

Our S.H.A.P.E. For Service

"We Are Shaped For Service."

God has shaped or uniquely designed each of us to do certain things. God's will concerning our function determines our frame or form. Our personal custom combination of capabilities that Rick Warren calls our "**SHAPE.**" This simple acrostic is extremely accurate: **S = spiritual gifts; H = heart; A = abilities; P = personality; and E = experience.** A word about each.

All Christians are gifted by God with **Spiritual Gifts**. They are given for the sake of the common good of Christ's body, so all may serve in ministry, and help the church grow and prosper in Christ. The gifts of the Spirit are set forth predominately in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4 and include: prophesy, ministry, teaching, encouragement, evangelism, giving, leadership, compassion, wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, working of miracles, discernment of spirits, tongues, and interpretation of tongues. All of us Catholics have one or more of these gifts given to us through the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation.

The **Heart** represents the core of your desires, hopes, interests, dreams, ambitions, and affections. The heart is the seat and source of all your intentions and motivations, what you love to do and care most about. Your heart is the real you, what you really are, not what others think you are or what circumstances pressure you to be. The heart determines why you say and do what you do, and feel the way you do about it. Just as each of us has a unique heartbeat, so God has given each of us a unique "**Emotional Heartbeat**" which signifies our passion in living. What you are passionate about reveals your emotional heartbeat; find your passion and you will find your heart. And God looks upon the heart. And God wants you to serve Him out of heartfelt passion, not duty.

There are two basic characteristics which determine when you are serving God from your heart. First is **Enthusiasm**. You will be working out of love and enjoyment. Second is **Effectiveness**. When you do what God has shaped you to love doing, you will get good at it. Passion, like caring, propels perfection.

You are born with certain natural **Abilities** or talents. Since they came from God, your natural abilities are as important for your service as your spiritual gifts. The difference is they were given to you at birth and belong to you – whereas the spiritual gifts are always gifts **from** Christ, for working **with** Christ. Beware of thinking that you don't have sufficient abilities for God's service. Research suggests that the average person has from 500 to 700 different skills

and abilities. God gave you abilities not merely to make a living but to do ministry. And whatever you are good at, you need to be doing for your church!

Each of us has a different ***Personality***. There has never been nor will there ever be again, someone exactly like you. DNA molecules alone are infinite in variety. The likelihood that another would ever have the same DNA as you is so improbable, that if you were to write out the numerical probability with each zero being an inch wide, you would need a strip of paper 37,000 miles long! God sure loves variety!

There is no right or wrong personality for ministry. Your personality will impact ***how*** and ***where*** you use your spiritual gifts and abilities. Rick Warren says, “Like stained glass, our different personalities reflect God’s light in many colors and patterns. This blesses the family of God with depth and variety....It feels good to do what God made you to do. When you minister in a manner consistent with the personality God gave you, you experience fulfillment, satisfaction, and fruitfulness.” Such service just feels right to you.

Finally, your ***life Experiences*** shape you for service. Rick Warren also says you need to examine six kinds of experiences to assess how God has shaped you. 1. ***Family*** experiences: What did you learn by growing up in your family? 2. ***Educational*** experiences: What subjects did you most enjoy in school? 3. ***Vocational*** experiences: What jobs have you most enjoyed and been effective at? 4. ***Spiritual*** experiences: What have been your most meaningful encounters with God? 5. ***Ministry*** experiences: How have you served God thus far? 6. ***Painful*** experiences: What pains, problems and trials have you learned from?

In this last category, the very experiences you have resented or most regretted are precisely the experiences God wants to use to help others. They *are* your ministry. Truly, ***“God never wastes a hurt.”***

In sum, Rick Warren says, “You will be the most effective when you use your spiritual gifts and abilities in the area of your heart’s desire, and in a way that best expresses your personality and experiences. The better the fit, the more successful you will be.”

You just need to ***say “yes”*** to who God shaped you to be, and ***act on*** what God shaped you to do.

® From Rick Warren’s book ***The Purpose Driven Life: What on earth am I here for?***