



YOUR *SHAPE* FOR GOD'S SERVICE

Enabling people to discover the gifts
God has given them and how they
might use those in His service

LEADERS GUIDE

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

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Please print a copy of this for each of your participants.

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INTRODUCTION



YOUR SHAPE FOR GOD'S SERVICE

Your *SHAPE for God's Service* is a series of three sessions designed to help churches as they enable people to discover their unique *SHAPE*, the gifts God has given them and how they might use those in His service.

It is our desire that the sessions will enable your church to build disciples and to develop the gifts of God's people. God gives each of us gifts through the power of the Holy Spirit. As we serve Christ, we look to identify these gifts, invest in their development and find practical opportunities to use them.

Hopefully this process will enable participants to live and serve with more joy, satisfaction and fruitfulness. This should build a healthy growing church, and will affect the way each person engages with their family, friends, job, community, and voluntary / leisure activities.

Each of the three two-hour sessions includes input from the session leaders on the topic and some Biblical teaching. There are practical exercises, and discussions to help each person apply the materials to their life situation. There is also space for the group to pray and to listen to God together.

A personal reflection exercise is also provided for participants to do at home after each session to help them to reflect upon what they have heard and discussed and to consider what it might mean for their life.

At the end of the three sessions each individual is encouraged to participate in an **individual review**. This involves sitting down with their parish priest or minister to consider how they will put what they have learned into practice. Whilst this element is entirely optional and group members should be given the option not to participate in this, we do believe there is great value in making space for this at the end of the sessions. Resources are provided for this.

The sessions could be run within a church setting, or it might be appropriate to connect with other local churches to run the sessions in partnership for a focused season.



SHAPE EXPLAINED

Session Two provides participants with an opportunity to discern their *SHAPE* for God's service.

By looking at the five areas of *SHAPE*, participants are equipped to understand more about who they are, how God has created them and how He has used life to shape them.

SHAPE stands for:

- S**piritual gifts God's unique gifts to us as members of Christ's Body.
- H**ear't's desire what motivates and excites us; what we most long to do.
- A**bilities our strengths, knowledge and skills.
- P**ersonality our character, style, preferences, personal qualities.
- E**xperiences our life experiences – both good and bad – and what we have learned and gained from them.

Spiritual gifts indicate what we will do when we serve.

Heart's desire indicates where we are best suited to serve.

Abilities indicate the gifts and talents God has given and grown within us for service.

Personality indicates the ways we will serve.

Experiences indicate the way God is moulding us for service and at work in our present lives.

HOW TO RUN THE SESSIONS

Venue: Choose an appropriate venue where people can feel relaxed and able to share openly and honestly with one another in an informal atmosphere.

Size of group: We recommend that you gather a group of between 5 and 15 participants.

Leaders: Whilst the sessions could be run by a single leader, we find it works best if there are two voices leading the sessions through.

Refreshments: We recommend that you offer people tea and coffee refreshments at the beginning of each session.

Length of session: Sessions are designed to be two hours long and have one hour and 45 mins of programmed content allowing for 15 mins of arrival and hospitality time at the beginning.

Confidentiality: As people are sharing honestly and openly it is important that you stress to the group the importance of the group space being a confidential place.

Participants Workbook: All the resources, questions and notes are available for group members in the Participants Workbook. Prepare well and make sure you have printed a full copy of the workbook for each group member.

Adaptation: Whilst much thought has gone into the design of each session, you know your group best. Please feel free to adapt the sessions as you see fit to best meet the needs of the group you are working with.

The Leader's Role

The leader needs to be experienced at leading small groups, an encourager and pastor, mature in faith, discerning, able to create a relaxed atmosphere and set an example of openness and honesty.

It is not necessary to be good at didactic teaching/preaching or to know much about the theology of gifts, calling, etc.

The role is one of gentle facilitation – making people feel safe; chairing the discussions; drawing people out so that everyone participates; keeping to time.

Do pray regularly for the session participants throughout the duration of the *SHAPE* sessions.

Using the Leaders' Notes

For each of the three sessions, there are detailed Leaders' Notes. They provide a detailed script for all the input sections to save you preparation time. The scripted sections are noted by italics.

Obviously it would be very stilted if you read this out word-for-word! It simply gives an indication of what needs to be covered. The key points are underlined, so you could just use these, and expand on them in your own words. Please do also make time to tell personal stories, share your own reflections or use props to illustrate and reinforce key points to people.

The Leaders' Notes also give detailed instructions for all the group activities and exercises, and everything that needs to be done by you.

Each session is divided into short sections, to give plenty of variety. An idea of timings is given for each section. This is not intended to tie you down, but is shown so that if you decide to change the content to spend more time on one section, you will know how much you'll need to shorten another.

Individual Review Session

At the end of the three sessions, each group member should be offered the opportunity to have a personal one-to-one session with someone (probably their parish priest or minister, or perhaps one of the group leaders). This entirely optional session provides individuals with the opportunity to discuss how they can put the insights about their *SHAPE* and gifts into practice – for example, looking at practical ways in which their unique *SHAPE* might enable them to serve God more fully through the Church or in their job, in the community, or through their other relationships and activities.

This meeting should also provide an opportunity for the individual to pray with their parish priest or minister about what God has been saying to them through their participation in the sessions. Information regarding this can be found at the end of this leaders guide and in the **Participants Workbook**. The 'Individual Review: Information for Individual Review Facilitators' pages (pp. 26-28) should be copied and made available to anyone facilitating one of these meetings to guide and inform their discussions with group members.

PUBLICITY WORDING

You are free to produce your own publicity to use to invite people to participate in the sessions, however here we have provided some suggested wording that may help you produce your invitations. A template poster is also available within this guide for your use should you wish to.

Join us to explore Your *SHAPE* for God's Service

Please join us for three informal meetings where together we will explore our unique God-given "*SHAPE*", discover more about our gifts and strengths and how we can use these in His service.

We will look at:

- God's unique gifts to you
- What motivates and excites you; what you love to do
- Your talents, knowledge and skills
- Your character, personal qualities and strengths
- Your life experiences and what you've gained from them

Following each session a personal reflection activity will enable you to consider these themes further.

Dates:

Venue:

Contact details:

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



Diocese of Bristol
Creating connections

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Other materials adapted with permission from the 'Your *SHAPE* for God's Service' course written and produced by Amiel Mary E. Osmaston, 2013. A 6-session course exploring *SHAPE* in more detail is available from www.germinate.net/church-life/your-shape-for-gods-service-2/

Session 1 Personal Reflection exercise acknowledgement and credit to www.lifeway.com/discipleship





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Your talents, knowledge and skills

Your character, personal qualities and strengths

Your life experiences and what you've gained from them

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Dates

Venue

Contact





SESSION 1: DISCIPLES

Through this session, participants will explore the following topics:

- Developing a biblical understanding of discipleship
- Understanding our identity as a disciple
- Knowing who we are in Christ
- Our place as a created, gifted individual made in the image of God.

For this session you will need:

- Session 1 worksheet (Participants Workbook pp. 2-3)
- Session 1 Personal Reflection worksheet (Participants Workbook pp. 4-12)



SHAPE SESSIONS OVERVIEW

10 mins

Explain the purpose and structure of the sessions as in on page 3.

Participating in these sessions may confirm things you already know or have half expected. On the other hand, it may challenge or even change the way you see yourself.

We're not just doing this for selfish reasons, looking for self-fulfilment. This is so that God's kingdom may be built up as each person finds the ministry to which God is calling them in the Church and in the world. We want God's will to be done on earth, as we pray in the Lord's Prayer. As we find our role in this, it will enable each of us to live and serve with more joy, satisfaction and fruitfulness. We aren't just talking about doing things in church either; it will also affect the way we engage with the wider world, our family, friends, job, community, voluntary and leisure activities.

It's important that we can create a friendly, relaxed atmosphere where people feel safe to share things at a personal level; however, nobody will be forced to talk about anything which they wish to keep private.

*If we really want to learn more about our **SHAPE** for God's service, we'll need to be as open and honest as possible. So we'll want to be sure that nobody is going to repeat personal things about us to anyone else outside this group. We must keep confidential everything that other people say about themselves or about other people.*

If you have any questions or concerns about anything that happens during the sessions, then please do come and speak to the leader(s) or to your parish priest or minister.



SESSION INTRODUCTION

10 mins

Ask group members to turn to **Session 1** in their **Participants Workbook** and explain that we will use this sheet as our guide throughout the session.

“Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV)

“Discipleship is the ongoing, lifelong process of growing to live more fully as a follower of Jesus Christ.”



Invite the group to share their thoughts about what a disciple is.

If evangelism is the natural outworking of proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ then discipleship is the term we use for teaching, baptizing and nurturing Christians. Discipleship is based in a relationship. To be a disciple of Jesus means, first and foremost, to have a relationship with him.

For the faithful disciple, this relationship with Christ continues to grow. Like any relationship, when it is not attended to it withers; when it becomes stagnant it dies; when it is taken for granted it becomes shallow. Faithful disciples of Jesus Christ attend to their relationships with Christ so that it will continue to deepen; to become richer; to shape their identity as people.





SESSION CONTENT



◆ BIBLE STUDY 1

25 mins

Acts 2:41-42 provides some key insights into ways this deepening happens in the life of the disciple.

'Those who accepted his message were baptised, and about 3,000 were added to their number that day. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.'

This definition of discipleship gives us our opening into the importance of teaching and lifelong learning within the life of the local church and community.

*From the earliest days of the Church, the very personal commitment to follow Christ on the Way has been marked by the public act of baptism. **The Church is the community of people who have been baptised.***

◆ REFLECT AND SHARE

Q1 Can you remember any of the words or actions that form part of the baptism or confirmation services?

Q2 In what ways might the act of baptism or confirmation be significant in the life of a disciple?

Q3 How might you explain to people the significance of baptism or confirmation?

*Recently, baptism has been defined as **"the sign of new life through Jesus Christ. It unites the one baptised with Christ and with his people."***

Paul writing to the Corinthians picks up this theme in 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, when he says "we were all baptised by one Spirit so as to form one body".

It has been said that baptism is God's gift and our response to that gift. In other words, it's about giving and receiving.

God calls everyone of us to serve Him as followers of Jesus Christ. As we saw in the passage from Corinthians, He gives gifts to His disciples for building up the local church and for supporting one another. Some are obvious 'up front' gifts like preaching, teaching, leading worship or what we call ministry gifts. For many in the local church, the hidden roles are where our gifts are most used. Gifts like hospitality, administration, friendship, pastoral care and kindness may go unseen, but are often taken for granted. The word Paul uses for many of these roles is the gift of 'helping' or in modern terms 'administration'.

Q4 If we all have gifts, how can we learn more about them and about our role in the church?

◆ ACTIVITY 2

15 mins

Invite group members to 'think', 'write', 'share' with the following three questions. People should be invited to reflect in silence before making some brief notes in response to the questions. After this time, invite the group to come back together and to share some of their responses and reflections.

Q1 How do you 'view' the church – as bricks and mortar, as a body, as the people who worship there?

Q2 What does 'church' mean to you and your growth as a disciple?

Q3 In what ways do you see yourself as part of the church?

◆ BIBLE STUDY 2

15 mins

Ask a group member to read Ephesians 2:10:

'For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.' (NIV)

And then Psalm 139:14-16:

'I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

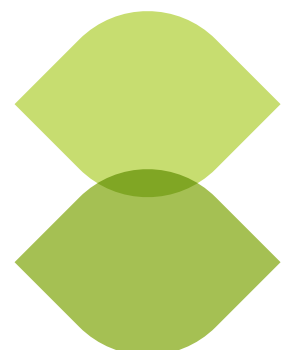
My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.

Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be..' (NIV)

◆ REFLECT AND SHARE

15 mins

Think creatively together about the differences between something that is made on a production line and something that is handcrafted. You might like to show some examples of things which have been handcrafted and things which have been mass produced.



Reflect as a group on the two passages by asking:

Q1 *What do these passages have to tell us about how we have been created?*

Q2 *What implications does this have for us?*

Knowing that we've been created is something that we can take for granted, but many people go through their lives totally unaware that they have been made by a creator God. Knowing that we're not mass-produced, that we are people created with a purpose, should give us a whole new perspective on our lives.

◆ EXPERIENCES

15 mins

*The 'E' of **SHAPE** stands for experiences. The person we are today has been moulded by both the positive and the challenging experiences we've gone through. God can use all of these experiences for good as He is at work in and through us all.*

◆ ACTIVITY

10 mins

Invite each group member to share an experience from their life that has been most influential.

Next, invite group members, using the space in the **Participants Workbook**, to take a moment to list three experiences that have been most influential in shaping the person they are today.

◆ PERSONAL REFLECTION

5 mins

This session's personal reflection task invites group members to complete a 'Growing as a disciple' survey and to reflect on their spiritual growth through this, identifying areas where they would like to invest further in their walk with Christ as a disciple.

Before you close the session invite group members to look through this and ask any questions they may have.

◆
SUMMARY

10 mins

To draw the themes of this session together, consider through group discussion the following two questions:

- Q1** Does your church offer opportunities to use our gifts?
- Q2** How do we help one another to grow as disciples of Christ?

*In the next session we will explore further our individual **SHAPE** for God's service.*

Close the session in prayer.





SESSION 2: IDENTIFYING OUR SHAPE

Through this session, participants will explore the following topics:

- The five elements of *SHAPE*
- Discovering our gifts, skills and abilities by using the *SHAPE* elements
- Reflecting upon the unique combination of gifts that God has given each of us

For this session you will need:

- Session 2 worksheet (Participants Workbook pp. 13-18)
- Session 2 Personal Reflection worksheet (Participants Workbook p. 19)



SESSION INTRODUCTION

*Through this session we are going to explore together our individual **SHAPE** and look deeper at the skills, gifts, experiences, talents and abilities that God has gifted to each one of us. We remember that we are all created uniquely in God's eyes and need to make sure that we respond to one another with grace and love as we build one another up as believers.*

Ask group members to turn to **Session 2** in their **Participants Workbook** and explain that we will use this as our guide throughout the session.



SESSION CONTENT

◆ INPUT

10 mins

Last week we acknowledged that each one of us has been made in a completely unique way.

*This week we're going to take some time to explore how God has put us together, discovering what our **SHAPE** for His service is:*

Spiritual gifts – what spiritual gifts has God given you?

Heart – what are you really passionate about?

Abilities – what are you naturally good at?

Personality – how do you usually relate to people and situations?

Experiences – what have been your positive and negative experiences and what have you learned from them?

*Knowing our **SHAPE** will enable us to serve in the most effective ways in the places that He has called us to.*

Q If you were to use just three words to describe yourself, what would those words be? Invite the group to share these with one another now.

S
SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Depending on your group, you may find it more appropriate to consider the Spiritual Gifts section after the other sections in this session.

◆ **INPUT**

5 mins

This is what the Bible says about spiritual gifts:

‘Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.’

1 Peter 4:10-11 (NIV)

God’s spiritual gifts are given to his people to help the Church be all that it is meant to be. He doesn’t give the gifts so that people can feel proud about their special abilities, like trophies on the mantelpiece; rather he gives them as tools for the job of building the body of Christ so that we may be a witness to Him in the world. Everyone who has God’s Spirit has some spiritual gift or gifts.

So what are they? Well first let’s look at what they’re not:

they’re not natural talents

they’re not personality traits

they’re not the same as the Fruits of the Spirit.

They are special abilities that God gives to individuals to serve others. Paul tells us that it is the Holy Spirit who decides which gifts to give to each person.

'Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed.'... 'There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them.'

1 Corinthians 12:1 and 4 (NIV)

◆ GROUPS

10 mins

In smaller groups, look at the following passages and ask the groups to pay attention for the spiritual gifts that are mentioned:

Romans 12:4-8

1 Corinthians 12:1-11, 27-28

Ephesians 4:11-12.

◆ ACTIVITY

15 mins

*Using the list in the **Participants Workbook**, in pairs, go through each of the definitions of the gifts and highlight whether you think this is:*

- 1. definitely me*
- 2. maybe me*
- 3. definitely not me.*

A helpful way to know if you have a certain gift is to ask yourself: are people helped when I do this? Is God honoured? Do I feel used by God?

The key things to remember are:

all God's people have spiritual gifts

we have to use them for them to grow

we can ask God for other gifts

at any time, he may give us new gifts for the benefit of the Church.



HEART

INPUT

5 mins

Tell a story about somebody in your church who has made a difference in a particular area because they were so moved by an issue.

For example, I have a friend who went on a short-term mission trip to Thailand. She was so appalled by the conditions under which children with disabilities were made to live – abandoned and rejected with no hope of reaching their potential – that she changed the whole direction of her life. She came back to the UK, researched various programmes and then returned to Thailand to set up a development project for children with cerebral palsy.

Because we have been created by God, He has left clues inside us about how He wants to use us. For each of us, the passion that moves our hearts will be different. As St Benedict puts it, God asks us to ‘listen with the ears of our heart’.



Now obviously we can’t all pack up instantly and go on some great campaign, but God will use us where we are to make a difference if we’ll let Him.

You may also find that you’re passionate about other things as well as causes that you encounter. You may be passionate about music or sports or designing things. We need to listen to these things too because God can use us in all the areas that we’re passionate about.

ACTIVITY

10 mins

In the **Participants Workbook**, under the Heart section, participants will find the following questions.

-  What do you really love to do?
-  What are the areas in which you would love to make a difference?

Invite the group members to discuss these together, or to break into pairs to do so.

Invite group members to make some notes of their discussions in the spaces provided.





ABILITIES

INPUT

5 mins

Unlike spiritual gifts, which are only given to those who follow God, everyone has natural abilities – those things that you can't help yourself but do. We often refer to these as our talents or abilities.

It's a very British trait to play down our talents and abilities, but they are things that should be celebrated because they too are from God, things that He chose for us as He created us.

ACTIVITY

10 mins

In small groups read **Matthew 25:14-30** – the passage known as the parable of the talents.

Discuss in small groups what this passage means for us today and how therefore we should use our talents.

The **Participants Workbook** provides a list of talents; this is by no means exhaustive, but might support people's thinking.

Through discussion with each other, invite the group to write in the appropriate section of the **Participants Workbook** what they, and others, think their God given abilities might be.

God's intention is that we link our abilities with our spiritual gifts, inspiring us with passion to do something that demonstrates His creativity and goodness to the world around us.



PERSONALITY

INPUT

5 mins

There is no such thing as a good personality or a bad personality. We can be people of good or bad character, but personality is a different thing. Our character is something that we can work, with God's help, at changing, but our personalities are pretty much given and formed by the time we're four or five.

Whilst passion will help us work out the 'where' of using our spiritual gifts and abilities, understanding our personality will go a long way to helping us work out 'how' we will use our gifts and abilities.

We discover what our personality is like in two main ways:

- 1. how we relate to people*
- 2. how we respond to different situations.*

ACTIVITY

15 mins

Invite group members to reflect individually on these two questions by putting a mark on each of the scales provided in the **Participants Workbook** and to use these scales to help them to reflect on how they personally relate to people and situations.

As the leader you may need to give some examples to illustrate what they mean – if possible use yourself and another team member who has a different personality type, demonstrating that leaders really do come in all shapes and sizes.





EXPERIENCES

INPUT

5 mins

*The final element that makes up our **SHAPE** is our experiences, both the good ones and the difficult. The person we are today has been moulded by the experiences we've gone through. Sometimes it's difficult to understand how the difficult things that we've gone through can ever be used for good, but they can. God will often bring people across our paths who are going through something that we've experienced. In those moments we're able to come alongside them and encourage them.*

Last week we each shared an experience in our life which was influential in shaping us. As group leader, take a moment now to share with the group an experience in your life which was influential in your journey as a disciple of Christ.



PERSONAL REFLECTION

5 mins

Ask group members to look at the **Personal Reflection** exercise in their **Participants Workbook**.

This session's Personal Reflection invites group members to take the notes they have made during the session, to prayerfully reflect upon them, and to look to write a concise statement about their **SHAPE** in light of the person God has created them to be.

Invite group members to ask any questions they may have, and to begin to make a few notes to help them with this exercise.



SUMMARY

5 mins

Invite group members to look back at the **SHAPE** sections in their **Participants Workbook** and to reflect, either individually, or with the group, how clearly they feel it acts as a mirror for the person God has created them to be.

Close the session in prayer.



SESSION 3: USING OUR GIFTS IN GOD'S SERVICE

Through this session, participants will explore the following topics:

- Discerning the call of God within our lives, being affirmed in and confirmed for His service
- Using our gifts effectively in God's service, in a God honouring way both within the church and the world
- Identifying the opportunities for service that God has presented us with
- Considering how to say no to the wrong opportunities
- What next – acting upon what we've learnt

For this session you will need:

- Session 3 worksheet (Participants Workbook pp. 20 - 21)
- Individual Review Information (Participants Workbook pp. 24-25)
- Individual Review: Information for Individual Review Facilitators (pp. 26-28)



SESSION INTRODUCTION

15 mins

*Begin this session by inviting the group to reflect on Session 2 and to share with one another something that they have discovered, or had reinforced to them, about themselves as a result of exploring their **SHAPE**.*

Whatever gift we each have, God has given it, He has called us, chosen us and anointed us (prepared us) for service. We learn how to use these gifts by learning more about Him and his Kingdom.

Each and every one of us needs to nurture and use the gifts God has given us and, more importantly, nurture our faith. We can only do this as we meet together in worship, prayer and

fellowship. Our mission as the Church will only be effective if we build each other up and learn more about our faith.

However, it is not just down to us; the local church community has a role in discerning our gifts. It is a partnership between you, the local faith community and God. We discern gifts in community and not in isolation.



SESSION CONTENT

5 mins

Ask group members to look at the **Personal Reflection** exercise in their **Participants Workbook**.

The Christian life is about living and working out our faith and discipleship in community. It is not about my gifts and my ministry, but about our gifts used for the benefit of God's church.

As one commentator has put it there are no Lone Rangers in the Christian Church. Jesus modelled a different kind of ministry, a ministry of servanthood and service. When the Disciples were arguing about their position in the Kingdom, Jesus reminded them that this was not his way; he tells them '...anyone who wants to be important among you must be your servant'.

- We must approach our service with a servant heart
- We must develop our 'character of service'
- We should test out any calling – how do we do this? Is now the right place, context, time?
- Having resilience skills so that when service is hard, we remember that God has called us to this.
- Serving in the widest possible contexts – not just within the church but in the wider world as Christ's ambassadors.

◆ BIBLE STUDY 1

25 mins

John 13: 13-16 provides some key insights into Jesus view of servant leadership

'You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.' (NIV)

◆ REFLECT AND SHARE

Share a personal story or reflection about an experience you had had when you were involved in serving others in a way which was attuned to your *SHAPE* for God's service. What was the impact? How did it feel?

Invite the group to reflect on their own experiences of serving others and to share their responses to these questions with the group.

Q In what ways do you use your gifts to serve others and what difference does this make?

Often, when we think of spiritual gifts, we default to thinking about leadership roles in the church. However, as church members we act as a bridge between the Church and the wider world, a bridge between our working context and our personal life and, as ultimately as signposts of God's Kingdom, wherever we find ourselves. For many our gifts will be used in support of our wider communities, not just in church.

◆ BIBLE STUDY 2

20 mins

'Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.' Colossians 3: 23-24 (NIV)

'We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.' 2 Corinthians 5:20 (NIV)

◆ REFLECT AND SHARE

Invite the group to reflect on their experiences of serving others outside of the Church.

Q1 How do you see yourself as an Ambassador of Christ and his Church in how you use your gifts?

Q2 In what ways are you currently serving the Lord Christ?

◆ ACTIVITY

10 mins

James in his letter (James 1:2-4) reminds the early Church that life doesn't always run smoothly and that faith is built through suffering and perseverance - in fact, he tells us to consider it a joy!

In pairs, think of a time when you have found serving God hard work and how you have seen God at work as you have used your gifts, even though you haven't see an obvious result or outcome until much later. As group leader you may like to share a personal experience of this as a way of introduction.

REFLECT AND SHARE

15 mins

How do you know whether you are called? When you talk to people about the possibility of using your gifts or skills in service, they don't look at you as if you are mad; instead they affirm it, and say: 'Of course, I could have told you that years ago!' They encourage you. In other words, in the eyes of others, your sense of calling also seems to make sense – it is not just an external sign or confirmation for you, but it is the beginning of a recognition of your gifts by others too. It is not enough for us to use our own judgement; we all need to have our gifts of service tested.

Consider as a group how the Church - both local and wider - might test any calling and why we should we do this.

Next discuss how we might go about identifying whether God is calling us to serve Him in a particular way. How will we test that call and how might we say no to opportunities we are presented with that where we do not feel called to serve?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

5 mins

Ask group members to look at the **Personal Reflection** exercise in their **Participants Workbook**.

This session's Personal Reflection invites group members to review the places where they already serve, to consider how aligned this service is with their **SHAPE** and also to prayerfully consider, in light of what they have learnt through the sessions, what new opportunities God may be calling them to explore in His service.

Invite group members to ask any questions they may have about this exercise.

INDIVIDUAL REVIEW

Ask group members to look at the Individual Review Information page in the **Participants Workbook** (pp. 24-25). Explain to group members the purpose of these sessions emphasising that this is an optional opportunity and that should they not feel comfortable participating in this then they are free not to do so.

Make sure that you have read the Individual Review Information (Participants Workbook pp. 24-25) and the Individual Review Information for Individual Review Facilitators (pp. 26-28) ahead of this session so that you understand the purpose of this element of the programme and can explain it to your group members here.



SUMMARY

10 mins

Close the session with a time of prayer.

You might like to suggest that the group prays for one another for the next steps that they each will take.

Depending on the group, this could be done in a number of different ways:

You might choose to invite people to silently pray for the person on your left, or you might ask people to stand, one by one, in the middle of the circle whilst people pray for them.

Alternatively, everyone's name could be placed into a hat and everyone invited to draw a name and to pray for that person throughout the coming week or month.

Please choose an approach that is appropriate for your group to close in prayer.



INDIVIDUAL REVIEW: INFORMATION FOR INDIVIDUAL REVIEW FACILITATORS



‘YOUR SHAPE FOR GOD’S SERVICE’

Enabling people to discover the gifts God has given them and how they might use those in His service

Your *SHAPE for God’s Service* is a series of three sessions designed to help churches enable people to discover their unique *SHAPE*: the gifts God has given them and how they might use those in His service.

It is our desire that the sessions will enable churches to build disciples and to develop the gifts of God’s people. God gives each of us gifts through the power of the Holy Spirit. As we serve Christ, we look to identify these gifts, invest in their development and find practical opportunities to use them.

Hopefully this process will enable participants to live and serve with more joy, satisfaction and fruitfulness. This should build a healthy growing church, and will affect the way each person engages with their family, friends, job, local community, and voluntary / leisure activities.

Each of the sessions includes some input from the session leaders on the topic and some biblical teaching. There are practical exercises and discussions to help each person apply the materials to their life situation. There is also space for the group to pray and to listen to God together.

A short personal reflection exercise is also provided for participants to do at home after each session to help them to reflect upon what they heard and discussed and to consider what it might mean for their life.

Session Two provides participants with an opportunity to discern their *SHAPE* for God’s service.

By looking at the five areas of *SHAPE*, participants are equipped to understand more about who they are, how God has created them and how He has used life to shape them.

SHAPE stands for:

- S**piritual gifts God's unique gifts to us as members of Christ's Body.
- H**ear't's desire what motivates and excites us; what we most long to do.
- A**bilities our strengths, knowledge and skills.
- P**ersonality our character, style, preferences, personal qualities.
- E**xperiences our life experiences – both good and bad – and what we have learned and gained from them.



BRIEFING FOR THOSE CARRYING OUT AN INDIVIDUAL REVIEW WITH A GROUP MEMBER

One-to-one Individual Review meetings are a really important final part of the *SHAPE* sessions. These meetings, which we suggest last for approximately one hour, provide participants with the opportunity to reflect on their participation in the sessions and what God has been saying to them through the *SHAPE* materials.

These meetings should be relaxed and informal and are designed to be of benefit to the individual. Please do not use these meetings to simply try and get the individual to sign up to a particular volunteering role you have in mind for them at the church.



POTENTIAL QUESTIONS AND MEETING STRUCTURE

Below are some questions which you may find helpful as you carry out an Individual Review with a participant from the *SHAPE* sessions.

Please feel free to use as many or as few of them as you find helpful and to use your own questions also.

- What stood out to you most about the *SHAPE* sessions?
- What did you learn about yourself and your *SHAPE*?
- How would you describe your *SHAPE* to me?
- Which element of your *SHAPE* was most enlightening to you?
- Is there any area of service you feel God inviting you to explore further as a result of what you explored through the sessions?
- Is there anything you feel God is asking you to lay down or give up as a result of what you explored through the sessions?
- What area of service are you going to explore in light of your personal discoveries?

- What can I do to support you as you embark on this journey?
- Would you find it valuable to meet again to see how things have progressed, perhaps in six or 12 months?

◆

RECOMMENDED READING FOR THOSE KEEN TO EXPLORE FURTHER

You may like to recommend any of the following books or resources as appropriate to the person you are meeting with.

FORD Paul R. ***Discerning your Ministry Identity***, in the Mobilising Spiritual Gifts series, ChurchSmart Resources, USA, 1998, ISBN 1-889638-07-2

BUCKINGHAM Marcus and CLIFTON Donald, ***Now, Discover your strengths***, Simon and Schuster 2002. You can take their online StrengthsFinder test at www.strengthsfinder.com

LEES John, ***How to get a job you'll love***, McGraw Hill Professional, 2008. A practical guide to unlocking your talents and finding your ideal career, by an ordained careers consultant.

GOLDSMITH Malcolm and WHARTON Martin, ***Knowing me, knowing you***, SPCK 1993. Exploring personality type and temperament – a beginner's guide to the **Myers-Briggs** Type Indicator.

Belbin Team Roles originally described by Dr Meredith Belbin. The nine roles represent team members' preferred ways to interact and behave in a group. For information, and to find your team roles, look at: www.improvingteams.com/using-the-nine-belbin-team-roles-for-team-development/

MUIR David, ***Fit for the Purpose***, 2006. Book based on the St John's Nottingham Extension Studies module. About the meaning of Christian vocation and how to respond when God calls.

BUGBEE Bruce, COUSINS Don and HYBELS Bill, ***Network: The Right People in the Right Places...for the Right Reasons*** (Willow Creek Resources – Zondervan, USA, 1994, ISBN 0-310-41231-5)

The Arrow Leadership Course, CPAS (Church Pastoral Aid Society). Email: info@cpas.org.uk

EVANS Neil, ***Developing in Ministry***, SPCK Library of Ministry series, 2012.

WAGNER Peter, ***Your Spiritual Gifts can help your Church grow***, Marc Europe, 1999, ISBN 0-8307-1681-5