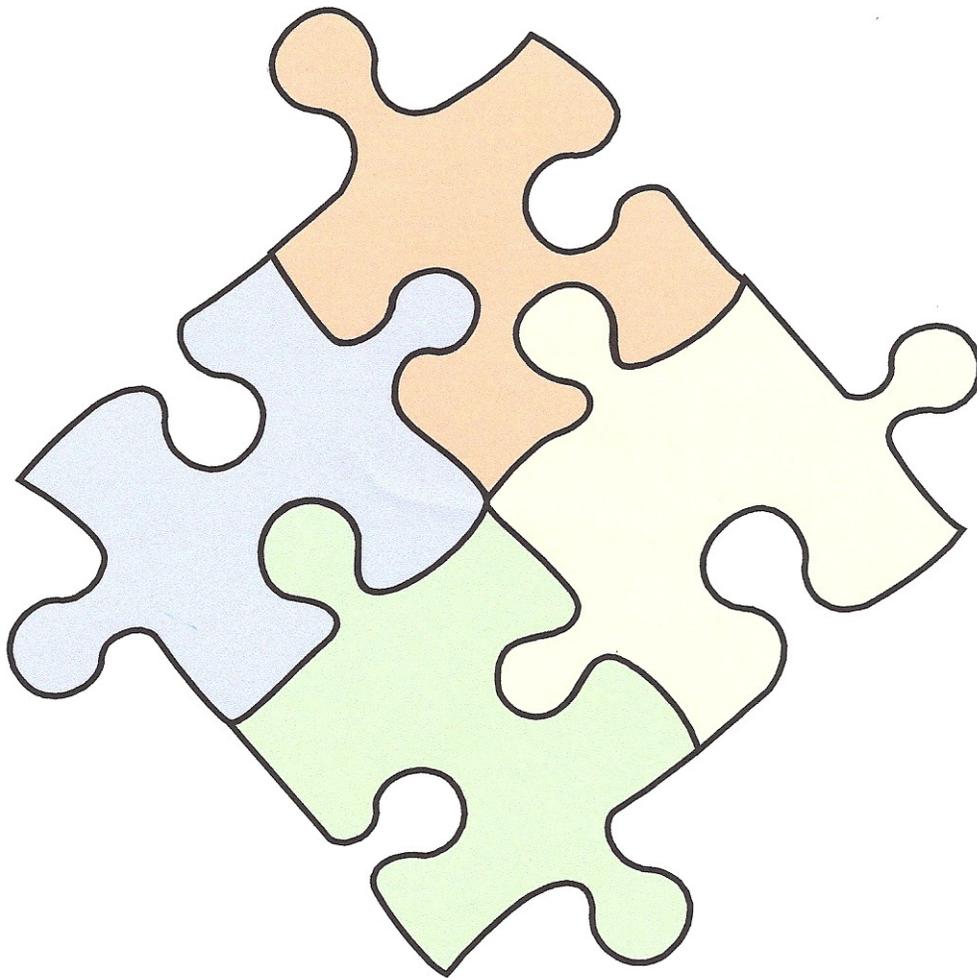


**HCBC HOLLONVILLE
MINISTRY
DEVOTIONAL GUIDE
APRIL 2013**



“WHERE DO I FIT IN?”

In the Fall of 2001 the Fayetteville campus embarked upon a study that included 8 weekly sermons and a devotional guide. After much thought and prayer your pastors believe that it is time once again to challenge the members of the body at both Fayetteville and Hollonville to discover or rediscover their SHAPE. You will soon discover that this is an acronym for Spiritual Gifts, Heart, Abilities, Personality and Experiences.

You hold in your hands a labor of love and joy. The vast majority of this devotional guide was written by Pastor Dennis Watson with a few stories or additions by me. This devotional guide is part of an eight-week focus on ministry entitled, **Many Parts—One Body: Serving Together**. This devotional guide is to be used to help all of us focus on ministry in and through the body of Christ at Harp's Crossing Hollonville. I will be preaching on the same themes found in these devotionals. You will have devotionals Monday through Saturday. On Sunday, I will be preaching on the very topics you were reading, studying and meditating on during the previous week.

Use the devotionals if possible with other family members. This will allow some discussion and sharing. Take the scripture and main idea of each devotional and think about them during the day or as you go to sleep at night.

Pray that we will be one body, serving together.

I Love You All,

Chris

Monday April 1, 2013

My SHAPE For Serving

For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. ¹⁴ I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well. ¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.

Psalm 139:13-15 (NKJV)

It is an incredible thing—God made me. But not only did he make me, He knew and still knows everything about me. But the beauty of this just goes on. God knitted me together in my mother's womb. He did the weaving or shaping. God has given each of us a unique shape of His own design and work. The Psalmist records that we are fearfully and wonderfully made. The amazing nature of this is not yet over. "All of our days were written in His book before one of them came to be." Do you struggle with this? We are all the result of God's design.

I am completely at peace with this. Are you? God has given you a unique SHAPE that is uniquely you. God never sleeps or takes time off. He has always been at work and He causes all things to work together for the good of those who love Him and who are called according to His purposes. God makes everything beautiful in His time. In the weeks to come we are going to be looking at our SHAPE.

SHAPE is an acronym with each letter standing for:

S piritual Gifts
H eart
A bilities
P ersonality
E xperiences

You have a special SHAPE for God's purposes. Begin to pray about the unique you God has made. Be ready to explore your SHAPE. Over the next eight weeks we are going to examine our SHAPE. Get ready to discover yours!

Pray for the Lord to reveal what He has shaped you for. Pray that He will show all of us our SHAPE. What a power-filled church ours will be when we are all serving according to our SHAPE!

Tuesday April 2, 2013

Every Believer Has a Spiritual Gift

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all.

1 Corinthians 12:7 (NKJV)

But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.

Ephesians 4:7 (NKJV)

Spiritual Giftedness is only one part of knowing the unique SHAPE God has given you for serving in and through His church. How has God gifted you? For some, spiritual gifts are but a mystery. It should not be a mystery to believers. A spiritual gift is a special ability, given by the Holy Spirit to every believer at their conversion, to be used to minister to others and thereafter build up the Body of Christ.

The words “each one” in the verses above gives indication that God has given to every believer a gift or gifts at conversion for use in and through God’s church. If you are a believer, that includes you. You are not an exception. Some may wiggle out through some sense of false humility refusing to believe that they are in any way gifted. But remember it is a gift of the Spirit and not something you have earned or accomplished. You do not need some misplaced humility to deny your giftedness but a true humility that acknowledges God’s giftedness in you. This does not lead to denial but to a life of usefulness expressed in thanksgiving.

Perhaps you know your gift or gifts. Share what your gift(s) is with your family during this devotional time. If you are doing this devotional alone, sometime today engage someone in a conversation about spiritual gifts and tell them what your gift is. Be sure to acknowledge the truth—it is a gift and not earned. Be thankful for your gift.

If you are unsure of your gift begin to pray and ask others to pray that you will know and begin to use your gifts for the common good.

In the weeks to come, I will be preaching on nine *team gifts*. In order to do this I will deal only briefly with what Larry Gilbert calls the *enabling gifts* and the *miraculous gifts*. For our purpose, I will focus most of my time on the *team gifts*.

Since God has given each of His children gifts, we need to know what they are and use them. Be praying for each one to know, develop and use their gift.

Discuss what you believe Spiritual Gifts are. What do you think your gift may be? Be prepared for the Lord to show you.

Gifted, Serving and Results

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. [5] There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. [6] There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.

1 Cor. 12:4-6 (NIV)

Do you see a distinction in these verses? Before you read any further, look carefully again.

Now, look at the clear distinctions made:

*Different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit
Different kinds of service, but the same Lord
Different kinds of working, but the same God*

The Spirit gives different gifts. The word for gift is *charisma*. This word means a gratuity or endowment. It is a gift given without deserve. It cannot be earned.

The Lord gives the service. The word for service here is the word from which we get our word ‘deacon.’ It is a technical word meaning service. It means ministry. The Lord gives us different ministries or places of service.

God gives the working. This word ‘working’ means an effect. God gives the results.

Think of it this way: If the spiritual gift you have is that of teaching, you may use that gift in the ministry of preaching, teaching, writing or counseling. The Lord calls you to use the gift in a particular area of service in His church. Then God brings about the results. Remember it is God who makes the planted seed grow (see 1 Cor. 3:6-7). At what point did you do anything but present your body as a living sacrifice to God as your spiritual act of worship? Do you see that it is God in you working to His good pleasure as He pleases (Philippians 2:13)? The Spirit gifted; Jesus called to ministry and God gave the results. The monkey is off our back so to speak. We surrender and He does great things. After all, apart from Him we can do nothing (John15:5).

One of Paul’s favorite terms is “in Christ.” In Colossians 1:27 he says that it is “Christ in you the hope of glory.” The life of the believer is found in Christ and Christ in the believer. As He works out His purposes in us we experience His glory.

See God’s plan for His church? It is great. “I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.” There is the joy of walking in surrender—gifted by Him, called by Him and He makes it happen. Then we boast in Him!

What are some of the results you see that only God can accomplish?

Thursday April 4, 2013

Eight Identifying Marks of a Spiritual Gift (Part 1)
(Adapted from Team Ministry by Larry Gilbert)

These identifying marks of spiritual gifts will help you understand how the gift you already have will help you serve the Lord more effectively.

1. A spiritual gift is the primary channel by which the Holy Spirit can minister through the believer.

Without spiritual gifts men can minister one to another only in the flesh. Spiritual gifts are God's provision for the Holy Spirit to minister to man through man. We often sing a little chorus that says, "Jesus be Jesus in me, no longer me but thee, resurrection power fill me this hour. Jesus be Jesus in me." It is through spiritual gifts that it is God's power and not ours.

One of the problems facing our church today is that we believe the church to be supernatural in its origin, but not in its operation. God started it and He sustains it.

2. A spiritual gift is a supernatural capacity.

A gift is not an ability. It is the capacity to develop an ability. Ability implies that you are able to do something. If someone is saved on Monday night and at the moment of salvation God gives him the gift of teaching, he would not wake up on Tuesday morning a supernatural teacher. He would wake up with the supernatural capacity to develop the supernatural ability of teaching. We do not develop the capacity for the gift, but we do develop the gift given us. We are to grow and develop the gift given us. In 1 Timothy 1:6, Paul tells Timothy to "fan into flame the gift of God." He is telling him to keep on developing and strengthening his spiritual gift.

3. A spiritual gift is a supernatural desire.

When the Spirit of God gives a gift, He also gives a supernatural desire to perform the duties of the gift. In 1 Timothy 3:1, Paul tells Timothy, "If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble thing." He is not directly addressing Timothy's gift, but the point is, to be effective in any ministry you must first have the desire. With the gift, the Spirit gives desire.

4. Spiritual gifts are the tools for doing the work of the ministry.

God knows the tools needed and He is faithful to provide those tools. A carpenter becomes skillful with the tools of his trade by using them. The more the carpenter uses those tools the more skillful he becomes. A spiritual gift is given for a lifetime of building His church. Each person needs to use the tool given and to grow in familiarity with that tool for a lifetime. The more that tool is used the more capable they will become. They are tools to be used, not put on a shelf.

A spiritual gift is the channel by which God works through you.

A spiritual gift is the capacity to develop an ability.

A spiritual gift is a supernatural desire.

Spiritual gifts are the tools for doing the work of the ministry.

Look at your gift. Are you developing it? Do you see God working through you? Is the desire there? Are you growing familiar with the tool? Ask the Lord to help you use your gift effectively.

Eight Identifying Marks of a Spiritual Gift (Part 2)

5. A spiritual gift is the source of joy in your Christian life.

Although today we have many advances in technology, several years ago (thirteen to be exact) I was given a tool to use to help me get organized. A dear brother and friend gave me a Palm Pilot. A Palm Pilot was a small pocket size computer for keeping calendars, to-do-lists, addresses and other significant information. The Palm Pilot was a blessing and a joy. It not only made my life a little more organized but it reminded me of a special friend each time I used it. Spiritual gifts are God's gifts to us. They are reminders of His goodness and His desire to bless us and make us a blessing. The more we use that gift, the greater joy it is in our lives.

6. A spiritual gift is a divine motivator.

Charles Stanley speaks of certain spiritual gifts as "motivational gifts." He says that as motivations, gifts are drives or feelings to do certain things or act certain ways. It helps to understand the motivation behind behavior. The story goes of a young boy who threw a brick at a moving car. The culprit just stood by the road as the driver backed his dented car to where the boy so determinedly stood. As the driver began to yell at the boy, the young boy only yelled louder, "Mister I am sorry I damaged your car, but my little brother fell and I think he broke his leg and this was the only way I could get a car to stop. It seems that often in our church we do not understand the motives behind another's actions. Often it is spiritual motivation. We are different!

7. A spiritual gift is a divine calling and divine responsibility.

The old hymn "Onward Christian Soldiers" is still in our version of the hymnbook. I am glad of that. Many things believers do and say fail the test of political correctness. That is okay. Contrary to popular belief, God's army is not a volunteer army. When you were saved and given spiritual gifts God did not invite you to enlist for service. In your salvation you were drafted! The issue is one of being on active duty or a draft dodger. Those sound like strong words and they are. Consider these two verses:

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. **Acts 1:8 (NKJV)**

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. **Ephesians 2:10 (NKJV)**

Neither of these carries with it any question of a saved person's involvement. We have been gifted and called, now it is our responsibility to be active in His service.

8. Spiritual gifts are the building blocks of the church.

God builds His church with living stones and not with programs (see 1 Peter 2:4-5). He builds His church with living stones on the only foundation—Jesus Christ. Each living stone has been made alive and has been gifted for service in His church. Look at a brick building and you do not see bricks stacked directly on top of one another. They are interlocking as the mason staggers them rather than stacking. God does the same with His living stones. Each one is vital and they all fit together to form one body. You are a living stone—a block in God's building.

Look closely at your spiritual gift, it is:

- The channel by which God works through you.
- The capacity to develop an ability.
- A supernatural desire.
- The tool for doing the work of the ministry.
- The source of joy in your life
- A divine motivator
- A divine calling and divine responsibility
- The building blocks of the church

Saturday April 6, 2013

Team Gifts

Planting and watering are menial servant jobs at minimum wages.⁹ What makes them worth doing is the God we are serving. You happen to be God's field in which we are working. Or, to put it another way, you are God's house.

1 Corinthians 3:8-9 (MSG)

Tomorrow, in both the morning and the evening services, we will begin to look at nine team gifts. These are gifts that the Spirit of God has given to His church for the purpose of building up and so that His church will function according to His purposes. Sunday morning we will look at the team gifts serving and administration. Sunday evening we will look at two more gifts—giving and mercy.

Here is a list of the nine team gifts we will look at over the next few weeks:

1. Serving
2. Administering
3. Giving
4. Showing Mercy
5. Teaching
6. Exhortation
7. Prophecy
8. Evangelism
9. Pastoring

In order for us to best understand these gifts we need to know what the Bible says. We will also look at the work of a few people who have studied gifts and churches for many years and have made some observations that will help us identify characteristics of those who have these gifts. We will also look at some warnings and some ways to better understand people who have these gifts.

If you are a believer, you are gifted in one or more of these areas. As a body of believers we are called upon to love one another and get along with one another. We are also to labor together in the work of God's church. As we study gifts it is not only our purpose to know our gift and SHAPE but also to learn to appreciate the gifts and SHAPE of others so that we can better labor together.

Please pray not only that you will know and use your gift but that we will understand and appreciate the gifts of others.

Church Family,

There will be devotions this week but they will be a little different! The Akins will be leading us in worship in both the a.m. and p.m. service so we will put the SHAPE devotions on hold for this week but we will still have devotions! To prepare for this week:

Monday April 8, 2013

Invite lost or unchurched friends and family

“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)

We all know of family members and friends that are lost or not in church! Who are you praying for and inviting to worship with you? Do you have an ongoing list of those whom you are asking God to work in their life? If not start today and then seek to invite and share. Maybe as a family think of those friends and family that you can pray for right now.

Tuesday April 9, 2013

Come Ready to Hear from and Worship the Lord

Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker! *Psalms 95:6 (NIV)*

Often times we come to church not ready to worship. We may come kicking and screaming or we may have had an argument with our spouse or kids and then of course get out of the car and smile!!! I want to encourage you to come prepared and ready, asking God what He wants to do. Ask Him to clear distractions away and for you to recognize the enemy when you are tempted or pushed. Begin today, leading up to Sunday, asking God to prepare your heart for worship.

Wednesday April 10, 2013

Slow to Speak

My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry. *James 1:19 (NIV)*

We are never at a loss for words! As a good ole American, we have an opinion about everything and we let folks know it. I am certainly guilty of this. But scripture says to be slow to speak...ouch. That means we are to think before we speak, consider what we are saying, and ask does it really need to be said? We all are guilty of speaking when we shouldn't. Ask the Lord to help you today to know when to speak and when to be silent!

Thursday April 11, 2013

Say What?

Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it. *Malachi 3:10 (NIV)*

God and His Word tells us to tithe! A tithe means a tenth so God has called us to give a tenth to Him. He instructs us to do it and also tells us to test Him in it. God tells us to give to Him our tithes and offerings. Offerings are over and above our tithe and include things like Annie Armstrong, Lottie Moon, Keith Fordham Ministry and the Akin Ministry. This Sunday you will have the opportunity to give your tithes and offerings! I encourage you to ask what the Lord may have you give as an offering to the Akins so they can continue to follow God in what He wants them to do.

Friday April 12, 2013 and Saturday April 13, 2013

Blessings

Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song. *Psalms 95:1-2 (NIV)*

God has brought us salvation in His Son Jesus Christ and that in itself is a miracle! Thank God for His Salvation and thank Him for what He has done. Not only has He given His son, but look at the blessings around you; the things that He has blessed you with. Take today and tomorrow to write down all the things the Lord has blessed you personally with. Then keep that list somewhere you will see it often.

Monday, April 15, 2012

Faithful To Serve

Down the road a way in Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha, "Gazelle" in our language. She was well-known for doing good and helping out.³⁷ During the time Peter was in the area she became sick and died. Her friends prepared her body for burial and put her in a cool room.³⁸ Some of the disciples had heard that Peter was visiting in nearby Lydda and sent two men to ask if he would be so kind as to come over.³⁹ Peter got right up and went with them. They took him into the room where Tabitha's body was laid out. Her old friends, most of them widows, were in the room mourning. They showed Peter pieces of clothing the Gazelle had made while she was with them.⁴⁰ Peter put the widows all out of the room. He knelt and prayed. Then he spoke directly to the body: "Tabitha, get up." She opened her eyes. When she saw Peter, she sat up.⁴¹ He took her hand and helped her up. Then he called in the believers and widows, and presented her to them alive.⁴² When this became known all over Joppa, many put their trust in the Master.

Acts 9:36-42 (MSG)

Where would we be in the church without the person with the gift of serving? Some have called this gift the gift of helps. By whatever name you call it this gift is the one that gets things done. You may see this person picking up paper in the worship center. You may see them helping with the bulletins. But more often you do not see them because they serve without being seen. When this person hears that something needs to be done they have the desire to meet that need. They say, "I can do that." It is possible that they are singing in the choir, helping in a class or even playing in the orchestra. When they hear of a need, they want to be a part of seeing that the need is covered.

Tabitha was such a woman in the book of Acts. Notice it says that she was doing good and helping the poor. The women were there the day Peter came following her death. They were showing Peter the things she had made for them. She obviously had a servant's heart.

It is not possible for me to overstate the importance of the server in God's church. The gift of service was important to Peter and the church then, and it is equally important to the church today. The gift of serving is very important in God's church.

We have many who "serve" at Harp's Hollonville. Such as teaching Sunday School, caring for babies in the nursery, passing out bulletins, working with children and youth, helping with music, sound, and video, just to name a few! All of these and the many others are so important and no "one" person can do all of them!!!

How many servers can you name? Perhaps you should give them a call or send them a note of appreciation. Thank God for those who are faithful to serve! Maybe you have this gift. If so, serve.

Tuesday April 16, 2013

The Gift of Giving

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.

Romans 12:8 (NIV)

All of us are to tithe. Some in the body are gifted with the desire and capacity to give way beyond the tithe to advance the work of God's church.

Dad shares an interesting story that I am sure you will enjoy ☺. "Soon after we had completed our first building the parking lot was not yet paved. A sudden and unexpected opportunity to get it paved without planning came along. The paver could start that day. All he needed was the "go ahead." The chairman of deacons at that time, Jim Wright and I looked at each other and said, "go ahead." It was needed. Each Sunday morning the ladies were damaging their dress shoes with heels as they would sink down into the gravel. By Sunday the lot was paved. As people drove in and walked on the nice new smooth surface they were rejoicing. Some asked, "How did this happen?" By the end of that day, even as happy as everyone was, Jim and I were in hot water. We had approved a \$17,000 expenditure without prior approval. I was young and even much more foolish. Spiritual gifts were an unexplored area for me at that time. A wonderful member of the body approached me and said, "How much was the parking lot? I'll write a check." A check was written for \$17,000 to cover the cost of the parking lot. I now understand, that person has the gift of giving".

This gift not only advanced the work of God's church but also saved its young pastor from being tarred feathered, and run out of town. I hope that too served to advance the work of God's church.

This gift is perhaps the most misunderstood of all the gifts. We know that everyone should give yet some are gifted by the Holy Spirit to go beyond the tithe.

Alpheus Hardy was an entrepreneur in the mid 1800's. The Honorable Alpheus Hardy made money and used it to support missionaries and educate ministers.

Here is Hardy's experience: "I wanted to go to college and become a minister. My health broke down and the truth dawned on me that I could not be a minister. 'I cannot be God's minister,' was the sentence that kept rolling in my mind. "One morning, alone in my room, my distress was so great I threw myself flat on the floor. The voiceless cry of my soul was, 'O God, I cannot be Thy minister.'

"Then it came to me that I could serve God in business with similar devotion, and to make money for God might be my special calling. The vision was so clear and joyous, I exclaimed aloud, 'O God, I can be Thy minister! I will go back to Boston. I will make money for God, and that shall be my ministry. I am God's man, and my ministry is to make and administer money for Him.' "

That describes the gift of giving. Perhaps you have the gift of giving. If so, develop this gift and give generously.

Wednesday April 17, 2013

The Organizing Organizer

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.

Romans 12:8 (NIV)

I understand this gift in two ways: the one who sees what needs to be done and the one who can organize to get things done. This gift brings clear direction and a plan to the church. This gift is always at work in God's church. It better be. In the original language the word was the same word for a steersman on a ship. He had the responsibility of steering the ship, toward and ultimately to, its destination.

While working in youth ministry for almost 10 years there were of course many trips, events, and so much planning! As I worked on these things God taught me how to plan, coordinate and how to "get things done." Now having the privilege to Pastor God's Church, I have realized that I need to pass some of these responsibilities on. I can't do it on my own, nor am I supposed to. My main responsibility now is to lead and direct His Church. That means I share the load of organizing and getting things done. In doing this God allows me to lead and for others to use their gifts! In the past 2 years I have learned to "share the load" and allow others to organize and plan; to use their gift.

Perhaps you have served on a committee that never seemed to get anything done. There were a lot of really good ideas but nothing ever happened. Your committee was missing the administrator. The administrator is frustrated with "just talk". They want a plan and want there to be assignments and deadlines. The organizer breaks out the calendar and is usually carrying a pad. The organizer asks all of the right questions to move the plan to completion.

Do you know someone with this gift? Look at more of the characteristics, warnings and cross-gift understandings in the back of this booklet. Perhaps you have been given this gift. If so, remember it is a capacity to develop this gift. It is your responsibility to develop the gift to its fullest.

Thursday April 18, 2013

The Mercy Shower

He who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. **Romans 12:8 (NKJV)**

This is a person who is full of forgiveness and compassion, pity and kindness toward others. Note that the merciful person is to show mercy with a cheerful heart. The word means kind, cheerful and joyful.

The person with the gift of mercy is not to show mercy in an annoyed spirit. The person with the gift of mercy is not to show mercy in a spirit of criticism and rebuke toward the person who needs help. (This often happens when the person is down and out because of unemployment, lack of education, or some other unfortunate circumstance.) The believer who has the spirit of mercy is to show mercy with a cheerful and joyful heart, doing all he can to lift up the person needing mercy.

Have you ever seen conflict in God's church? Often that conflict comes about because of a lack of understanding. Since believers have different gifts, sometimes those gifts will cause friction between people. But remember, "iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another" (Proverbs 27:17). When believers use their gifts in the Spirit of God, there is unity and complimenting or balancing each other.

The person with the gift of mercy is a real balancer to many of the persons with very strong and aggressive gifts. The mercy-shower is one who shows sympathy and empathy. Sympathy is feeling for others and empathy is feeling with others. The person with the gift of helps or service sees a job that needs to get done. Their desire is to help out with the project because they are project oriented. The person with the gift of mercy is not project oriented but people oriented. The server will go and cut the grass of the person going through tough times, but the mercy shower will go and sit with them and listen and help them through the tough times. They will provide the shoulder to cry on.

Do you have this gift? Look in the appendix at the characteristics of the mercy shower. If you have this gift, ask the Lord to enable you to develop and use it in and through His church. If you have this gift, use it cheerfully.

Building Christ's Church

And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. ¹⁹ And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

Matthew 16:18-19 (NKJV)

After Simon boldly made his confession to Jesus' question, "who do you say that I am?" Jesus told Simon that he was now Peter, which means rock and, "upon this rock I will build my church." We need to make note of several things.

1. The church belongs to Christ. He said it is "my church." Make no mistake it is not mine, ours or yours. It is His. He brought it into existence, continues to build it and sustains it. The church is the creation of and the possession of Jesus Christ.
2. Jesus is the builder of His church. It was Peter who said in 1 Peter 2:5, "*you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*" When a person comes into relationship with Jesus in salvation He makes them living stones for the purpose of building His church. He then places each stone carefully according to His design. We do not build His church for Him. He builds the church with us.
3. The rock upon which Jesus builds His church was the confession of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Jesus builds His church with believers upon the foundation of faith in Him. The real church is not made of wood, bricks, steel and mortar. Jesus builds the true church with living stones on the foundation of faith in Him.
4. The key spoken of in the scripture is the gospel, the message of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. It is the business of the believer to proclaim and teach the Gospel. By proclaiming and teaching he opens the door; by not proclaiming and not teaching he shuts the door.

As we commit ourselves to Christ and His church, He does the building. Peter committed Himself to Christ and on the day of Pentecost he preached the first sermon and three thousand people came to the Lord that day. Peter used the keys to the kingdom and Jesus built His church. As you use whatever SHAPE God has given you in and through His church, He builds His church. Pray that we will all be faithful to use those keys. Peter was faithful. Let's be faithful to Christ and His church.

Saturday April 13, 2013

For The Common Good

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

1 Corinthians 12:7 (NIV)

Paul wrote to the church at Corinth to correct some improper behavior and activity that grew out of incorrect thinking. In 1 Corinthians 12-14 he dealt specifically with a spirituality that was expressing itself in the church that was destructive—showy spirituality. This was being expressed primarily in speaking in tongues. However it may appear, showy spirituality can show up in many forms. Paul was telling them that true spirituality had a purpose beyond the individual.

Jealousy, envy and many kinds of strife appear when people use their abilities for self-glorification. Paul gives a warning in Philippians 2:3 that we do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. He warns in 2 Corinthians 14:4 that those who spoke in tongues did so to build up themselves.

When God gives us something like a spiritual gift or any kind of special working of His power or Spirit it has a purpose beyond the recipient. In 1 Corinthians 12:7 Paul says that the purpose of the giftedness is the common good of all the believers—the church. I must admit God's power and blessings are wonderful. When He does something in my life it is a real joy. However, I am not the goal of His workings. He works in and through us for the purpose of blessing others. He gives gifts and abilities in the church so that the church will be built up.

The idea of building up is one of construction. Our ministering in the church is to have as its goal building others up so that the church will become stronger.

About twenty years ago I was in the 7th grade Sunday school class. The teacher had been teaching 7th & 8th grade for years, and he still does. That teacher is David Cooke. His co-teacher spent most of his time “calming” down the boys so we could somewhat listen. I have in fact heard him say often that I kicked him in the shins repeatedly!!! I am sure both the teacher and the co-teacher wondered if there was any hope for us, myself especially. Today that co-teacher is one of our deacons; John Cauble and that boy who kicked him; you guessed it! Your Pastor.

God may be calling you to sit in a class to rock babies, teach kids, work with the youth or be a helper. You may never know what impact you might have on the future! You may have the opportunity to see it now or you may never see it, but God knows and uses those who are willing.

How might God want to use you for the “common good?” Nothing is too small!

Monday April 15, 2013

The Teacher

If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach.

Romans 12:7 (NIV)

And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.

1 Corinthians 12:28 (NKJV)

Maybe growing up you had a teacher that you connected with or one that taught in a way you could understand or get it, I did. In college I took a class on Job, yes, a full semester on the book of Job. I wasn't sure what it would be like but after the first few classes I was excited. The professor loved what He was teaching and it showed; he was excited about teaching it and it in turn got me excited. I learned so much during those 15 weeks.

God has given to his church those with the gift of teaching. The gift of teaching is the desire and capacity and ultimately the ability to present the truth of the word of God with accuracy and simplicity.

In our church we have many wonderful teachers. A teacher is so much more than a person who funnels or gives out information! It is one who takes the information, thinks on it, prays on it, and teaches it in such a way that many can grasp and understand it. They are excited about what they teach and it shows! They are excited about showing and teaching the love of Jesus.

How have you been touched by this gift? Give thanks for that person and the gift. Do you have this gift? If so, ask the Lord to enable you to develop this gift to the fullest.

Tuesday April 16, 2013

The Exhorter

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.

Romans 12:8 (NIV)

“Come on, you can do it. Here’s how!” How many times have you heard such encouraging words from a parent, teacher or coach? God has placed in His church those with the gift of encouragement. The person with this gift is driven to encourage others on in their Christian life. They want to see people succeed. They want to see people succeed where they may be failing—personal walk, marriage, family, relationships and life in general.

The word ‘encourage’ or ‘exhort’ translates a word that is very similar and comes from the same word translated ‘comforter’ in John 14:26. The reference there is to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is one who comes alongside. That is what the word literally means—to come alongside. An encourager is one who comes alongside of another in order to help them along. In the church, the encourager or exhorter wants to help people along in their life, particularly in their Christian life.

The encourager can see the problem in a person’s life and then come up with a formula of how to get things straightened out. Often they come up with the needed 1, 2, 3, a, b, c steps necessary to help the person with the struggle. Often we think that the exhorter is not taking seriously the problem or is being simplistic with the problem. Remember, they want to help people succeed. They are seeking an application that may begin the process.

We have all been helped along in a time of difficulty. We have sought counselors who assist people when going through tough times but many times the counselors we get help from are not professional. The church has many gifted people with the capacity to give help and guidance.

Do you have this gift? If so, begin to more fully develop it and use it. Have you been encouraged along the way in your Christian life? If so, why not thank God for that person and send them a note or give them a call to let them know you are thankful they use their gift.

Wednesday April 17, 2013

The Gift of Prophecy

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. **Romans 12:6 (NIV)**

Appreciating all of the gifts in the church is of utmost importance. We have a tendency to prefer one gift above another. For instance we enjoy the warmth and kindness of the mercy shower, but when we think of the prophet we are often unmoved by the seeming over aggressive nature that accompanies this gift. God has given to the church all of the gifts and they are all needed and necessary. This is something that we all need to keep constantly in mind. Many times what we call personality differences may really be failure to appreciate and recognize different gifts.

The prophet is strongly compelled by his gift to speak the word of God. He looks to see where ungodliness is present and then speaks out without apology against the wrong and calls people to repentance and righteousness.

Before the New Testament was completed, prophets would receive their revelation directly from God. We have those prophetic words uttered in the Old Testament by those prophets. They spoke forth the word of God, confronting the people with righteousness and unrighteousness. Now that the Bible is complete the prophet gets the truths and principles directly from God by reading and studying God's Word.

Any gift can be used in the flesh. However, when the prophet is walking in the Spirit and using the gift of prophecy to build up the church, he/she will be burdened with the sinful condition of the world and will spend much time praying and addressing the need for healing and repentance.

When you find yourself working with or around the prophet, be understanding. They carry out a very significant role. They are not judgmental, only speaking forth the truth.

Do you have this gift? If so, surrender to the Lord and begin to develop and use this gift in God's church. Use in proportion to your faith.

Thursday April 18, 2013

The Pastor/Shepherd

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers. **Ephesians 4:11 (NIV)**

Once again we need to be reminded that God supplies the gifts through the Holy Spirit. That God has given His church pastors is evident to us, but this gift is not one of position but of function. In Ephesians 4:11 the word 'pastors' is only translated that way once but the word is used seventeen times in the New Testament. The other sixteen times it is translated 'shepherd.' The gift is displayed in the church in many other functions other than senior pastor.

The pastor/shepherd leads and feeds, guards and protects, and oversees those under his care. He is the coach or leader of the team. I see many of these at Harp's Crossing. It is a blessing to see those with a pastor's heart teaching our preschoolers, children, students and adults. The person with the pastor/shepherd gift loves the people they shepherd. They want to help them learn and grow. They want to be with the people they shepherd when they are hurting and when they are rejoicing. The pastor/shepherd gifts loves to present the word of God in such a way that people come alive with the living word of God.

On Sunday morning I see this happening in some of our Sunday school classes. The teacher not only desires to teach about God's love but they genuinely care about the people they are teaching. They are passionate about what they are doing, and what is taking place in the lives of the people they are teaching. And, if a sheep is missing, they go looking for them!

Share with others those with this gift who have impacted your life.

Do you have this gift? Look at the characteristics of the pastor/shepherd in the appendix. If you know of people with this gift, encourage them in their gift. If you have this gift, ask the Lord to enable you to grow in it.

Friday April 19, 2013

The Gift of Evangelism

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.
Ephesians 4:11 (NKJV)

That all believers are to present the gospel is clear. In the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20 Jesus tells His followers to make disciples. Paul told Timothy to do the work of an evangelist. So we need to be clear that even if you do not have the gift of evangelism you are to present the gospel to people and make disciples.

That said, there are those who have the gift of evangelism. The person with the gift of evangelism is usually outgoing and clearly has a desire to talk with people about their relationship to Jesus.

Not every person who has the gift of evangelism is a vocational evangelist. Look in the appendix at the gift of evangelism. Read over the list of characteristics, warnings and cross-gift understandings. Do you have this gift? If so, ask the Lord to enable you to develop and use your gift in and through His church.

We have two vocational evangelists in our church. David Akin and Keith Fordham have both been in fulltime vocational evangelism for many years. They travel around to churches presenting the message of the gospel. David Akin presents the message in song and Keith Fordham through preaching.

Perhaps you were saved under the ministry of an evangelist. Share that story with your family. Discuss how evangelists have influenced your life.

Saturday April 20, 2013

As Working For the Lord

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, [24] 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)**

Paul wrote to the believers at Colossae and told them that all they did was to be done with full devotion as though they were working for the Lord and not for man. The motivation behind their activity was to be service for the Lord. Of course we may be performing some ministry for people, but it is not to be for them or to them, it is to be for the Lord and from the Lord. This kind of service requires a life overflowing with God's grace. We often do work because of external motivation. People will go to work each day because they need to earn a living. The motivation is the paycheck. Athletes will train and work hard to be the best. The motivation is fame and recognition. Others will practice and work around the clock to win the applause of people.

God's children are motivated by something far greater. This motivation is liberating. The motivation is the undeserved, unmerited, and unsolicited love of God. You did not need applause, recognition, fame or fortune. All you need is to know the wonderful message of God's love for you! Paul said that the love of Christ is that which compels us (2 Corinthians 5:14). We work in our vocations to make a living. We serve the Lord to make a life.

What are you doing in God's church? Why are you doing it? Can you say that you are fruitful and fulfilled in your service? God desires that you be fruitful and fulfilled.

As you pray, ask the Lord to lead you to live out of a love relationship with Him. Ask Him to fill our church with people who are joyfully serving as serving the Lord. Ask Him to lead you to discover, develop and use your spiritual gift.

Monday April 22, 2013

A Heart for Second-Graders

“Do not be afraid,” Samuel replied. “You have done all this evil; yet do not turn away from the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart. **1 Samuel 12:20 (NIV)**

Pastor Dennis shared this story: Over thirty years ago, I served in a church where there was a sweet, God called Sunday School Teacher. Mrs. Cave taught second-graders. But just to say that she taught second-graders is a tremendous understatement. Mrs. Cave had a heart for second-graders. She was so drawn to second-graders, she knew what a second-grader looked like. She could be in a department store and see a second-grader and know they were a second-grader. She would strike up a conversation with the child and parent with the desire of finding out about the child’s relationship with the Lord and His church.

What you have a heart for is a very significant part of understanding your SHAPE. In our acronym SHAPE, the “H” stands for ‘heart.’ In fact, your heart is as important as your spiritual gift. Your spiritual gift comes from God but so does your heart. Your heart is part of your makeup.

Physiologically, each of us has a unique heartbeat. Each person has a slightly different pattern. Likewise, God has given each of us a unique emotional “heartbeat” that races when we encounter activities, subjects, or circumstances that interest us. We instinctively feel deeply about some things and not about others. This God-given motivation serves as an internal guidance system for our lives. It determines what your interests are and what will bring you the most satisfaction and fulfillment. It also motivates you to pursue certain activities, subjects, and environments.

Most all of the things we may have a heart for can be used by God in and through His church. Some have a heart for recreation. They love athletics and athletic competition. That can be used in and through God’s church to minister to others and to provide fellowship. Others have a heart for music or dramatic presentation. What an outlet for ministry! Some have a heart for writing or love to build and repair things. These all give an indication of your heart.

Now, what do you love to do? Look at the appendix entitled “SERVING WITH YOUR HEART.” Begin to ask God to help you know your heart and the things you love to do and how He has shaped you to serve. Take time to know your heart.

Discuss what you love to do and what you may have a heart for. What are some ways you see that it could be used in and through God’s church? God has given you a special heart to SHAPE you for His work.

Tuesday April 23, 2013

Your Heart Determines Three Things

Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.

Proverbs 4:23 (NIV)

Your heart determines certain things about you. That is why God tells us to guard our heart. Consider three things our heart determines:

1. Why I say the things I say.

For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.

Matthew 12:34 (NIV)

It should give us some concern that what we say tells what is in our heart. Now that can be good and it can be bad. Think about the things you said today. How were your words used today? Did you show honor and respect to your parents, teachers, coworkers, and friends? Or did you use harsh or mean words? That should cause alarm. What we say comes out of our heart. The Psalmist prayed, *Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me* (Psalm 51:10). Perhaps you need to pray this prayer over and over. Your words tell about your heart.

2. Why I feel the way I do.

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

Hebrews 4:12 (NIV)

We all find ourselves in bad moods from time to time, but is it right to let weather, situations, or other external factors determine our moods? The Psalmist said that he set his heart to follow the Lord (Psalm 119:112). A set heart is necessary to follow the Lord and maintain feelings. What you feel—your moods—originate in your heart.

3. Why I act the way I do.

Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.

Proverbs 4:23 (NIV)

The King James Version of the Bible says it is the “issues of life” that come from the heart. The New International Version says the heart is the “wellspring of life.” It all means that what we do comes out of our hearts. Who is in control of your heart? On what is your heart set? As you can see, your heart determines the direction of your life. What is in your heart?

Are you an actor, acting out of a clean heart or are you a reactor allowing externals to determine what you say, feel and do? Give your heart to Jesus. Invite Him to come and take control of your heart.

Wednesday April 24, 2013

Your Heart is Your Appetite

The laborer's appetite works for him; his hunger drives him on.

Proverbs 16:26 (NIV)

What you love to do drives you on to action. The verse above comes from the Proverbs. These are wise sayings recorded under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It is true! Think about it. When a person is hungry they will do what it takes to get food. People will get a job and work diligently to earn money to satisfy their hunger.

This truth applies in many areas of life. Jesus says that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness are blessed because they will be filled. To hunger and thirst for righteousness is to hunger and thirst for the things of God. When a person hungers for the things of God they will seek Him to have their hunger and thirst satisfied. Their hunger drives them on. When it is said that someone has a heart for God that means they seek Him and serve Him. Their hunger drives them on.

When a person has a heart for missions that heart hunger drives them on to satisfy that hunger. We are blessed to have many in our church who have a heart hunger or appetite for missions. Their heart hunger—appetite, drives them on. It is why they do what they do.

Do you have appetites that remain unsatisfied? It may be that all that is needed is development. Ask the Lord to show you appetites that you have that reveal your heart. Ask Him to enable you to develop your appetites so that they will drive you on to serve in and through His church. Perhaps there are some things you feel strongly about but to this point have only talked about. Could it be that God has burdened your heart not for talk but for action? Are there some steps that need to be taken that will lead to action?

Thursday April 25, 2013

Taking a Spiritual EKG

Building on the scripture and ideas expressed yesterday, let's begin to look at some heart appetites from your past.

Now let's have some fun! For some it will be easy fun but for others it may be a little more difficult. Have you ever taken the time and the energy to do a review of your life? I want you to take some time to look back over your life and see if you see trends, which may reveal things you love to do or passions you may have. This will help you know the appetites you may have. These appetites need to be developed. I was told years ago that I needed to develop an appetite for broccoli. It took a while but I did.

The younger you are, the easier this will be. Unfortunately, the opposite is also true—the older you are, the more difficult this will be.

If you are like most people, you have never taken the time to sort out and identify the things you are good at and are motivated to accomplish. As a result, it is unlikely that you use the talents as completely or as effectively as you could.

We will use a tool that we use in our “Discovering My Ministry” course. It is called “Taking a Spiritual EKG.” The exercise is adapted from the book, Finding A Job You Can Love.

Take some time to look over the “Taking a Spiritual EKG” pages found in the appendix. Use a separate sheet of paper to write down some of your answers. If you are doing this with your family, share your responses and relate some of the accomplishments and heart appetites you may discover.

Ask the Lord to help you remember. Take the time needed to complete this exercise.

Friday April 26, 2013

What I Love To Do

Jesus said to him, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind."
Matthew 22:37 (NKJV)

Have you ever thought about why you do some of the things you do? Of course, as a child of God we do most of what we do because of God working in our lives. But let's get a little more analytical. Some people are passionate about working with preschoolers while others are uneasy around young children. I have watched many of our high school students who appear to be a natural with young children. They love working with children and the children respond well to them. It is safe to say that they have a heart for children.

Let me illustrate my point. David Cooke has a heart for seventh-& eighth grade boys. For years David has invested his life in these boys at Harp's Crossing. He has made a difference in the lives of most of the young men in our church. David taught me when I was in 7th grade and continues to teach 7th grade boys today! David enjoys teaching!

Other people love to work with things. They are right at home doing technical work with computers, electronics, and audio/visual equipment. Some are skilled in construction, electrical, plumbing, carpentry, cooking, sewing and decorating.

Some people love to work with people, some with things and others with information. What do you love to do? Look at the appendix, **SERVING WITH YOUR HEART** to discover your unique "Heartbeat". Also, refer to the "I Love To..." section to help you get in touch with the things you love to do.

The Shaping of A Heart

For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. ¹⁴ And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. ¹⁵ But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, ¹⁶ to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, ¹⁷ nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.

Galatians 1:13-17 (NKJV)

Everything changes when you devote yourself in love to someone. Another way of saying this is what you love shapes your heart or the passions of your life. A man by the name of Saul was zealously advancing in religious Judaism. He was doing this with great passion and a devoted heart. One day everything changed. He suddenly turned away from his passion and zeal for religious Judaism and turned to a radically new philosophy and way of living. What caused this change in only a moment? He tells us what brought about the change in the passage above, "But when it pleased God...to reveal His Son"... All changed for Saul when He encountered Jesus. The life he had persecuted and tried to wipe out now became the life he sought to bring others into. It was not a philosophy or religion that brought about the change but a relationship with Jesus. Paul expressed it this way, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). On another occasion he said, "For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died" (2 Cor. 5:14).

Paul was no longer controlled by a passion for religious advancement but by the love of and for the one true God whom he encountered in Jesus Christ.

The Psalmist give us some insight into what takes place in a person's life when they begin to grow in their love for God, "Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart" (Psalm 37:4). To delight in the Lord is to have Him as the love and delight of your life. One's whole life and desires are shaped by this love.

We are told to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus. This is in contrast to being carried away by error (See 1 Peter 3:17-18). To grow in the grace and the knowledge of Jesus is to develop daily the love relationship which daily shapes our heart.

Is your relationship with Jesus shaping your heart? I hope that by now you are beginning to see that God really does SHAPE us to serve Him and to be on mission with Him. Have you begun to discover your spiritual gift and heart? If so, share with someone what you have learned and how you are seeking to develop your gift and your heart.

Meditate on this question as we prepare for worship together tomorrow.

Monday April 29, 2013

Skilled By God

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ² "See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. ³ And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, ⁴ to design artistic works, to work in gold, in silver, in bronze, ⁵ in cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood, and to work in all manner of workmanship. ⁶ And I, indeed I, have appointed with him Aholiab the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan; and I have put wisdom in the hearts of all who are gifted artisans, that they may make all that I have commanded you.

Exodus 31:1-6 (NKJV)

The 'A' in the SHAPE acronym stands for "abilities." If God has given you a spiritual gift and has been shaping your heart, what about special abilities He has given you? You have abilities you do not even know about. The truth is that many studies have proven that the average person possesses from five hundred to seven hundred skills. Now I don't know about you, but that seems hard to believe. Even if it's only half that number, you are loaded with skill and abilities.

Many people say, "Oh, I can't do anything." Would you look a little more closely and ask God what skills and abilities He has given you?

In Exodus 30 God has just given Moses the blueprint for the tabernacle to be built. Exodus 31 opens with God telling Moses who He has skilled to be the superintendent of the construction project. God had been preparing Bezalel for many years and had filled him with the skill, ability and knowledge needed for the task.

Bezalel had been born in slavery, raised in Egypt as a slave. He had obviously grown up toiling and laboring long, hard days, even to the point of utter exhaustion. He had known the hardness, the cruelty, and the savagery of slavery. But through it all, he had apparently learned trade after trade and skill after skill. He had obviously been a slave to several Egyptian craftsmen and businessmen and learned the crafts well. God had been at work throughout his life preparing him for this special task

You have been given abilities by God. He gave them to you not just for your enjoyment or convenience, but so that they can be used in His work.

After reading "Applying My Abilities" in the appendix, begin to look at the list of 26 Specialized Abilities. This list is in no way exhaustive but is intended to help you to begin to think of abilities God has given you. Would you ask Him to show you how to use your many abilities in and through His church?

Tuesday April 30, 2013

You Have Been Skilled, Too!

Moreover, I have appointed Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, to help him. Also I have given skill to all the craftsmen to make everything I have commanded you. **Exodus 31:6 (NIV)**

God gifted Oholiab to be Bazalel's assistant. Oholiab, like Bazalel, was gifted with the skill for artistic work necessary for construction of the tabernacle. In both of these lives it is clear that God had been protecting, preserving and preparing both of these men in the past for future service.

Now wait a minute! If this was true of these two men, certainly it is true of you and me also. What do you think? If God had been protecting, preserving and preparing Oholiab and Bazalel for service He has most definitely done the same for us! It seems odd that God would bring up something so insignificant as the names of and the abilities of the superintendent and his assistant. But God did! I think He wanted to honor them and to let us know there are no insignificant people in God's plan to accomplish His work. He also gave skills to the other craftsmen who would carry out the work.

I don't have to look very hard to see a multitude of skills and abilities that are used every day at Harp's Crossing. It is evident of the musical skill and ability with which God has blessed us. God's people being in a love relationship with Him and being obedient is what makes His Church great!

Since I have been at Hollonville I have been so thankful for God's people being willing to serve. I could list many examples but here is just one! VBS takes much time, work, planning, and skill. Stacy Morris for the past 2 years has taken VBS by the reigns and run with it. Without her leadership, enthusiasm, and direction on VBS, I would be lost. At the same time VBS wouldn't happen if many of you didn't help plan, teach, work in registration, cook, and work in many other areas. It takes the whole church, everyone using their gift.

Where are you in using your skills and abilities? You may have an ability that you have tucked away. It is time to discover, rediscover and bring out it to use in God's church.

Wednesday May 1, 2013

A Sampling Of A Few Abilities

My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.

James 1:19 (NIV)

Have you ever just wanted someone to listen to you? You did not want advice, just someone to understand. Listening is a very special ability only a few have. James gives us instructions to be quick to listen. Have you ever thought of being a good listener as a skill or ability? Believe it or not there are many people who cannot listen. They are skilled in gab. Now I am not being critical, but the skill of listening is a very special skill.

I am a preacher. Being a preacher with the gift of exhortation I want to give answers. Too often I only listen a little because I am constructing a prescription in my mind for the part I have heard. This is why most of us do not hear a person's name when being introduced. We are not listening but thinking of what we are going to say.

Do you have listening skills? If so, you are also one who is skilled in asking questions. Not just asking questions for questions sake, but the ability to sincerely probe so as to encourage a person to express what is on their heart. If you have this skill, you may be a good counselor and encourager. Have people told you, "you are a good listener," or "thanks for listening?" This may be a clue to a hidden unused skill that you have.

Another often overlooked and unappreciated skill is recall ability. I have a very poor memory. I am thankful for that at times because I can forget things that need to be put aside. Yet how often are we trying to recall a name or a face but there is only a blank. This is a wonderful ability that is useful in God's church. Do you have this ability? Step forward and use it in committee work and in other areas of His church.

Once again, look at the list of "26 Specialized Abilities" in the appendix and make a list of abilities you have and begin to ask the Lord to show you how to use them in and through His church. Do not be bashful or shy. Also, take this opportunity to look over the list of "Ministries and Opportunities Available". Step forward and be used of God.

Does God Expect Anything Of Me?

For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.

Luke 12:48b (NKJV)

Does God expect something of me? What do you think? Has God given you anything—gifts, talents, abilities or other resources? If so, do you think He expects anything of you involving these things?

In a parable in Matthew 25:14-30 known as the parable of the talents Jesus says that the kingdom of heaven is like a man who before going on a journey gave to one servant about \$5,000; to another servant he gave \$2,000 and to another \$1,000. When he returned the one with the \$5,000 had invested the money and got an additional \$5,000. The master told him he had done well and would be blessed even more and that he could come and enjoy his master's happiness. To the one who had been given \$2,000 he had also invested wisely and brought an additional \$2,000. Once again the master affirmed him, gave him more and invited him to enjoy his master's happiness. The servant who had received \$1,000 had merely hid what he had been given. He did not invest it and brought only the \$1,000. He was scolded and rebuked and what was given him was taken away and given to the one with \$10,000.

What do you think? Does God expect anything from us? It is clear—to those who have been given much, much will be demanded or expected. If God has given you much—many abilities, money, talents and resources—He expects more from you. It is a blessing to be given much, but it is also a great responsibility.

What kind of return are you presenting to the Lord? He is expecting a return on His investment. That is why He has blessed you. Remember what God told Abraham? In Genesis 12:2 God says to Abraham, "I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing." It is wonderful to be blessed and gifted of the Lord. But that is not the end of it. You and I are not the goal of His blessing alone, we are also a vehicle of blessing. You are blessed to be a blessing.

What abilities, gifts, talents or resources has God given you? Are you giving it back? Are you tithing? Are you using your skills and abilities to be a blessing to others? Once again, take some time to look over the list of abilities in the appendix. Ask God to help you identify some abilities He has given you to be used in and through His church.

Why Tithe?

You may be thinking, “what in the world does tithing have to do with ministry and service?” Well, I am glad you asked that question. Do you have a job? Do you get an allowance? Do you have any source of income? If the answer is yes, guess where it comes from! Look at this:

And you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.

Deuteronomy 8:18 (NKJV)

God had just spent several chapters warning the people of Israel not to forget Him and His blessings, provisions and salvation. He warned them that to forget Him would put them in a prideful way. The proud do not need God and God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6). I want to give you a few reasons to tithe, however it is only the first one that really matters. The tithe is a tenth of your income.

First and foremost we are to tithe because God said to. In Malachi 3:10 God leaves no question in our mind—the tithe belongs to God. He says to bring the whole tithe into the storehouse. To fail to do this amounts to robbing God. There are many reasons for tithing but the only one that really matters is that God commands it.

The second reason for tithing is pragmatic. In other words, tithing works! God said that if we obey Him, He will bless us. Remember, I told you first, the first and supreme reason to tithe is because God said to. It is not, however, incorrect to give consideration to the pragmatic reason. God said that He would pour out more than we could handle. Understand, I do not tithe and give because I am going to get. But I love seeing God’s bountiful provision. He will do it. He has in my life. Why not test Him if you haven’t yet. He said you could.

The third and last reason I want to share for tithing is utilitarian. That is a big word as was pragmatic. This word means useful. Tithing is useful. God said to tithe so there would be food in His house. There is a useful reason to tithe. Have you ever looked at our annual church budget? The total is just shy of \$198,000. That is not for physical food in God’s house but for spiritual feeding. That is man’s greatest need—the bread of life. Get a copy sometime of our budget and see what God does with our tithes and offerings. What could we leave off? Missions? Missionary salaries? VBS? China? Canada? Ministry to children? Students? Worship? God does so much to feed souls through His church.

I have shared with you three reasons to tithe. Do you want to see God do great things in your life? Do you want to experience God’s hand in a mighty way? Test Him. He said we could. See if He will not provide and amaze you in ways you have never dreamed. Remember the real reason to tithe—obedience.

Holding The Ropes

Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress. ¹⁵ *Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only.* ¹⁶ *For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities.* ¹⁷ *Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account.* ¹⁸ *Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God.* ¹⁹ *And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*
Philippians 4:14-19 (NKJV)

Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel.,
Ephesians 6:19 (NIV)

They call it the “Greatest Show On Earth.” You do not have to be a child to enjoy the circus. The acts are continuous and fast pace. The best seat in the house is right in the center a little way back so that you have a view of all three rings. The acts are great, but equally important and entertaining are those who hold the ropes. The stars get all of the attention and applause. But have you ever watched the stage hands? These are the men and women who set up everything. That in itself is very important. If I were to swing on the trapeze, walk on the tight rope, or swing and spin from a rope by my head or foot, I would want to know I could trust those who had prepared those things. I would want to know they are doing their job as though my life depended on them, because it does. Beyond set up they often assist by holding ropes that steady the apparatus. Without those who set up and hold the ropes the show would not go on, but if it did the stars would be in great danger.

You may not physically go—to China, Canada, Russia, or to other mission fields or on mission trips, but you need to be aware of something. Just like the circus that would not go on without the rope holders, neither would the ministry, on distant and not so distant mission fields, go on without the rope holders. I am a rope holder. When I am privileged to see those serving on the mission field, I am reminded of how important rope holding really is. Are you a rope holder?

- Rope holders support God’s church
- Rope holders pray
- Rope holders give
- Rope holders serve
- Rope holders are involved and interested
- Rope holders help keep the home base strong
- Rope holders pass on the task to the next generation

Rope holding is vital to the work of God’s church. Join me in being a rope holder!

Monday May 6, 2013

Your Bent is Your Personality

Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.

Proverbs 22:6 (NKJV)

Have you ever tried to write your name with your opposite hand? Take a minute to give it a try. Write your name with your normal writing hand and then do the same with the opposite hand. How was it? How does it look? Did you feel natural or comfortable?

Well I am sure it was no work of art. The purpose of this exercise was to show that when you are doing something that you are not suited for, you do not do it well and you feel dreadfully uncomfortable. The same is true when we are ministering in areas we are not shaped for.

God has gifted you with a spiritual gift. He has also given you talents and skills. Along with these shaping influences He has given each of us our own temperament. In our SHAPE acronym the 'P' stands for personality.

The passage above from Proverbs 22:6 gives some insight into our personality bent. In the original language of the Old Testament the verse actually reads, "Train up a child according to his bent." Some believe that these personality bents can be spotted even in newborns.

John Trent and Gary Smalley have developed a personality discovery tool that is based on your personal strengths. In the appendix you will find the "Personal Strengths Survey." You will find the instructions for completing the survey. It will be fun and revealing. Share and compare your results with others. If you are doing these devotions as a family share and see if you agree. Have some fun with this. Who is a lion? Beaver? Otter? Golden Retriever?

Appreciate the differences. God has made us different. Learning and appreciating the differences will go a long way in creating unity and mutual respect. I have already shared that some of what we call personality differences may indeed be such. We must learn how to appreciate the differences in SHAPE in our families, church and other relationships. Just as we need to appreciate the different spiritual gifts, hearts and abilities, we also need to learn to appreciate different personalities.

Pray for a spirit of understanding as we explore the different personalities.

Tuesday May 7, 2013

Can't We All Just Get Along!

Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark.³⁸ But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work.³⁹ Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus; **Acts 15:37-39 (NKJV)**

Wouldn't it be great if people were more like you? O, give thanks to the Lord! I am so glad that everyone is not like me! Yet too often I find myself in conflict with people because they are not like me.

Do people always get along? Well, do they? Is it biblical? Is murder biblical? Murder does occur in the Bible, but that does not mean it is God's will. Did people always get along in the Bible? Of course not, the Bible is true. People, even godly people, failed to get along at times. Paul and Barnabas came to a point of "sharp disagreement" even to the point that they parted company. Of course this was later resolved and Mark became a very significant person in Paul's life and ministry.

As people work together, conflict will arise because of differences. I want you to know that conflict did arise in the New Testament between believers. When conflict arises, we need to work through it for the sake of a higher calling. Lisa and I have been married for nearly ten years. We have had and will continue to have conflict. We are two uniquely shaped people. She has her SHAPE and I have mine.

We have had and will have conflict. We are two uniquely shaped people. She has her SHAPE and I have mine.

Personality often is the source of conflict. We do not all have the same personality. For the next few days we will review the four personality types—Lion, Otter, Beaver and Golden Retriever. These are a lot of fun. We can see unique personalities in these animals that help us better understand other people.

Have you had conflict with a brother or sister? Is it resolved? God wants that conflict resolved. Are there steps you need to take?

Ask God to help you be understanding of others who are different from you. Commit yourself now to get along with others so that God's work will not be hampered in any way.

The Lion Personality

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. [39] The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off--for all whom the Lord our God will call." [40] With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation."

Acts 2:38-40 (NIV)

It is a chilling sound to hear the majestic roar of a lion. I am not talking about the roar of a lion cub but a full grown lion. They are the king of the jungle.

The lion personality is equivalent to the dominant personality in other personality tools. In the New Testament the clearest example of this would be Peter. Just look at some of the events in Peter's life which correspond to the lion personality. Among the twelve Peter often took charge. He seems to be the leader of (apart from Jesus) and spokesman of the group. When Jesus asked about who they thought Jesus was, Peter boldly asserted, "thou are the Christ, the son of the living God." A not-so-positive element of the lion personality is they often speak before they think. Peter was quick to speak but on at least one occasion he should have thought before he spoke. He rebuked Jesus when Jesus spoke of His upcoming rejection and death. Certainly God relied on Peter's adventuresome nature when He sent him to the Roman centurion, Cornelius' home to take the gospel for the first time to a non-Jew. On the day of Pentecost God called upon Peter's boldness and determined nature to present a powerful message of salvation as the church burst forth into existence and three thousand people were saved.

The lion is strong, vocal and can be very opinionated. They do not walk away from a challenge. The lion loves a battle and will fight to the finish. In the flesh the lion can come across as pushy and overbearing. They can be intimidating to most other personality types. When under stress they may express anger.

The lion is a personality type that is a blessing to God's church. The lion knows how to take charge and he will! This may appear to be domineering, but that is not the goal. The lion wants to get the job done and they know they can do it. The lion speaks out in meetings because that is the nature of their personality. They have an opinion and idea and will express it. They roar! Sometimes other personality types will sit quietly.

God shapes his church with different people, gifts, hearts, abilities, personalities and experiences. He makes no mistakes. Do you have this personality but wish you did not? Do you know someone who has this personality but you wish they did not. Let the lion roar, in the spirit of course. Where would we be without the roar of the apostle Peter? Bring that personality under Holy Spirit control to be used of the Lord. Thank God for the lions.

Thursday May 9, 2013

The Otter Personality

It is not easy to find a positive example of the otter in the Bible, so, I will use a not-so-positive example—Lot. Now I do not want to associate all otter type personality types with Lot. Let me get the negative out of the way. Lot was irresponsible, a partier and sought the course of least resistance. He took the easy way.

That is enough of the negative. All personality types have their negatives. The negative is only present when they are in the flesh. Think of an otter swimming around in a river. I have seen them in captivity at the Tennessee aquarium. They love to play. You can see them swimming and sliding down slippery rocks like children at play. They appear to not have a care in the world. It is said that the otter personality is a party waiting to happen.

Otters love to talk and are great net workers. They know many people but maybe not their names. They come to conferences, church etc... to talk and meet people. At a party they will talk to everybody, but not go deep with anyone. They love to have fun and may be late to the party so they can meet more people. They do not like to be serious and do not like details. They make good salespersons.

They need to learn that deadlines are not guidelines, and not to do everything at the last minute. Not to be so optimistic that they miss areas they need to address. They are susceptible to peer pressure because they want to be liked. King David may have had some otter in him. He loved to dance and worship with energy.

Of course Jesus was perfectly balanced and we can see all of the personalities in Him at times. He was at a wedding party and turned water into wine in John 2. The people there called Him a glutton and drunkard and a friend of tax collectors. Jesus loved to meet people, but He also loved to be alone.

Do you know any otters? Perhaps you are an otter. Heed the warnings and allow your personality to be a tool in the hands of God so that you can serve Him and His church. If a young person in your family has the otter be careful not to be overly critical of their personality but give direction to it. We all need direction in our lives.

Friday May 10, 2013

The Beaver Personality

Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, [2] just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. [3] Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, [4] so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

Luke 1:1-4 (NIV)

In order for the busy beaver to accomplish the task he has to accomplish, he must be very careful and detailed in his work. The beaver is the illustration of that personality trait that likes to do things orderly and correct. The beaver personality pays much attention to detail. The beaver is predictable and extremely precise.

How does the beaver fit into God's plan and purpose? There is an illustration in scripture of a beaver type personality. Dr. Luke wrote a detailed account of the gospel and a book about the birth of the church and spread of the gospel—Acts. Just the words of Luke in the opening of the gospel of Luke give a hint into his personality. He wanted to give an “account of the things that had been fulfilled.” He also wanted to share the result of what he had “carefully investigated.” And in the end his goal was to “present an orderly account.”

The beaver pays close attention to detail and desires things to be done thoroughly and precisely.

Have you ever been in a meeting and a great deal of ideas were put forth and talked about, but then the meeting was over. All that had been accomplished was talking and expressing good ideas. Beavers want to take the talk and put it into a plan of action. They want a date on the calendar and a timeline for getting there. The beaver wants assignments made so that everybody can be in on the work. The beaver will not quit until the talking and dreaming becomes a plan of action and a reality.

Are you a beaver? If so, get to work. Ask those questions? Whip out that legal pad. Inspect the project. Push for excellence and settle for nothing else. Do not let others squelch your desire for perfection and order. Do you know a beaver? Thank God for them. If you are a beaver, be careful not to plan God out.

Look around. Name some people you think are beavers. You may understand them better now.

Saturday May 11, 2013

The Golden Retriever Personality

Now when he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. ² Saul took him that day, and would not let him go home to his father's house anymore. ³ Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. ⁴ And Jonathan took off the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, even to his sword and his bow and his belt.

1 Samuel 18:1-4 (NKJV)

It seems as though God not only raised up Queen Esther for “such a time as this” but also most of the other people God used in the Bible. I love God’s timing. Like God, it is perfect. Where would David—king, soldier, psalmist and man after God’s on heart be without his loyal friend Jonathan?

At one time, I had a golden retriever. I do not know of an animal with a more gentle and loyal personality. The only thing a golden retriever may do is lick you to death. The golden retriever personality is loyal, sensitive, avoids confrontation and hurting others. The golden retriever is easily hurt and wants to be liked. The golden retriever will try to carry the world on his/her shoulders.

Where does this personality fit in God’s church? Think what was going on in David’s life. Jonathan’s daddy was trying to kill Jonathan’s best friend David. Talk about a tough predicament! Jonathan realized that the source of truth was God, who demanded his ultimate loyalty. It was his relationship with God that gave Jonathan the ability to deal effectively with the complicated situations in his life. He was loyal to Saul because Saul was his father and the king. He was loyal to David because David was his friend. Jonathan’s loyalty to God guided him through the conflicting demands of his human relationships.

Relationships get sticky. They do! Not just sometimes. The golden retriever can be counted on. In the flesh, the golden retriever can let people drift into sin without confrontation. But the golden retriever must deny self and take the risk of confrontation.

Golden retrievers will be there when it seems no one else is. On a committee, they may remain quiet, but they are there to bring softness and warmth. All of you goldens, do not cower down when the lion roars. Do not grow hard from hurt. Thank God for the way He made you.

Do you know a golden retriever? Give them a word of encouragement and thank God for them.

Monday May 13, 2013

What Has Happened To You?

Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel.

Philippians 1:12 (NIV)

We all face many kinds of experiences in our lives. Some we consider to be bad or negative experiences and others we consider to be good or positive experiences. It is not the actual experience that deems it good or bad, but the ultimate outcome. Paul was imprisoned in Rome when he wrote Philippians.

Paul faced dark circumstances: he was a prisoner in Rome. The dark circumstances stared Paul right in the face. No circumstances could ever be any more severe—no matter what they were. Paul was waiting to appear before the Supreme Court of Rome: he was facing a trial before Nero, the Roman Emperor, and he was innocent. He had done nothing that should cause his arrest and imprisonment. Yet there he was, and he was having to wait the arrival of his Jewish prosecutors with their trumped-up and malicious charges. True, he had some privileges—renting his own house and receiving friends—but these privileges were minor when the strains of his sufferings are seen. He was imprisoned for over two years, and as is the case with all prisoners, the days wore on ever so slowly—hour by hour and day after day. Whatever pressures hang over a man's head who is awaiting a trial, that will determine whether he lives or dies, are the same pressures that hung over Paul's head. As he says in Ephesians 3:13, his tribulations were intense and lingering.

The 'E' in our SHAPE acronym stands for 'experiences.' We all have a multitude of experiences that have in many ways shaped us to be the person we are today. These experiences added to our spiritual gift, heart, abilities and personality all provide the way God has shaped us for ministry in and through His church.

What has happened to you? Paul said that what had happened to him was actually serving to advance the gospel. Paul used his dark circumstances to spread the gospel. Paul did not see himself as a prisoner of Rome nor of Nero. He saw himself as a prisoner *for Jesus Christ*. He did not see himself as a victim; he saw himself as a conqueror for Jesus Christ.

Give some thought to your experiences:

- Your Spiritual Experiences
Meaningful decisions/times with God
- Your Painful Experiences
Problems, hurts, trials that have taught you
- Your Educational Experiences
What were your favorite subjects?
What special training you have received?
- Your Ministry Experiences
How have you served in the past?

Take some time to think through and pray about past experiences. Allow God to redeem all of your life and experiences so that what has happened to you can serve to advance the gospel.

Tuesday May 14, 2013

Life Changing Spiritual Experiences

The Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built an altar there to the Lord, who had appeared to him. **Genesis 12:7 (NIV)**

Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, [19] and after taking some food, he regained his strength. Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. [20] At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. **Acts 9:18-20 (NIV)**

God spoke to Abraham and everything changed from that point. God told Abraham that He would:

- Make him into a great nation
- Bless him
- Make his name great
- Make him a blessing

God then made the promise very specific when he showed him the land and promised to give it to Abraham and his offspring. Immediately upon receiving the promise, Abraham built an altar to the Lord and the rest is history.

Abraham had a spiritual experience. For Abraham, this experience was life and destiny changing.

Saul was traveling to Damascus to arrest Christians. He was on the “Damascus Road” when he had a life and destiny changing spiritual experience. Jesus appeared to him and the short-term result was blindness, but the long-term result was clear sight, and a new name—Paul.

In both of these two lives everything changed. Paul and Abraham both had their lives changed but as a result the lives of millions were changed and all of history. How can you ever measure the impact of a genuine spiritual experience?

What significant spiritual experiences have you had that have shaped your life? Share that experience with your family or another person. Take the time to write it down. Give thanks to God for what He has done.

Life Building Painful Experiences

Then his brothers also went and fell down before his face, and they said, "Behold, we are your servants."¹⁹ Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God?²⁰ But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.²¹ Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones." And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them. **Genesis 50:18-21 (NKJV)**

His brothers plotted to kill him because of their jealousy. Joseph had gone to check on his brothers. When they saw the “dreamer” coming they thought about killing him, but his brother Reuben convinced them to throw him into a large empty hole in the ground for holding water. The brothers sat down to eat and when a group of traders came by they decided to sell their brother Joseph to them.

As the story goes, Joseph was sold in Egypt to one of Pharaoh’s officers. Things got much worse before they got better. There is nothing recorded in the Bible that Joseph did anything to deserve all of the terrible things that happened to him. In fact, the Bible says that God’s hand was with him and that God blessed him. He was thrown away and sold by his brothers, sold as a slave, falsely accused by Potiphar’s wife, thrown into prison, and forgotten. Life had handed Joseph a raw deal! But Joseph did not see it that way. When his brother appeared before him after their father’s death, the brothers were fearful that Joseph would retaliate. He did not retaliate. He said that what they had meant for harm, God meant for good.

God is always in control. He was in control when Joseph was thrown into the pit. God was in control when Joseph was sold into slavery. When Joseph was falsely accused, God was still in control. God did not drift off to sleep when Joseph was thrown into prison. When Joseph was forgotten in prison, God never forgot.

What about your painful experiences? Was God asleep? Was He not paying attention? As with Joseph, He has always been in control. Regarding your painful experiences you need to do as Joseph did—allow God to redeem and use them. Say what Joseph said—what was meant to bring me harm, God meant to bring good. What you do with those painful experiences determines the rest. Have you allowed God to use them for good?

There are people, in the church and outside of the church, who are going through similar experiences to the ones you have gone through. You made it through by God’s grace. Now, explore those experiences and ask God to redeem them and use them for good in and through His church. Remember Paul’s words, “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”

Ask God to enable you to use those painful experiences for good.

Thursday May 16, 2013

God and Suffering

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, [4] who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. **2 Corinthians 1:3-4 (NIV)**

Look at the word in verse four—“so that.” Those are great words. God does things and allows certain things in our lives “so that” we can do certain things in response to and based upon what He has done. Have you ever recognized a time when God has set the stage for you “so that” he can show Himself through you? He does it quite often, but too often we are not paying attention.

What is it that God does “so that” we can minister to others? He comforts us. The word here for ‘comfort’ is the word that means ‘to come alongside.’ God comes to us and alongside of us in ALL of our troubles. Have you ever gone through a tough time alone? First of all, you were not alone. You only thought you were. Second, even when God is there it doesn’t feel good to be alone. If I figure this right, no one should ever go through a tough time alone.

Kids can be cruel. If you are a young person have you ever been the one left out or made fun of? Well, if you are a believer then you know the truth—God loves you and what people say about you is not true. What God says about you is true. As you pray and read His word—the Bible, you are comforted. God comes alongside of you and the truth sets you free—you are comforted. When you receive such comfort, you give the same to others. Instead of making fun and leaving others out you encourage and seek to include them. You comfort as God has comforted you. Since you know what it is like to be made fun of and to be left out, you know you do not want anyone to go through that alone. God uses you to help others.

We are called upon to give to others what God has given to us—nothing more, nothing less. We have all been through trying times in our lives and have seen God bring us through times of suffering; now He may want to use us in other people’s lives.

Maybe you have experienced the loss of a loved one and God wants to use you to minister to someone in a similar position! Maybe you have been through a difficult or trying time and God wants you to minister to others as they walk that road.

Perhaps you have had many different kinds of painful experiences. God can use those experiences to minister to and through you. Ask Him to take your hurts and use them in and through His church.

His grace carried you through “so that” you can be there for others.

Friday May 17, 2013

Classroom and On-The-Job Training

But David said to Saul, “Your servant has been keeping his father’s sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, [35] I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. [36] Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. [37] The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.” Saul said to David, “Go, and the Lord be with you.”

1 Samuel 17:34-37 (NIV)

David used his educational background to convince King Saul to allow him to go into battle against the giant Goliath. He told King Saul that he had been thoroughly educated and trained at ‘Shepherd College.’ He was determined to use his educational experiences to get Goliath off of the back of the Israelite army. He said that as a shepherd he had been trained by experience to fight lions and bears to protect his father’s sheep. He then concluded that he could take Goliath.

We have all had at least a little education. Not all education is formal. Much of the educational experiences we have received is on-the-job training. Both are useful in determining your SHAPE.

What experiences do you have that you could pass on to others? Maybe you could tutor a child, teach someone how to fix a car, or teach someone a skill that the Lord has blessed you with.

Many of our mothers have come alongside younger mothers to give guidance, counsel and assistance. These mothers are using less formal, on-the-job training received in motherhood to bless and strengthen God’s church.

What educational experiences have you had? Give it some thought—both the classroom educational experience and the on-the-job training educational experiences. God continues to SHAPE you to be on mission in and through His church.

Saturday May 18, 2013

Ministry Experience

Now all the people gathered together as one man in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate; and they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded Israel. ² So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly of men and women and all who could hear with understanding on the first day of the seventh month.

³ Then he read from it in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate from morning until midday, before the men and women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law. **Nehemiah 8:1-3 (NKJV)**

By the time of the reporting of the events above, Ezra was probably pretty old. He had been involved in much of the events surrounding the rebuilding of Jerusalem's temple and now the wall. Ezra had a great deal of ministry experience as a scribe, teacher, preacher and leader. He had probably retired to private life but was called out of that retirement to use previous ministry experience. Ezra read from God's word and God sparked a great spiritual awakening.

I have found that too often people retire from ministry in God's church. I have heard many say, "I have served my time." Well check your pulse. If you've got one, God is not finished with you yet.

For years Mrs. Earline Whittington taught preschoolers in our Sunday School at Fayetteville. When she and her husband came to Harp's Crossing years ago, they were already well advanced in years. But she continued to teach five-year-olds, in fact she taught me. She loved teaching and I can hear her now when we would call her teacher, she would respond back, "there is nobody here named teacher". ☺ She continued to teach and at least just sit in the room with them until her health completely failed. She loved doing what the Lord called her to do.

Perhaps you have been involved in some area of ministry in the past. Have you taught Sunday School, sung in the choir, been involved in an outreach ministry, worked in VBS, or worked with children or youth? Give some thought to previous ministry experience. God has used this experience to SHAPE you for work here and now.

Think through how you have served in the past. Perhaps you were in another church years ago and served in a ministry. Are you willing to use that ministry now?

Monday May 20, 2013

Who Decided That I Would Be a Member?

But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.

1 Corinthians 12:18 (NKJV)

Church membership is a big deal to some and not such a big deal to others. I think it is a BIG DEAL, but of course, that is what you would expect me to say. However, that is not my idea. In the Bible, God's word, it says that God did the arranging! I did not decide. He did! Paul says that God has arranged all of the parts just as He wanted them! You may have thought you decided, but you were only acting in keeping with God's plan and will for your life.

I was born in Augusta Georgia. God called our family to Harp's Crossing when I was 2 years old and my family moved to the Fayetteville area. For 28 years of my life Harp's Crossing and Fayetteville was all I knew. Those 28 years shaped me to where God has brought me today. I was always in church, and when I was a kid there were times I didn't think it was the "best thing", today I know it was. I am so thankful for my godly heritage, family, and God's church.

Church membership is God's will. When a person is saved God wants them in a family called a church. When babies are born, God puts them in a family where they are nurtured and cared for. As they grow in health and strength, they are given chores and responsibilities. This contributes to their health and maturity.

Likewise, in the church, God grows and nurtures His children. As they grow He wills for them to take on service opportunities in His church. He placed them there for that purpose—just as He wanted them to be. In the home, the children come to a time when they are not just receivers but contributors. As believers grow in the Lord and in His church, they become not just receivers but contributors. How are you contributing to God's church at Harp's Crossing? God placed you here to grow and to be a contributing member.

Who decided for you that you would be a member of Harp's Crossing Baptist Church? I know who decided for me. I know who decided for me; literally! 2 years ago this March God called me and my family to Hollonville! I was unsure about a lot of things during that time but I was sure of one thing; this was where God wanted us and know that is true today. God did this. What about you? I do not think you and I are different in this regard. He decided that you would be a part of Harp's Crossing. Didn't He? Now will we, each one of us, acknowledge His decision to arrange us as a part of this body? If so, let's get on to what He want us to do.

Tuesday May 21, 2013

The Ecstasy of Community

The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!"
1 Corinthians 12:21 (NIV)

I hope you are beginning to move in the direction of discerning your spiritual gift. If not, just be patient. By now I am certain that you are convinced that God gives gifts to His children to be used in and through His church.

Dennis shares about a wonderful book he read about 10 year ago entitled *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made* by Paul Brand and Phillip Yancey. This book introduced to him the idea of "the ecstasy of community."

The human body is used by Paul to illustrate the many parts of the church and at the same time the unity of the church. The book *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made* uses the same idea but looks microscopically at the body to drive the point home even more dramatically. The human body is made up of billions of cells. These cells are unique. Some are eye cells, others are muscle cells, some are brain cells and some are bone cells. I could go on and on. An eye cell will never be anything but an eye cell. It cannot be an ear cell. One kind of cell cannot move to another location and be something else. When each cell does its part the body functions together and certain wonderful things are experienced. Yet with all of the cells, there are no pleasure cells. How then is pleasure experienced? I love this! Let's say that you are going to the beach and want to see a beautiful sunrise. You set the alarm at night using brain cells to make that choice and decision. You sleep through the night with kidney cells and blood cells all at work to maintain body functions. You awake in the morning to the buzz of the alarm alerting your ear cells. You climb out of bed with the aid of bone and muscle cells. After dressing, using a multitude of different cells, you eat some breakfast using those taste buds and their cells. After breakfast you walk to the beach, again with a concert of body cells working together to get you there. You sit on the beach gazing toward the horizon, watching as it gets lighter and lighter. Then suddenly, a golden sun rises as though coming out of the sea. Chill bumps erupt on your arms, back and neck. Perhaps tears roll down your cheek. And yet not one pleasure cell in your body!

Have you ever experienced anything like that? It may have been at a concert, special worship time, romantic encounter or other time that you experienced overflowing joy. It takes the whole body working together and then an enzyme bathes your body creating the ecstasy of community. You saw, heard, felt with all of your being and were thrilled.

This same thing happens in the body of Christ. When we all work, functioning in the way God created us, we complement one another and the body experiences the ecstasy of community. No one part alone getting the good feeling but the entire body rejoicing. We do not all preach, but we all share the joy. We do not all play in the orchestra. We do not all sing in the choir, make the visit, go to China, Canada or Russia. But we all share in the joy of the accomplishment, because no one part can do it alone.

The body of Christ should be functional and celebrative. I love the body of Christ. It is a living miracle of many parts, just like the human body.

Give thanks for your church! Indeed, how beautiful is the body of Christ.

No Real Soloists In God's Church

What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. [6] I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. [7] So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. [8] The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor.

1 Corinthians 3:5-8 (NIV)

A solo in a worship service can be a beautiful part of worship. But, it is not really a solo. In fact there are no real soloists in God's church. Everything in God's church and everyone in God's church is part of a bigger picture. Some people would think of Apollos and Paul as soloists. God has, however, assigned to each his task. Paul planted, and Apollos watered; both real and necessary tasks, but God caused the growth. Paul and Apollos did solo things but they did them in concert.

Concert is a good word to use here. When an orchestra or band presents a concert that is what they do, they play in concert. That word means many instruments playing together. Some play trumpet, others saxophone, others the flute, tuba, drums, trombone and many others. Beyond music the word concert means agreement of two or more to work in harmony for a design or plan. As with the orchestra, the many instruments are playing the same song in the same key with the same beat.

I love to hear a beautiful solo, especially when it is not a solo. When is a solo not a solo? When it is done in concert with every other part of worship! The solo then becomes a part of the whole—many working together to accomplish a plan or design.

Paul and Apollos were working independently together! They were in concert with God as the director. God gets the glory and praise and He brings the success. It is ours to obey and us our gifts, heart, abilities, personality, and experiences. When we each do our part as God has shaped us, we are in concert—playing the same song, in the same key under the direction of God.

I believe the church to be a true miracle. For over two thousand years it has been in existence and has prospered all over the world. It is not perfect, just the miraculous presence of Christ in the world. Give thanks for God's church. Be specific in your giving thanks—thank Him for the body of Christ at Harp's Crossing. Which task has He assigned you?

Thursday May 23, 2013

Given To The Lord

For this child I prayed, and the LORD has granted me my petition which I asked of Him.²⁸ Therefore I also have lent him to the LORD; as long as he lives he shall be lent to the LORD." So they worshiped the LORD there.

1 Samuel 1:27-28 (NKJV)

Samuel was a man who filled many roles: judge, priest, prophet, counselor, and God's man at a turning point in the history of Israel. No birth of a child is ever an accident. God formed all of us in our mother's womb, and He has a plan for each one. Samuel's birth came as the result of the fervent, constant prayers of his mother Hannah. In fact, the name *Samuel* means 'heard of God.' God heard and answered Hannah's prayer.

When Samuel was born, Hannah loved and nurtured him. She told her husband, Elkanah when the child was very young that she was going to present the child to the Lord and that he would live there always. When that time came, Hannah did as she said. She took young Samuel to the temple and dedicated him and his whole life to the Lord. God used Samuel in a mighty way.

My mother and daddy did much the same with me. They prayed for me, loved and nurtured me and got me into a church that joined with them in that love and nurturing. The members of that church joined with them in presenting me to the Lord.

Earlier we shared with you a devotional entitled "Holding The Ropes". This week I shared about my own life and church experience growing up in a loving nurturing home and church. We hold the ropes for people God has sent out all over the world. Before they are sent out they grow and experience God's call on their life. I am so thankful for a church who nurtures our little babies, preschoolers, children, youth and adults. Hannah presented Samuel to the Lord and he was raised from that point on in the temple. We have parent-child dedications regularly. The parents present the child and themselves to the Lord and we as a church join with them to give that child to the Lord. Our kids have been blessed by this wonderful church body! We have a reason to do as Hannah did—to celebrate and praise the Lord for what He has done and what He is going to do! You can read Hannah's prayer in 1 Samuel 2:1-11. It is the expression of a thankful heart. I am thankful for Harps Crossing Baptist Church. You have tag-teamed with many parents in giving children to the Lord. Just look around and see.

Give thanks for your church. Celebrate the body of Christ!

Friday May 24, 2013

Don't Ever Give Up!

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

Galatians 6:9 (NIV)

A scientist once conducted an experiment in his laboratory. From the ceiling he suspended an iron ball weighing a ton, attaching it to a strong cable. Beside the huge iron ball, he hung a small sphere made of cork, attached to a thread fastened to the ceiling. An electrical mechanism kept the little cork ball swinging slowly, pendulum-like, against the iron weight.

At length, after days of unceasing swinging back and forth on the part of the cork, the iron ball weighing a ton began to swing very gently to and fro in harmony with the little cork ball. Gradually, its motion increased until it was prescribing a wide arc, all because a tiny cork ball had kept persistently knocking against its massive side, day in and day out.

It is said that a giant tree can be cut down with a small hatchet given enough time and persistence. The passage of scripture in Galatians 6:9 lays out this principle for us. Do whatever God wants you to do and keep doing it. He has promised that He will cause the seeds that we plant to grow and bear fruit if we will not give up.

I have wanted to give up and quit many times. But, whose idea was the ministry to which I have been called?

Doug and Evelyn Knapp served as Southern Baptist Missionaries in East and South Africa. Doug was there in 1964 as an agriculture missionary to help the farmers improve their crops. At first the people did not accept them or their help. The local witchdoctor told the people that the Americans were there "to take your blood." The people would not come around. The Knapp's set up a demonstration farm and grew corn. The farmers in the area only had inferior seed. One day a man came and asked for some seed. Others came also. A leader of one village accepted an invitation to the Knapp home for refreshments. The leader asked, "Why did you come to our valley?" Doug said that he came to tell about God and His Son. The leader responded to the gospel by accepting Jesus. He invited the Knapp's to come to his village and tell his people. Others were saved also. And as a result many others came to know the Lord.

That first convert did not come for two years and following many disappointments. Doug and Evelyn Knapp did not give up. Have you ever wanted to give up? Make sure that it is God's will before you abandon a work He has called you to. Do not give up. If you continue faithfully, you will see a harvest.

Are you serving the Lord? If so, keep on until He says stop. Pray for others to keep on!

I Will...

“Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. [15] But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.” [16] Then the people answered, “Far be it from us to forsake the Lord to serve other gods! [17] It was the Lord our God himself who brought us and our fathers up out of Egypt, from that land of slavery, and performed those great signs before our eyes. He protected us on our entire journey and among all the nations through which we traveled. [18] And the Lord drove out before us all the nations, including the Amorites, who lived in the land. We too will serve the Lord, because he is our God.”
Joshua 24:14-18 (NIV)

Moses successor, Joshua, had successfully led the Israelites into the Promised Land. After the glorious accomplishment Joshua delivered a rousing and challenging message. In the message he challenged the people to make a choice to serve the Lord. He then gave his own decision, *“But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.”*

Joshua asked the people to make a commitment in advance that would carry them when other decisions sought to compete with the decision to serve the Lord. I have always told my children not to wait to make certain decisions. I will not use drugs. I will not be involved sexually before marriage. There are certain things you decide in advance. Joshua decided in advance that he and his family would serve the Lord.

David, the psalmist, said many times, “I will praise the Lord.” I believe these were resolves made because of love and commitment to the Lord. The word ‘resolve’ means to make up your mind in advance.

I believe there are certain things we should make up our minds about because the Lord is our God:

- I will worship God daily
- I will be in worship with other believers each week
- I will be involved in Sunday School
- I will read God’s word daily
- I will pray daily
- I will serve God according to how He has shaped me
- I will seek to lead others to Jesus
- I will tithe

It is not a good thing to just wait and see how you feel. Instead there needs to be a predetermined mindset that will help you navigate your way through life. Ask the Lord to enable you to live a life that is governed by a heart that is determined to serve the Lord. Go to bed this evening with your heart set with these and other “I wills.”

APPENDIX

S.H.A.P.E. Sheet/ WHAT IS YOUR S.H.A.P.E. ?

S—Spiritual Gifts—The Nine Team Gifts

H— Serving With Your Heart/Taking a Spiritual EKG

A—Applying My Abilities/26 Specialized Abilities

P—Personality Traits

E—Examining My Experiences

WHAT IS YOUR S.H.A.P.E.?

NAME _____ PHONE# _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____ EMAIL ADDRESS _____

DATE OF BIRTH _____ YOUR CURRENT VOCATION _____

Please take a moment to help us understand how God has shaped you for ministry. Use your Ministry Devotional Guide to assist you. Please make a copy for your records and return a copy to the church by May 19.

S – PIRITUAL GIFTS (s) – List the spiritual gifts you believe you have from the Ministry Devotional Guide, the Appendix and/or by listening to the Ministry Sermons.

H –EART – List the things you love to do. Look in the Appendix of the Ministry Devotional Guide beginning on page 70. I Love to ...

A – BILITIES – There are 26 Specialized Abilities listed in the Appendix of the devotional guide. Please list those that apply to you. Also, add any other job or skills that you have experience in:

P – ERSONALITY –There are four basic personality types listed in the Appendix of the devotional guide. List the one that is most like you. If you have traits in more than one area, list the strongest trait and then the second strongest.

E – XPERIENCES – What experiences have you had in these four areas:

Spiritual (Meaningful decisions/times with God)

Painful (Problems, hurts, trials that have taught you)

Educational (Your favorite subjects in school? Seminars or training that has been helpful to you?)

Ministry (How have you served in the past? At Harps, or in a previous church?)

After reviewing the ministries of Harp’s Crossing, what do you feel that you are best “shaped” for in our church?

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

THE NINE TEAM GIFTS

THE SERVER

The gift of service comes from the word from which we get our word “deacon.” The words means helps and ministering. The server wants to be behind the scenes working on manual projects and helping.

1. Characteristics
 - a. Does not need to be in the public eye.
 - b. Desires to get things done. This person sees something that needs to be done and says, “I’ll do it.”
 - c. Is usually ambitious.
 - d. Usually enjoys manual projects.
 - e. Often is involved in a variety of activities and volunteers for many different jobs.
 - f. Enjoys short-range projects.
 - g. A tendency to feel inadequate and unqualified for spiritual leadership.
 - h. Is usually good with mechanical work.
 - i. Is loyal, sincere, tolerant faithful and devoted.

2. If this is your gift, some warnings
 - a. Be careful not to neglect more weightier matter—spiritual concern.
 - b. Avoid over commitment—it is alright to say, “no.”
 - c. Do not exclude others who may want to help and need to help.
 - d. Be certain not to neglect family and personal needs.
 - e. Be careful not to neglect policies and procedures. Servers have a tendency to rush into service and miss the process.
 - f. Be careful not to over help.

3. Cross-gift—Understanding and Communication
 - a. The server is a doer and not a talker. Aggressiveness to get the job done need to be understood in light of the motive.
 - b. The gift of service should never be thought of as a lowly or second-rate ministry.
 - c. The desire to see the need met needs to be seen not as a disrespect for procedure. They may need to be reminded to wait for the leader.
 - d. May appear to be seeking self-advancement. Understand the motive.
 - e. May appear to neglect spiritual matters for busy things. Understand the motive—to serve and get things done the busy things that need to get done.

THE ADMINISTRATOR/ORGANIZER

The gift to lead and organize. The organizer sees a project as a whole and desires to work it to completion. The word means one who stands out front.

1. Characteristics

- a. The administrator sees the big picture and can break it down into small pieces,
- b. Can visualize the big picture and the outcome.
- c. Is goal oriented.
- d. Is well disciplined.
- e. Usually works best under pressure.
- f. Does not procrastinate.
- g. Is seriously minded, highly motivated and intense.
- h. Is a perfectionist. He wants to job to be well done.
- i. Can identify what needs to be done.
- j. Is good at delegating.
- k. Is skilled in planning.
- l. Plans ahead and works on a schedule.

2. If this is your gift, some warnings

- a. Be sensitive and appreciative of people in the organization. Be careful not to neglect warmth
- b. Be aggressive with project not people.
- c. Beware of pride of position.
- d. Remember spiritual concerns, motive and teachings.
- e. Always keep the big picture in front of others. They grow discouraged with what appears to be “menial tasks.”
- f. Will assume leadership when no leadership is in the group.
- g. Be careful not to plan God out.

3. Cross-gift—Understanding and Communication

- a. Do not look at the administrator as lazy because of delegation. They are motivated to get the job done and will involve other in the process.
- b. May appear to be cold or pushy.
- c. May appear not to be concerned with people.
- d. The willingness to endure criticism and reaction may appear to be insensitive. They are driven to move forward with the project.
- e. This gift is necessary in all churches and committees.

THE GIVER

The gift of giving is the Spirit-given capacity to give beyond the tithe to advance the work of God.

1. Characteristics

- a. Has a unique ability to make wise purchases and investments in order to save money to give away.
- b. Desire to give quietly and humbly.
- c. Need to know of the need—how to help and how much is needed—not pressure. They want information and direction.
- d. They want others to give and they have a vision of what would be if others gave.
- e. More likely to be lighthearted than depressed.
- f. Is conscientious and self-disciplined.
- g. Has a mind for and sensitivity to financial matters and needs.
- h. Has a desire to feel a part of what they are giving to.

2. If this is your gift, some warnings

- a. Remember your gift is not power to control or manipulate.
- b. Be careful not to get out of focus, looking more to finances than spiritual concern and needs.
- c. Do not expect others to share your enthusiasm to give. Remember your motivation may not be theirs.
- d. Avoid pride of wealth, all things come from God.
- e. In helping individuals, be sensitive to the Holy Spirit so as not to over help.

3. Cross-gift—Understanding and Communication

- a. They may appear to be worldly or only concerned about money. Their motive is to give, to provide financial help and guidance.
- b. Family may see as tight or selfish when the give will not give to them but will give to others.
- c. This person operates from the desire to see all people give. Be convicted but not critical of their desire to see all people give.
- d. Others may think the giver wants to be control with money.

The Mercy Shower

The Spirit-given capacity and desire to serve God by empathizing with and comforting those in distress.

1. Characteristics

- a. Is outgoing with a low-key inoffensive personality
- b. Not gloomy, but cheerful; has the ability to cheer and maintain a positive outlook
- c. Has a high sensitivity level to discern the feelings and emotions of others
- d. Finds it easy to express feelings
- e. Appears to always be loving
- f. Has a unique ability to hurt and rejoice with others
- g. Has a tendency to avoid firmness
- h. Is frustrated with dishonesty, hypocrisy and dissent. Since they give themselves away, they get hurt and therefore turn away from others who are insincere.
- i. Talks easily with people and is easy to talk to
- j. Is a good listener and is responsive to people\

2. If you have this gift, some warnings

- a. Realize that there is a time for mercy and a time for firmness and confrontation.
- b. Be careful not to burn out. Mercy-showers burn out due to the constant giving of self and being hurt.
- c. In the flesh this person can become very angry because of their sensitivity. Be aware of the danger of growing angry and hard.
- d. Be careful not to be pulled down or into danger by those you are hurting with. Avid the danger of over-involvement.
- e. Danger- watch for the misinterpretation by members of the opposite sex.
- f. Do not rely entirely on your feelings.
- g. Without additional discipline the mercy-shower makes a poor counselor.

3. Cross-gift—Understanding and Communication

- a. The mercy-shower needs closeness and communication from friends and family members. The mercy-shower needs others who are willing to give to them. They look for close intimate friends on whom they can depend.
- b. The mercy gift is very vulnerable to hurt. We usually think this person to be over sensitive—that is their gift. Be aware that sensitivity is needed—this they provide.
- c. For the spouse of the mercy-shower be sensitive to the need for close contact and quality time together.
- d. Be understanding that their tendency to avoid firmness is not weakness but the desire to create a healing environment.
- e. The tendency to be sensitive is usually interpreted by others to be rejecting reason and logic. There is a need for both.

THE TEACHER

Definition: The team gift creating the desire to serve God by making clear the truth of the Word of God with accuracy and simplicity. The teacher is driven to clarify the truth by research and factual validation.

The teacher is not necessarily the Sunday School teacher. The teacher is the scholar. He enjoys research and studying in-depth.

1. Characteristics

- a. Has a tremendous love for the Bible.
- b. Desire to present truth in a systematic way. Like Dr. Luke, the teacher wants to give an “orderly account.”
- c. Is concerned with accuracy, presenting the truth with proof and documentation.
- d. Enjoys research, details, facts and figures.
- e. Is usually a better researcher than presenter
- f. Enjoys reading and research
- g. Is creative and imaginative
- h. Generally is self-disciplined

2. If you have this gift, some warnings:

- a. Be careful not to be consumed with the details. Find them and use them but do not expect everyone to share your interest.
- b. Be on guard against the pride of learning—knowledge puffs up (1 Cor. 8:1).
- c. Be careful not to be critical of others when spotting little factual errors in the teaching of others.
- d. Be careful not to intimidate others with your demand for accuracy and detail.
- e. Keep practical application in view.

3. Cross-gift—understanding and communication

- a. Others need to appreciate the fact finding work and efforts of the teacher. They love details—this is needed in the body.
- b. Remember that the teacher is not showing off when presenting facts and details—their motive is accuracy and detail.
- c. Do not interpret their initial silence as disinterest. Give them time and when they speak, listen.
- d. When they question others, understand that they are discerning scriptural accuracy.

Be willing to tolerate facts and details—you may learn something.

THE EXHORTER

The special ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ to minister words of consolation, encouragement, comfort, and counsel to other members of the body in such a way that they feel helped and healed. They motivate others to their best effort, the highest level of being in Christ. Exhorters urge us to our full potential as children of God. Exhorters help others fulfill their destiny!

1. Characteristics
 - a. Is results-oriented.
 - b. Is comfortable working one-on-one or in groups.
 - c. Is a very practical person, usually analytical.
 - d. Is usually a good counselor.
 - e. Is expressive in a group setting; group listens when he or she speaks.
 - f. Is usually impulsive, needs self-discipline.
 - g. Is more tolerant than hostile toward people, usually sympathetic.
 - h. Has an accurate self-image.
 - i. Is serious minded, conservative, logical.
 - j. Is talkative.
 - k. Is an orderly person, likes things done in an orderly fashion.
 - l. Is enthusiastic, usually cheerful and bubbly.
 - m. Is a person of charts, graphs, and lists.
 - n. Is bored with trivia.

2. If this is your gift, some warnings
 - a. Don't talk too much.
 - b. Be careful not to over simplify a problem and thus make each problem solvable by a formula basis thus belittling others.
 - c. Don't be *overly* optimistic, positive or flattering, and don't shy away from being confrontational when it is needed.
 - d. Should first take time to understand where others are and what they really need.
 - e. Be careful not to rely on personal charisma and gregariousness rather than flowing in the energy and power of the Holy Spirit.
 - f. Avoid spending too much time with those who want only temporary relief.
 - g. Don't rely on your own understanding (formulas) and not the leading of the Holy Spirit.
 - h. Don't feel like you have failed God if one does not follow your advice. It is important to know that all that matters is that we are obedient to do what the Lord tells us. The rest is up to Him and them.

3. Cross-gift – Understanding and Communication
 - a. May appear as not evangelistic.
 - b. The urgency to give steps of action may appear as having an over confidence in them.
 - c. May appear to make everything too simple. Understand their motive - to encourage and help people to follow Christ.
 - d. May take scripture out of context, or may not use enough scripture. However, their heart's desire is to provide practical application that will motivate people to do more, do better, and do their best.
 - e. May interrupt people. Understand the motive – they can be very enthusiastic because they want people to reach their full potential.

THE PROPHET

The prophet is the functional gift of speaking forth the mind and counsel of God. Before the New Testament was complete, Old Testament prophets would receive their revelation directly from God. Now that the Bible is complete, the prophet gets the mind and counsel of God from the pages of the Bible. He speaks forth the truth of God.

Definition: The functional or team gift of speaking the truth of God in order to maintain correct direction (righteousness) or to correct wrong direction through repentance.

1. Characteristics

- a. Must speak out against wrong, cannot keep quiet, concerned with right and wrong. Always has something to say (Peter).
- b. Is not very patient, especially with people and their problems.
- c. Has a tendency to be painfully direct when confronting others. Is usually bold and aggressive.
- d. Persuasive in defining what is right and wrong. Makes a strong appeal for outward change.
- e. Impulsive—quick to speak
- f. Will make sacrifices to stand for the truth.
- g. Has a strong self-image and is individualistic
- h. Has a tendency to be more depressed and serious than lighthearted about life.
- i. Is not usually inhibited, but is usually expressive.
- j. May be very intimidating to others.
- k. Very opinionated
- l. Idealistic

2. If this is your gift, some warnings:

- a. Be sure to exercise your gift with love (see 1 Cor. 13:2;14:1).
- b. Remember your authority.
- c. Remember your motive—truth and correction. If you come across so mean you lay forfeit the opportunity to be heard.
- d. Keep your eyes on people as well as the issues.
- e. Do not neglect your own spiritual growth. Jesus warned about the log in your own eye.
- f. Allow the scriptures to bring the conviction, that is not your responsibility.
- g. Avoid jumping to conclusions. Get all of the fact and details.
- h. Seek to be positive
- i. Avoid sarcasm when making points.

3. Cross-gift understanding and communication

- a. The prophet may be viewed as pushy, opinionated and/pr judgmental. Keep in mind their goal—truth and correction. When they are sincere and in the spirit they are a blessed necessity in the body.
- b. Others may view the prophet as intolerant of the views and feelings of others. Do not be intimidated by the prophet. Use your gift and balance the prophet. The mercy shower may flee the presence of the prophet. Resist that temptation. Both are needed.
- c. Their direct approach may be understood as harshness. Be understanding that their desire is to see God's will done.
- d. Their boldness and strict standards sometimes leaves them a very lonely person longing for personal relationships.
- e. The desire to see change may appear to neglect an on-going spiritual growth. This is when the exhorter is needed to step in.

THE EVANGELIST

The functional gift of evangelism has to do with telling the good news of the gospel. It gives us the image of a preacher or a witness.

Definition: Has the desire and motivation to tell the story of the gospel in such a way as to call for a decision to receive Jesus as Lord and Savior.

1. Characteristics of the evangelist
 - a. Usually is outgoing and personable. Likes to ask questions of strangers about their life, work and family. Seeks to establish a platform to share.
 - b. Is consumed with the need of confronting people with the gospel or encouraging other believers to do the same.
 - c. The evangelist is not limited by lack of opportunities because he makes opportunities for himself.
 - d. Is more lighthearted than depressed.
 - e. Is expressive in speech and communication.
 - f. Is tolerant of people and their weaknesses; sympathetic to sinners.
 - g. Is usually very enthusiastic.
 - h. Is talkative and often interrupts other people.
2. If this is your gift, some warnings
 - a. Be careful not to focus just on getting a decision. Be sure to provide assistance for follow up and growth.
 - b. Do not press your gift on others. It is the temptation of the evangelist to press others to have his gift. All believers are commanded to witness but only a few have this gift. According to the research of Larry Gilbert about 10% have the gift while all believers have the role of witness.
 - c. Not every encounter is an evangelistic opportunity. People have many needs. Be sensitive to the other needs that people may have.
 - d. Be careful not to become numbers-only-motivated.
3. Cross-gift—Understanding and Communication
 - a. It is often thought that the evangelist is not concerned with other church ministries because he is so strong in his gift.
 - b. The evangelist is often viewed as pushy and his methods awkward. Remember this is a gift and he is exercising it. What may be awkward to you is natural for the evangelist.
 - c. The aggressiveness of the evangelist is seen as self-motivated. Once again, remember this is a gift. Be careful not to question the motives of another's heart.
 - d. The focus on numbers is often viewed by others as the only goal. For the evangelist, numbers represents the souls of people entering the kingdom of God. The more who hear—the more who respond; the more who respond the more people saved—that is why they do what they do.

The PASTOR/SHEPHERD

The pastor/shepherd leads and feeds, guards and protects and oversees a group of people in the church. This may be in a Sunday School class, church or other group, large or small.

1. Characteristics

- a. Is usually patient
- b. Is people-centered and loves them
- c. Is sometimes authoritative
- d. More of a leader than a follower
- e. Is expressive, composed and sensitive
- f. Draws people to himself easily
- g. Has a pleasing personality
- h. Has a burden to see others learn and grow.
- i. Has a burden to teach the Bible
- j. Usually does not like to present the same material more than once.
- k. Has a sensitivity to the overall attitude and spirit of the group
- l. Is sensitive to hurt feelings or problems which cause loss of unity

2. If you have this gift, some warnings

- a. Be careful not to leave others out. Often fails to involve others
- b. Tendency to become too independent. Be accountable and responsible to others.
- c. May fail to be evangelistic due to the number of people already under his care. Multiply self and continue to grow the flock.
- d. Be careful not to become over protective of the flock.
- e. Avoid using other people.
- f. Avoid the Messiah complex.

3. Cross-gift—Understanding and Communication

- a. The pastor/shepherd is not necessarily an evangelist. He is to do the work of evangelism, but gift is pastoring. Do not expect the pastor/shepherd to do all of the outreach.
- b. Needs time for preparation and prayer. The pastor/shepherd cannot be infinitely available.
- c. Often becomes discouraged because the load gets heavy. Be sensitive to the pastor/shepherd's need for encouragement.
- d. Do not expect the pastor/shepherd to do all of the work in the group.

SERVING WITH YOUR HEART

Physiologically, each of us has a unique heartbeat. Each person has a slightly different pattern. Likewise, God has given each of us a unique emotional “heartbeat” that races when we encounter activities, subjects, or circumstances that interest us. We instinctively feel deeply about some things and not about others. This God-given motivation serves as an internal guidance system for our lives. It determines what your interests are and what will bring you the most satisfaction and fulfillment. It also motivates you to pursue certain activities, subjects, and environments.

Heart for:

Teaching
Entertaining
Helping
Building
Repairing
Playing
Fixing
Influencing
Leading

I love to work with, be with and assist with people:

Children
 Babies
 Toddlers
 Preschoolers
 Younger school age children grades K-2
 Older school age children grades 3-5
Students
 Middle School students grades 6-8
 High School students grades 9-12
Adults
 Young Singles—college/career ages 18-25
 Older single adults
 Young married
 Median adults
 Senior adults
Special Needs
 Physical Impairments
 Visually impaired
 Hearing impaired
 Developmentally impaired
 Homebound due to illness

I love to work with things:

Building/Repairing/Designing/Improving/Maintaining

I love to work with information:

Gathering facts and figures/Analysis of Information/Research

3 KINDS OF HEARTS -

I Like To Work With:

- **People**
- **Things**
- **Information**

MONITORING MY HEARTBEAT

Definition: “HEART”

- a. “The organ that pumps your blood”
- b. “Your emotional constitution or disposition”
- c. “The vital force or driving impulse”

The Bible uses the term “heart” to represent the center of your motivation, desires, and inclinations.
“Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart. (Ps. 37:4 etc.)”

My heart determines . . .

- **Why I say the things I do**

“The mouth speaks what the heart is full of” Matt. 12:34 (GN)

- **Why I feel the way I do**

*“The Word of God . . . examines the **thoughts and motives** of the heart.”* Heb. 4:12 (Ph)

- **Why I act the way I do**

“Guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.” Proverbs 4:23

MY HEART IS THE REAL ME!

Physiologically, each of us has a unique heartbeat. Each person has a slightly different pattern. Likewise, God has given each of us a unique emotional “heartbeat” that races when we encounter activities, subjects, or circumstances that interest us. We instinctively feel deeply about some things and not about others.

This God-given motivation serves as an internal guidance system for our lives. It determines what your interests are, and what will bring you the most satisfaction and fulfillment. It also motivates you to pursue certain activities, subjects, and environments.

WHY HAS GOD GIVEN EACH PERSON A UNIQUE “HEARTBEAT”?

*“God has put it into their hearts **to accomplish this purpose.**”* Rev. 17:17

God had a purpose in giving you your inborn interests. In fact, your emotional heartbeat reveals a very important key to understanding God’s design and intention for your life.

The Bible makes very clear that your heart was designed by God, but you make the choice to use it for good or evil, for selfish purposes or for service.

You may have . . .

“selfish ambition in your heart . . .” James 3:14

Or you may . . .

“. . . Serve the Lord with all your heart.” 1 Sam. 12:20

“. . . Do the will of God from your heart.” Eph. 6:6

How can I do God’s will and serve God’s purpose?
By letting my heartbeat motivate me for ministry!

“It is quite true to say that a man who sets his heart on becoming a church leader has a laudable ambition.”
1 Tim. 3:1 (PB)

TAKING A SPIRITUAL EKG

If you are like most people, you have never taken time to sort out and identify the things you are good at and motivate to accomplish. As a result, it is unlikely that you use the talents as completely or effectively as you could. The key to understanding your heartbeat is to look at your past accomplishments.

This exercise is adapted from the book “**Finding A Job You Can Love**” by Ralph Mattson & Arthur Miller (Nelson, 1982).

STEP 1” LIST AND DESCRIBE YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS SINCE CHILDHOOD

Examples:

- “I put on plays of the neighborhood kids with costumes, props, etc. We transformed the shed in back of our house into a fairyland with lighting effects, decorations, and princesses.
- “I started a kool-aid stand in 4th grade and expanded it into three different stands. It was fun and I made money!”
- “I had a job as a printer’s assistant and developed a method of cutting stereotypes which was faster and more accurate.”
- “I ran for president of everything (and won sometimes) when I was in school.”
- “I have always liked to build things, Before I got married, I completely rebuilt the little apartment I was living in.”
- “I successfully led protest marches against toxic wastes in my hometown and got local TV coverage.”
- “I set a goal to read fifteen books over the summer and I did.”

What to include:

- Accomplishments at home, school, work, etc.
- Things you **enjoyed** doing.
- Things you believe you **did well**.
- Give specific details about what you did.
- Forget what other people think about it.

1. Remember, you’re recalling things you *enjoyed doing* and *did well* (accomplishments), not simply pleasant experiences.

BAD EXAMPLE: Had a great vacation in Canada.

GOOD EXAMPLE: Took some stunning photos during my vacation.

2. You do not have to cover every year of your life. Just focus on what **you feel** are the highlights of things you've done.

MY HIGHLIGHTS OF THINGS I DID WELL AND ENJOYED DOING DURING MY GRADE SCHOOL YEARS

1.

2.

AS A TEENAGER

1.

2.

3.

IN COLLEGE OR EARLY 20'S

1.

2.

3.

4.

IN MY "THIRTYSOMETHING" YEARS

1.

2.

3.

4.

COMPLETE UP TO YOUR PRESENT:

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

The more you can list the better. Get another sheet of paper!

STEP 2: DISCOVER THE MOTIVATED DIRECTION OF YOUR HEART

Examine your achievements for a common motivational thread. You might find a key phrase repeated. See if you can match one of the “heartbeats” listed below as samples:

Remember these are ALL God-given motivations. They are only sinful when used selfishly. Every one of these can be used in effective ministry. Don't be embarrassed to identify a basic heartbeat that doesn't *seem* spiritual! Almost every one of these can be identified in the ministry of one of the twelve Apostles!

I LOVE TO . . .

DESIGN/DEVELOP - I love to make something out of nothing. I enjoy getting something started from scratch.

PIONEER - I love to test and try out new concepts. I am not afraid to risk failure.

ORGANIZE - I love to bring order out of chaos. I enjoy organizing something that is already started.

OPERATE/MAINTAIN - I love to efficiently maintain something that is already organized.

SERVE/HELP - I love to assist others in their responsibility. I enjoy helping others succeed.

ACQUIRE/POSSESS - I love to shop, collect, or obtain things. I enjoy getting the highest quality for the best price.

EXCEL - I love to be the best and make my team the best. I enjoy setting and attaining the highest standard.

INFLUENCE - I love to convert people to my way of thinking. I enjoy shaping the attitudes and behavior of others.

PERFORM - I love to be on stage and receive the attention of others. I enjoy being in the limelight.

IMPROVE - I love to make things better. I enjoy taking something that someone else has designed or started and improve it.

REPAIR - I love to fix what is broken or change what is out of date.

LEAD/BE IN CHARGE - I love to lead the way, oversee and supervise. I enjoy determining how things will be done.

PRESERVE - I love to see things to completion. I enjoy persisting at something until it is finished.

FOLLOW THE RULES - I love to operate by policies and procedures. I enjoy meeting the expectations of an organization or boss.

PREVAIL - I love to fight for what is right and oppose what is wrong. I enjoy overcoming injustice.

DID YOU FIND THE BASIC MOTIVATIONAL DIRECTIONS OF YOUR HEART IN THIS LIST? WRITE THEM ON YOUR S.H.A.P.E. SHEET:

APPLYING MY ABILITIES

“There are different abilities to perform service.” 1 Cor. 12:6

“I (God) . . . have given him skill, ability, and knowledge in all kinds of crafts. . .”
Ex. 31:3

One of the most common excuses people give for not getting involved in ministry is “I just don’t have any abilities to offer.” Nothing could be further from the truth. The key is *matching* your abilities with the right ministry!

FIVE MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT ABILITIES (Skills and Talents)

1. MYTH: People aren’t born with skills. All skills must be learned by experience. This is simply not true. There are a number of skills which seem to be inborn, or are developed very early in infancy. When people say “He just seems to have a natural talent for it” it’s probably true.!

2. MYTH: Those skills which must be learned, are learned primarily in the classroom. Actually, some of your most basic skills were learned at home, ‘in the street’, or somewhere else outside the classroom.

3. MYTH: If you have certain abilities, you will be very aware that you have them. Again, this is not true. You are probably using a number of talents or skills that you are not even aware of! You need some process of skill identification.

4. MYTH: Skills that I use at work are only usable in that environment. I couldn’t use them in ministry. Hopefully, by the end of this class, you’ll see the fallacy of this idea. Be creative!

5. MYTH: Most people only have a very few abilities. The truth is that many natural studies have proven that the average person possesses from five hundred to seven hundred skills!

HOW TO DISCOVER YOUR MOTIVATED ABILITIES

Look over your list of accomplishments again. Circles all verbs that denote actions performed while you were doing each achievement.

Now compare those verbs to the list below and check those abilities you feel you have.

26 SPECIALIZED ABILITIES

Entertaining ability: to perform, act, dance, speak, magic

Recruiting ability: to enlist and motivate people to get involved

Interviewing ability: to discover what others are really like

Researching ability: to read, gather information, collect data

Artistic ability: to conceptualize, picture, draw, paint, photograph, or make renderings

Graphics ability: to lay out, design, create visual displays or banners

Evaluating ability: to analyze data and draw conclusions

Planning ability: to strategize, design and organize programs and events

Managing ability: to supervise people to accomplish a task or event and coordinate the details involved

Counseling ability: to listen, encourage and guide with sensitivity

Teaching ability: to explain, train, demonstrate, tutor

Writing ability: to write articles, letters, books

Editing ability: to proofread or rewrite

Promoting ability: to advertise or promote events and activities

Repairing ability: to fix, restore, maintain

Feeding ability: to create meals for large or small groups

Recall ability: to remember or recall names and faces

Mechanical operating ability: to operate equipment, tools or machinery

Resourceful ability: to search out and find inexpensive materials or resources needed

Counting ability: to work with numbers, data or money

Classifying ability: to systematize and file books, data, records and materials so they can be retrieved easily.

Public Relations ability: to handle complaints and unhappy customers with care and courtesy

Welcoming ability: to convey warmth, develop rapport, making others feel comfortable

Composing ability: to write music or lyrics

Landscaping ability: to do gardening and work with plants

Decorating ability: to beautify a setting for a special event

List your specialized abilities on your **S.H.A.P.E. SHEET**.

PERSONALITY TRAITS

LION

BEAVER

OTTER

GOLDEN RETREIVER

PERSONAL STRENGTHS SURVEY

Dr. John Trent

L

Takes Charge	Bold
Determined	Purposeful
Assertive	Decision Maker
Firm	Leader
Enterprising	Goal-Driven
Competitive	Self-Reliant
Enjoys Challenges	Adventurous
“Let’s do it now!”	
Double the number circled _____	

O

Takes Risks	Fun-loving
Visionary	Likes variety
Motivator	Enjoys change
Energetic	Creative
Very Verbal	Group-oriented
Promoter	Mixes Easily
Avoids details	Optimistic
“Trust me! It’ll work out!”	
Double the number circled _____	

G

Loyal	Adaptable
Non-demanding	Sympathetic
Even keel	Thoughtful
Avoids conflict	Nurturing
Enjoys routine	Patient
Dislikes change	Tolerant
Deep relationships	Good listener
“Let’s keep things the way they are!”	
Double the number circled _____	

B

Deliberate	Discerning
Controlled	Detailed
Reserved	Analytical
Predictable	Inquisitive
Practical	Precise
Orderly	Persistent
Factual	Scheduled
“How was it done in the past?”	
Double the number circled _____	

Personal Strengths Survey Chart

	L	O	G	B
30				
15				
0				

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Traits of a Typical Lion

- **Leaders**
- **Inspire a following**
- **Many accomplishments inspire awe**
- **Take charge**
- **Visionary**
- **Sometimes intimidates others**
- **Can become pushy and overbearing**
- **Can step in front of or over people**
- **Competitive**
- **Problem solvers**
- **Great at confrontation**
- **Don't like wasting time**
- **Often need to express anger when stressed**
- **Must learn people are more important than projects**
- **Must learn that it is okay to have times of relaxation**
- **Usually not good listeners**

Traits of a Typical Otter

- **Fun loving**
- **Entertainers**
- **Enthusiastic motivators**
- **Know people who know people who know people—networkers**
- **A party waiting to happen**
- **Sometimes irresponsible to commitments**
- **Can be dangerous and foolish risk-takers**
- **Will goof-off**
- **Plays practical jokes**
- **Not good with details**
- **Must learn that deadlines are not guidelines**
- **Constantly on the go**
- **Very verbal—talks to everyone**
- **When under pressure will attack verbally**
- **Friendships are numerous and not very deep**
- **Will raise expectations and hurt feelings without meaning to**
- **Creativity can be a nuisance**
- **Very optimistic**
- **Susceptible to peer pressure**
- **Can be so optimistic they miss areas that need to be addressed**

Traits of the Typical Beaver

- **Enjoys writing and reading instructional manuals**
- **Values accuracy and doing things right**
- **Very careful with children**
- **Keenly alert to own weaknesses and shortcomings**
- **Persistent**
- **Enjoys time alone, quiet reflection**
- **Likes quality not “junk”**
- **Can make others feel uncomfortable**
- **Has little tolerance for those who mess up**
- **Hardest on themselves**
- **Orderly**
- **Finishes what they start**
- **Brings stability**

Traits of the Typical Golden Retriever

- **Sensitive**
- **Stamped on forehead, “I won’t hurt you, I won’t say mean things to you”**
- **Avoids offending**
- **Stubborn, refusing to let go of hurt/grief**
- **Carries the weight of the world on shoulders**
- **Has a hard time saying “no”**
- **Avoids confrontation**
- **Enjoys routine**
- **Values loyalty**
- **Warm**
- **Relational**
- **Nurturing**
- **Easily hurt**
- **Does not like change**
- **Feels the hurt of others**
- **Absorbs most pain and suffering**
- **Wants to be liked**

EXAMINING MY EXPERIENCES

“And we know that in ALL things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” Rom. 8:28

*“Now I want you to know, brothers, that **what has happened to me** has really served to advance the gospel.” Phil. 1:12*

One of the most overlooked factors in determining the ministry God has for me is my past experiences, particularly my hurts and problems I’ve overcome with God’s help. Since our greatest life messages come out of our weaknesses, not our strengths, we should pay close attention to what we’ve learned in the “school of hard knocks.”

GOD NEVER WASTES A HURT!

HE WANTS YOU TO BE OPEN TO MINISTERING TO PEOPLE WHO ARE GOING THROUGH WHAT YOU’VE ALREADY BEEN THROUGH!

“(God) . . . wonderfully comforts and strengthens us in our hardships and trials. And why does he do this? So that when others are troubled, needing our sympathy and encouragement, we can pass on to them the same help and comfort God has given us!” 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 LB)

ON YOUR S.H.A.P.E Sheet RECORD THESE EXPERIENCES:

- **Your Spiritual Experiences**
Meaningful decisions/times with God
- **Your Painful Experiences**
Problems, hurts, trials-that have taught you
- **Your Educational Experiences**
What were your favorite subjects in school?
- **Your Ministry Experiences**
How have you served in the past.