

SHAPED FOR SERVING GOD

Based on Rick Warren's

The Purpose Driven Life – Part 5

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The Scripture

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with

him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. 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. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

The Sermon

God has a purpose for your life! That means you matter to God and to those around you. Three weeks ago we discovered that we were “Planned for God’s Pleasure.” The Bible calls this “Worship.” Two weeks ago we learned that we were “Formed for God’s Family.” The Bible calls that “Fellowship.” Last week we concluded that we were “Created to become like Christ,” which the Bible calls Discipleship. God has five purposes for our lives and we are more than halfway there.

What about today? Today we learn that we are Shaped for Serving

God. The Bible calls this ministry. Our owner's manual says in Ephesians 2:20, "*We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*" In other words, you were created to contribute, not just consume. God **made** you to make a difference. Job 10:8 says of God, "*Your hands shaped me and made me.*" You were shaped for God's service.

The word SHAPE is an acronym. Just as each of us has a unique physical shape, so each of us has a unique SHAPE as a Christian. Your SHAPE includes your **S**piritual gifts, your **H**eart, your **A**bilities, your **P**ersonality, and your **E**xperiences. These five things make you **who** you are and God has shaped you **like** you are because He has a **plan** for you. **Each** of us has the same **purpose** – to serve God – but **how** we serve God is determined by our SHAPE: our spiritual gifts, heart, abilities, personality, and experiences.

The Bible says in 1 Peter 4:10, "*Each of us should use whatever gift he's received to serve others.*" Remember, it's not about **you**. God

love you and wants you to be happy, but He's **given** you your unique gifts, talents, abilities, background, experiences, education, and everything else for the benefit of others. Please write this down on your study guide: "My fourth purpose in life is to **serve God by serving others.**

The Bible calls this "ministry." Like worship, fellowship, and discipleship, ministry is often misunderstood. When I say "minister," too many people think of a priest or pastor. They think of somebody with a funny collar, a robe, or cross around their neck who talks with a stained glass voice. The **Bible** says that **every** believer is a minister. Not everyone is a pastor, of course, but every Christian is a minister. Today I commissioned 12 new ministers through Confirmation. Their ministry will be using their unique **SHAPE** to help others in the name of God. **Any** time you use your talents, abilities, background, experiences, and so on to help other people, that's ministry. We're **all** called to ministry. Your only **choice** is how **effective** a minister you're going to be.

God Himself has given us a **model** for that **ministry**. His name is Jesus. He said in Matthew 20:28, *“Your attitude must be like My own, for I did not come to be served, but to serve.”* How does God want you to serve? Look at your SHAPE. God’s smart enough to plan ahead and He’s already **given** you the tools you need for the ministry He’s calling you to do.

The world is full of people desperately searching for **self-esteem**, **self-worth**, and **significance**. They want to feel good about themselves, but they’re looking for love in all the wrong places. Your **self-worth** is not determined by success, status, or salary. **Self-esteem** comes through service. Jesus said you have to give your life **away** in order to find it and he put his body where his mouth is by what he did for you and me on Calvary. The greatest thrill on earth is being used by God to benefit others. Mature Christians celebrate and use that gift.

Three things are necessary for us to serve others as Jesus did. First, we must be **available**. The Bible says in Matthew 20:30-32 that Jesus

was walking by one day when “*Two blind men shouted ‘Lord, have mercy on us! Jesus stopped and called them. ‘What do you want me to do for you?’*”

If we want to be used by God to serve other people, we must be willing to be interrupted. Jesus was on his way to Jericho, but he stopped when the man called out to him. Most of his miracles, most of his ministry, were interruptions. Almost everyone he healed – the blind man, the lame man, the paralyzed man, the bent over woman, the woman with the hemorrhage, several dead children – were interruptions. His first miracle was an interruption at a wedding party. His second miracle interrupted his journey to Galilee. The Bible says in Proverbs 3:28, “*Never tell your neighbors to wait until tomorrow if you can help them now.*” Loving people don’t procrastinate. They say, “Let’s do it now!”

What keeps us from being available? Let me give you three common barriers. The first is **selfishness**. The Bible says, “*Forget yourself long enough to lend a helping hand.*” (Philippians 2:4) The

number one enemy to compassion is busyness. Did you know that BUSY is also an acronym? It stands for Buried Under Satan's Yoke. We've let ourselves get so busy that we use our lack of time as an excuse for not serving others. It's like we've hung a "*Do Not Disturb*" sign over our hearts. Almost every miracle, every act of ministry Jesus performed was an interruption. I thank God he wasn't too busy for me when I cried out for salvation.

The second barrier is **perfectionism**. Ecclesiastes 11:4 says, "*If you wait for perfect conditions, you'll never get anything done.*" Real servants, Christ-like people, do the best they can with what they have right now. They don't make an idol out of excellence. They simply do their **best**, while realizing that they're not **perfect**. If God only used **perfect** people, where would we be? We're **all** a bunch of misfits. We **all** have our weaknesses. We all have our faults, our frailties, our failures. Guess what? God uses us anyway. God doesn't wait for perfect people. There are too few of **them** to go around. He uses ordinary

people like you and me.

The third roadblock is **materialism**. Jesus said in Luke 16:13, “*No servant can serve two masters. You cannot serve both God and money.*”

You’ve got to decide right now whether you want to be rich or blessed.

Are you going to be a wealth-builder or a kingdom-builder? Now listen:

If God **wants** you to be wealthy, that great! It gives you the tools to help others but, if getting wealthy is the primary goal in your life, you’re going to live a miserable existence, even if you get what you want. You can’t take it with you. Only your character lasts beyond the grave.

Serving God by serving others starts with **availability**. It means peeling away the selfishness, perfectionism, and materialism that get in the way. It also means being **grateful**. Psalm 100 verse 2 says, “*Serve the Lord with gladness.*” Be **grateful** for the opportunity to serve. Jesus was. Don’t serve grudgingly or out of obligation, serve with a deep gratitude to God for including you in His plan to help other people.

There are also barriers to **gratitude**. The first is **comparison and**

criticism. Our owner's manual says in Romans 14:4, "*Who are you to criticize someone else's servant? The Lord will determine whether His servant has been successful.*" It's not our job to compete with others or to criticize them for how they do their ministry. **Our** job is to do what **we** can do with what **we** have to help other people. Too often, the greatest arguments against Christianity are the words and actions of those who call themselves "Christian." Be faithful with what God has given you. Trust your brothers and sisters in Christ to do the same.

The second barrier to gratitude is **wrong motivation.** Jesus said in Matthew 6:1, "*When you do good deeds, don't try to show off. If you do, you won't get a reward from your Father in heaven.*" It's not about **you!** We don't serve so that others will notice how cool we are. We serve because we love God and because God's children are in need. Self-promotion and servant-hood don't mix. You don't have to **hide** your service, but it's helpful to ask, "Would I be doing this if no one knew it?"

If you want to serve like Jesus, you must be **available** and **grateful**, but you must also be **faithful**. Faithful means you don't give up. Like the Energizer Bunny, you just keep going and going and going. You don't quit in the middle of your assignment. Jesus said to God in John 17:4, *"I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work that You gave me to do."*

The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 4:2, *"The one thing required of servants is that they be faithful."* What keeps us faithful? **Gratitude** for what God and others have done for us in the **past**, **love** for God and others in the **present**, and **anticipation** of what God's going to do for us in the **future**. *"Throw yourselves into the work of the Master,"* the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 15:58, *"confident that nothing you do for Him is a waste of time or effort."* In **God's** book, there **is** no little service. Even a cup of cold water given in His name is a gift to God Himself.

Once upon a time, there were two teenage boys who went to church. The service was packed and they couldn't find a place to sit, so

they started to leave. An usher said to them, “Come on, guys. I’ll find you a seat,” and personally escorted them to a place where they could hear the message. Both boys accepted Christ that night. One of them was named Billy Graham. All that usher did was help a couple of kids find some seats, but there are **no** small acts in the Kingdom of God. Don’t belittle the little. Everything’s important. **Real** servants do every task assigned to them with equal dedication because they know it all matters.

Hebrews 6:10 says of God, *“He will not forget how hard you’ve worked for Him and how you’ve shown your love to Him by caring for other Christians.”* Do you what **I** want to hear when I stand before God on Judgment Day. Jesus’ words from Matthew 25:21, *“Well done good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things so; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness.”* What about you?

Will you pray with me?

Dear God, I realize now that I was shaped to serve You by serving

others. Please forgive me for all the times I've put a "do not disturb" sign over my heart. Help me recognize interruptions as opportunities for serving you. You've been so good to me. I want to give something back. When I stand before you on the threshold of eternity, I want to hear You say to me, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." Come into my heart, Lord Jesus, that I might live for you. In Your name I pray. Amen.