

**Finding Your S.H.A.P.E for Ministry**

While on the mission field you no doubt exercised your God-given gifts for ministry. It’s very possible that God stretched your faith and you saw yourself serving in ways you never imagined.  It’s important to keep that momentum upon returning home.  We must be intentional to not allow for stagnation to set in in our service to God.

Discovering your S.H.A.P.E. will help you be intentional about discovering how God created you for ministry.  S.H.A.P.E. is an acrostic that stands for:  Spiritual Gifts, Heart (or Passion), Abilities, Personality and Experience.  Understanding your S.H.A.P.E. will help you find and start fulfilling God’s Kingdom purpose for your life.  Erik Rees, Author of [S.H.A.P.E - Finding & Fulfilling Your Unique Purpose For Life](http://www.shapediscovery.com/book.php) defines your Kingdom Purpose as, “Your specific contribution to the body of Christ, within your generation, that causes you to totally depend on God and authentically display His love towards others—all through the expression of your unique S.H.A.P.E.”As you discover your S.H.A.P.E., you will better understand what area of ministry to serve in.  You will grow spiritually and in-turn the church will grow.  The result for you will be joy, purpose and fulfillment.

**Spiritual Gifts** – 1 Peter 4:10 says, “*As* ***each one*** *has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God*.”(emphasis mine).  Every believer in Christ has a spiritual gift (1 Cor 2:14) that has been given to them by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:11).  We cannot earn or work for these gifts as they are a *gift* from God.  As stewards, we are called to develop these gifts (Rom. 11:29) and it is a sin to waste them (1 Cor. 4:1-2).  Step one is to understand what those gifts are.  The Church Growth Institute (CGI) offers comprehensive tools for discovering and understanding your spiritual gifts.

* Take their free online [spiritual gifts assessment](http://www.churchgrowth.org/cgi-cg/gifts.cgi?intro=1)
* Focus on your top three spiritual gifts then read their [descriptions](http://www.churchgrowth.org/giftslist.php)

After you have completed the assessment, reviewed the report and definitions, the next step is to understand how to utilize (or exercise) those gifts for ministry in your church, community and continued service around the world.  We recommend Larry Gilberts revised edition of *How to Find Meaning and Fulfillment through Understanding the Spiritual Gift within You*, available at [CGI’s store](http://store.churchgrowth.org/).  Another recommended step is set up a time to talk with your pastor, church leadership or mentor.  Here, you can share your assessment and what you’ve learned, review it with them and determine next steps of service and ministry.

**Heart (Passion)** – Psalm 37:4 says, “*Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.*” God has designed you with a unique heart or passions.  You have unique desires, hopes, ambitions, dreams and affections.  This is your source of motivation for what you love to do, why you do it and what you care most about.  There are three ways your heart or passions are directed:

1. A passion for a **role** – what you like to do
2. A passion for a **specific people** – whom you like to help
3. A passion for a **cause** (what you would like to see changed)

A helpful fee-based assessment ($15) that reveals what motivates you is Mark Gungor’s [Flag Page Test](https://www.flagpagetest.com/).  Mark provides a very helpful summary report that can be shared with a mentor or church leaders if you need additional insight.

Another way to determine your passions is to respond to the following:

1. What motivates you most in life?  I love to …
2. These are the people with whom I love to work most (age and type).
3. Church issues, ministries or possible needs that excite or concern me most are ­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­...
4. If I knew I couldn’t fail, this is what I would attempt to do for God with my life­­­­­­­­­­?

**Abilities** – Matthew 25:15 says, "*To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey.*”

Your natural abilities are also a gift from God.  These are special skills that you can do and excel at today.  Your abilities are unique to you and for the unique purpose God has for your life.  When you think about abilities in the context of ministry, a good reminder is, “what I am able to do, God wants me to do.”

1. What are your top five natural abilities?
2. What specialized abilities and interests do you have?
3. What do you believe your most valuable personal assets are?

To assist you with identifying your skills and abilities, click on a few of the links below:

* [CareerOneStop Skills List](http://www.careerinfonet.org/skills/skills_list.aspx)
* [Wisconsin Department of Workforce Skills List](http://www.wisconsinjobcenter.org/publications/9446/9446.htm)
* [Department of Labor Soft Skills List](http://www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/fact/softskills.htm)

**Personality** – Your personality also affects how you utilize your gifts and abilities.  It determines how you relate and socially interact with others while ministering in a team environment.  It will also help you understand how to respond to ministry opportunities as it will prevent you from ministering in an environment that is out of character.

In any ministry team, Jesus desires unity and love.  John 13:35 says, “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."  We can strengthen both unity and love when we better understand ourselves and the personality of those we are serving with.  For example, people respond to stress in different ways; some desire to be alone, some like to talk, others get aggressive.  When we understand our personality, we learn our tendencies and can seek God’s help to strengthen our weaknesses and to encourage us in our strengths.   Knowing the personality of others on our ministry team brings unity because we suspend judgment and to seek to understand why someone has responded a particular way.

To better understand your personality, we recommend the Institute for [Motivational Living’s Biblical Personality Profile](http://www.discinsights.com/).  They offer an electronic or hard copy version that can be completed in less than ten minutes.  Once completed, review the report and share this with your mentor, pastors or church leadership.

**Experience** – Romans 8:28 says, “*And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.*”  God doesn’t waste any of our experiences.  He uses our spiritual experiences, personal experiences, relationships, work-related experiences, educational experience, ministry experience and even our painful experiences to mold and shape us for His current purpose in our life.  Here are some questions to help you identify key experiences:

**My Spiritual Journey**

This is how and when I became a Christian:

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Times when I felt closest to God and meaningful spiritual experiences that stand out in my mind:

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**My Personal Experience**

These life achievements have been significant to me:

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**My Work-related Experiences**

These are the jobs in which I have been most effective:

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**My Relational Experience**

These are the healthy relationships in my life (indicate length of relationship):

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**My Educational Experience**

Schools I attended: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Degrees or Major areas of Study: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

My favorite subject were: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Training or seminars that have been meaningful to me:

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**My Ministry Experiences**

Where I have served in the past (include name and location of church, position of service, and length of service):

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**My Painful Experiences**

These are the kinds of trials through which I can relate and encourage others:

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**Putting it All Together**

Once you have identified your S.H.A.P.E. and completed all of the assessments, take the following next steps to apply what you have learned:

1. Pray and ask God for wisdom and direction for ministry.
2. Set up a personal meeting with your mentor, pastor or church leadership to go over your S.H.A.P.E. together.  Ask for their input and council for areas of service that would best fit your unique design.
3. Determine your level of availability for ministry service.
4. Once you have received some recommendations and evaluated your availability, if you are still not clear, begin to experiment with different areas of service.  It is recommended to serve a minimum of three months to determine if it’s a good fit for the church and for you.  Be sure to communicate up front your intent so unrealistic expectations about your commitment are not created.
5. Once you have identified your area of ministry (or ministries) commit for a minimum of a year.  At the conclusion of that year review your S.H.A.P.E. to determine if you should stay or adjust.