serves the church
- Organize information for teaching and practical use
- Gain knowledge that was not attained by natural observations or means

Cautions:

- Be careful of pride
- Remember that it's God's message, not yours, when you give the knowledge of the Word to the body of Christ

Leadership

Definition: The supernatural ability to cast vision, motivate, and direct people in order to accomplish the purposes of God (Romans 12:8)

Traits: Influential, diligent, visionary, trustworthy, persuasive, motivating, goal-setter

Distinctives: People with this gift:

- Provide direction for God's people or ministry
- Motivate others to perform to the best of their abilities
- Present the "big picture" for others to see
- Model the values of the ministry

- Take responsibility and establish goals

Cautions:

- Realize your relational credibility takes time and is critical for leadership effectiveness
- Remember that servant leadership is the biblical model, that greatest means being the servant of all
- You do not need to be in a leadership position to use this gift

Mercy

Definition: The supernatural ability to manifest practical, compassionate, and cheerful love towards suffering members of the Body of Christ. Different than general command for all believers to show mercy (Romans 12:8)

Traits: Empathetic, caring, responsive, kind, compassionate, sensitive, burden-bearing

Distinctives: People with this gift:

- Focus upon alleviating the sources of pain or discomfort in suffering people.
- Address the needs of the lonely and forgotten.
- Express love, grace, and dignity to those facing hardship and crisis.
- Serve in difficult or unsightly circumstances and do so cheerfully.
- Concern themselves with individual and social issues that oppress people.

Cautions:

- Be aware that rescuing people from their pain may be hindering God's work in them.
- Guard against feeling "unappreciated" since some of the people helped will not show or express any appreciation.
- Guard against becoming defensive and angry about the sources of others pain.

Prophecy

Definition: The supernatural ability to proclaim the written Word of God with clarity and to apply it to a particular situation, with a view to correction or edification. (I Corinthians 14:3)

Traits: Discerning, compelling, uncompromising, outspoken, authoritative, convincing, confronting

Distinctives: People with this gift:

- Expose sin and deception in others for the purpose of reconciliation.
- Speak a timely word from God causing conviction, repentance, and edification.
- See truth that others often fail to see and challenge them to respond.
- Warn of God's immediate or future judgment if there is no repentance.
- Understand God's heart and mind through experiences He takes them through.

Cautions:

- Be aware that listeners may reject the message if not spoken with love and compassion.
- Avoid pride that can create a demanding or discouraging spirit that hinders growth.

Shepherding

Definition: The supernatural ability to guide a group of people into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ through the use of the Word of God, and by nurturing and caring for them in the process (Ephesians 4:11-12)

Traits: Influencing, nurturing, guiding, discipling, protective, supportive, relational

Distinctives: People with this gift:

- Take responsibility to nurture the whole person in their walk with God.
- Provide guidance and oversight to a group of God's people.
- Model with their life what it means to be a fully devoted follower of Jesus.
- Establish trust and confidence through long-term relationships.
- Lead and protect those within their span of care.

Cautions:

- Remember that God judges those who neglect or abuse their oversight responsibilities.
- Be aware that the desire to feed and support others can make it difficult to say "No."
- Realize that some of those being nurtured will grow beyond the shepherd's own ability, and need to be freed to do so.

Teaching

Definition: The supernatural ability to communicate biblical truth in an accurate, clear, and concise manner, which results in greater involvement and obedience to the Word of God. (Romans 12:7, I Corinthians 12:28-29)

Traits: Disciplined, perceptive, analytical, articulate

Distinctives: People with this gift:

- Communicate biblical truth that inspires great obedience to the Word of God.
- Challenge listeners simply and practically with the truths of Scripture.
- Present the whole counsel of God for maximum life change.
- Prepare through extended times of study and reflection.

Cautions:

- Avoid pride that may result from your "superior" Bible knowledge and understanding.
- Be careful not to become too detailed when teaching and fail to make practical life application.
- Remember that your spirituality is not based on how much you know.

