

Purpose Driven Life, IX

Getting Into S.H.A.P.E. (Chpt 29-32)

April 25, 2004

POST-CONSUMER

Easter is over, the 2004 numbers are in:

- 90 million chocolate bunnies were consumed in the U.S.
- Enough Cadbury Crème Eggs to stretch about 12,000 miles
- 700 million Peeps purchased (I'd guess about six consumed)
- 15 billion Jelly Belly's (Roasted Garlic & Cinnamon Toast)

We are a nation of consumers. Books offer us advice on how to get the most out of life for ourselves. Yet, fulfillment only comes as we learn to give the most of ourselves.

So far we have studied three Areas of our Created Purpose: to *believe* in our creator; to *belong* to His family; to *become* like His son. Today we touch on another vital aspect of the meaning of life:

- To *bestow* what He's given us

You were put on this earth in order to make a contribution. You were created with gifts and abilities for that purpose.

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

- Whenever we serve others, we are serving God

However, we shouldn't serve out of guilt or fear or even duty, but out of joy, and deep gratitude for what God has done for us. In the verses preceding, Paul said:

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast. - Ephesians 2:8-9 NIV

- We are not saved *by* service, we are saved *for* service

10 CENT SERVICE

One of the core values stated in our Membership Manual reads: Leaders should equip members to do the work of ministry. All believers will experience great joy and fulfillment as they discover, develop, and deploy their God-given gifts and passions in the body of Christ.

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, [WHY?] to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ... - Ephesians 4:11-12 NIV

Otherwise you have *NFL churches*: a few trained professionals running around in great need of rest - while being observed by screaming spectators in great need of exercise!

God has a ministry for you. That can be a scary word: ministry.

- Ministry is simply the way you serve others

Our church is the primary place where we fulfill our call to serve one another. Hundreds of you have responded to the call to serve in some capacity:

- Teachers, Helpers, Home-group-leaders, Hosts, Jail Visitors, Missions, Ushers, Cleaners, Lend-a-handers, Prayers, etc.
- Artoberfest has become a big service to our community.
- The blood drive was an incredible service to our state.

The mature follower of Jesus stops asking, "Who's going to meet my needs?" and starts asking, "Whose needs can I meet?"

Q: Do you ever ask that question?

This is vital not only to the spiritual health and growth of those you are called to serve ... but to your own as well.

The Sea of Galilee is a lake full of life because it has an inflow *and* an outflow. The Dead Sea has no life in it, because it *only* has an inflow. It only receives.

- With no outflow we stagnate and poison ourselves

We have to be intentional about serving (ministering to) others. We should practice every day: giving words of support and encouragement, praying for, listening to, and helping others.

Q: How many times a day would you like to serve others like this?

- Here's an exercise: Put that many dimes in your pocket.

Each time you serve/minister to someone transfer a dime to your other pocket. The goal is to transfer all of the dimes by the end of the day. When you remove the dimes, talk to God about it.

Real Christian service/ministry is not some duty-bound-compliance; it's a fulfilling sense of contribution, value, and purpose. This is one of the ways we can:

... offer [our] bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God ... Romans 12:1
NIV

THE SHAPE WE'RE IN

What you are is God's gift to you; what you do with yourself is your gift to God. –
Danish proverb

When we examine the unique *shape* God has given us, we more clearly comprehend how He will most effectively use us.

- S.H.A.P.E. is Rick's acronym for helping us determine ours.

S is for *Spiritual Gifts*. These are God-empowered abilities that He will use to advance His Kingdom.

Q: Isn't it funny how much we can change when we're saved?

- A burly truck-driver with a sailor's mouth transforms into a kind and sensitive Children's Church teacher.
- A self-centered mall-shopper is shocked to discover a strong desire to go to the mission field and serve strangers.

When you see spiritual fruit in your life, it *is* the result of God's gifting. We can't advance His Kingdom without His help.

If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. – John 15:5 NIV

Q: What fruit are you bearing with the gifts He has given you?

H is for *Heart*; our hopes and dreams, our desires and ambitions. My gifts reflect God, my heart reflects me.

As water reflects a face, so a man's heart reflects the man. – Proverbs 27:19 NIV

Q: What do you love to do and care about most?

God has wired us so that our hearts will race when we think about certain subjects, activities, and circumstances. We instinctively care about some things and not others.

- God wants us to serve him passionately, not dutifully

Q: In what way can you see yourself fervently serving others?

A is for *Abilities*; these include the natural talents you were born with and the skills you've honed.

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. -
Psalm 139:13 NIV

All of our abilities come from God. Even abilities we use to sin with are God-given; they're just being misused or abused.

- Our abilities are an obvious indication of how He'll use us.

If you think you don't have any abilities, I guarantee you have hidden ones that just need to be exercised.

- I have as many muscles as Mr. Universe; mine are just hiding!

Like that truck-driver and mall-shopper, you may need to experiment with ministries/servings in order to reveal them.

P is for *Personality*. God made introverts and extroverts, thinkers and feelers, competitors and cooperators.

Q: Do you like routine or variety?

Q: Do you prefer serving on a team or by yourself?

Your unique personality will affect *how* and *where* you use your spiritual gifts and abilities.

E is for *Experiences*: family background, education, vocation, encounters with God, past ministries, and painful events.

What's interesting about experiences is that our greatest ministry will usually come from our greatest hurts and failures.

[He] 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 1:4 NIV

The experiences you've resented and regretted most are the very ones God wants to use to effectively and powerfully help others.

Q: Who could better help an alcoholic recover, than someone who fought that demon and found freedom?

Q: Who could better comfort a wife whose husband has left her for an affair, than a woman who went through that agony herself?

But, for God to use our trials and our past sins to serve others, we have to be willing to share them ... when we'd rather hide 'em, cover 'em, and forget 'em.

- Don't waste your pain.