

CHRISTIANITY EXPLAINED

CHAPTER THREE

INTRODUCTION

God loves you and has a purpose for your life. God created you with special gifts, talents and abilities that would equip you to fulfill His purpose. You are on this earth for a reason. God's purpose for you includes three 'phases.' God's purpose for you is that you be (1) saved, (2) sanctified and (3) serving. We have previously talked about the first two. Let's talk about the third one. The Bible Teaches The Church Is A Body With No Unimportant Parts. In other words, every Christian has a place of service in the body of Christ. You discover your service ministry by discovering your S.H.A.P.E. (S=Spiritual Gifts, H=Heart; A=Abilities; P=Personality; and E=Experience.)

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

I Peter 4:10-11 says "As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God; whoever serves, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." This passage teaches us six very important things about Spiritual Gifts.

Two Facts About Spiritual Gifts

Every Christian has a spiritual (special) gift and each Christian is a steward of his or her gift. We like to jokingly say 'I was behind the door when God was passing out gifts (talents).' But the fact is that the Bible teaches that each and every Christian has at least one spiritual gift and maybe more. A Spiritual Gift is a capacity for service. It may need developing but it is within you. It is a special area of ministry that God wants you to develop and use. God will hold you responsible for the use of your gift or gifts. In judgment, God will want you to give an account of how you used the gift He gave you.

The Two Types of Spiritual Gifts

There are two types of spiritual gifts. There are the speaking gifts and the serving gifts. The speaking gifts includes prophecy, teaching, exhortation and other 'speaking' ministries. The serving gifts include showing mercy, serving, giving and other 'serving' ministries. One kind is not better than the other. Both are needed in order to accomplish God's work.

The Two Purposes of Spiritual Gifts

The two purposes of spiritual gifts are mentioned in this passage but you have to search a little to find them. The two purposes of spiritual gifts are to glorify God and to serve people. We glorify God by doing things in such a manner that God, not us, gets the glory (praise, credit). One little boy, when asked how can we glorify God said, 'We glorify God by putting the spotlight on God.' When the spotlight is on God, I am in the shadows. God gave us the gifts; therefore He should receive the glory, the praise, the honor and the credit for the ministry performed using that gift. We are to use our spiritual gifts to serve others. Note that we use the gifts to serve others, not ourselves.

Nine Spiritual Gifts That Most Students Agree Are Available Today

Sincere Bible students disagree about whether all the spiritual gifts listed in the New Testament are available today. We do not want to get into that controversy in this booklet. We will just consider the nine gifts that almost all Bible believing teachers believe are available. (While the study of the controversy is important, this is not the place nor the time for that debate.) Seven of the nine gifts are listed in Romans 12:4-8 and we get two more from a list in Ephesians 4:11-16. The nine gifts are listed below with a very brief description of each.

Prophecy - which is speaking for God. The prophets in the Bible were inspired by God. The prophets today are not inspired in the same way. Christians who have the gift of prophecy are usually very firm and straightforward in presenting the truth. They tell the facts and sometimes forget that people have feelings. They are dedicated to telling the truth.

Service - Christians with the gift of service usually serve in practical ways, behind the scenes without drawing attention to themselves. This gift covers a wide range of activities that are absolutely essential for the success of the church and other ministries. Note the order in which the first three gifts are listed. Prophecy (preaching) then service followed by teaching.

Teaching - Christians with the gift of teaching are involved in giving instructions to others in an effort to change their knowledge, attitude and/or actions. While the prophets tell you what is true, the teacher will tell you why it is true and give additional details about it.

Exhortation - The Christian with the gift of exhortation exhorts, encourages, comforts and motivates others. He tells you how to use God's truth in practical ways in your everyday life. People with this gift are usually compelled to give advice. They are very helpful as counselors to those with problems or those who are going through a bad emotional experience.

Giving - The gift of giving is the ability to share liberally and cheerfully with others. All Christians are to give a percentage of their income for the work of the Lord, but those with this gift enjoy giving above and beyond what is normally expected. Sometimes the person with this gift has a natural talent to made great sums of money but that is not always true.

Leadership - The gift of leadership (administration, ruling) is the ability to organize and to administer a project to its successful completion. They are usually goal-oriented people who know how to plan the work and motivate others to work the plan.

Showing Mercy - The Christian with the gift of showing mercy shows mercy, understanding and kindness to those who are undeserving. Mercy is to refrain from punishing offenders and this person is very forgiving of people who have made mistakes and gotten themselves into some kind of financial difficulty.

Evangelism - The evangelist has a strong desire to present the gospel to the lost and to lead them into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. Every Christian is to be involved in evangelism but the Christian with this gift is usually more concerned than others and he is usually more effective than others.

Pastor-Teacher - A Pastor-Teacher shepherds, feeds, leads and protects the flock (Christians), which is the church. Many Christians with this gift are in the located ministry as a "professional Minister" but that is not always the case. This person has a burning desire to teach and care for Christians and help them grow to maturity.

As you discover and use your particular gift(s), remember that other Christians have other gifts. One gift is not superior to another gift. All the gifts are needed in order for the body of Christ to function properly.

HEART (PASSION)

The “H” in the word “SHAPE” stands for “heart” and it means your passion, your desire, what you have “feelings” about. Usually there is a job or activity or function that you enjoy doing. You want to perform this particular activity. When you do it, it brings joy, happiness and satisfaction to you. It is something that the Lord has put on your heart. You know somebody ought to do this. When you keep feeling that “somebody ought to do this” you should realize that you are the “somebody” that ought to do it. This desire and conviction is a very strong indicator of the area in which you should work.

ABILITIES (Natural Talents)

The “A” stands for abilities or your natural talents. Each and every person has certain talents that allow him or her to excel in particular activities. The three areas of natural talents are (1) things, (2) people and (3) information. Each person is usually very good in one of the three areas. He may be fair in another area and very poor in the third area. If “things” is your area, then you like to fix things, you like to work with your hands, etc. If it is people, then you like to deal with them and be around people and work with and through them. If it is information then you like to work with facts, figures, knowledge etc. To understand this will not only help you in discovering your area of service in the church but also will help you tremendously in your job and career.

To help you discover which of the three areas you are the best in, I’m going to ask you to do something that will take a little time, but will be worth the effort. I want you to make a list of seven (7) things (projects, programs, etc) that you have done in your life. I want you to only include those projects or activities that brought great joy and satisfaction to you personally. Don’t include the ones that were the most profitable financially unless they also brought you personal joy and satisfaction. Some samples of things you might include are:

I obedience trained my dog

I built a deck onto my house

I read the entire Bible in one year

I wrote a research paper on a subject that was important to me

I learned to fly a plane and got my pilot’s license

I cut my grocery bill 25% by using coupons

I learned to get along with a very difficult person at work

I performed CPR on a person and might have saved his life

Now, go back over those seven things and determine which area of talent was most needed and used. Did I use my “people” talent or my “things” or was it “information?” The area that was needed and used the most in the seven things listed is probably the area in which you are the strongest. Try to be very honest and objective. If one of your seven projects was learning to do something, what brought you the greatest joy, the learning or the doing.

PERSONALITY

Several hundred years before Christ, Hippocrates discovered that people fit into one of four basic personality types. People who have never heard of personality types know that a person is naturally either active or passive. We realize that some people are “people-oriented” and others are “task-oriented.” We know that some people are extroverts and others are introverts. We know that some people are very outspoken and others are very shy. Some people are by nature very aggressive

and others are very submissive. Many of these characteristics can be distinguished even when a person is a small child. In the last 100 years or so we have discovered that most people instead of being one of the four personality types are instead a combination of two (or more) of the personality types with one type being more dominant. As we look at the four basic types, realize that you are probably a combination of two or more of the types. It is very important that you realize that personality types are not mentioned in the Bible. We can learn about personality type from the science of human behavior and then go to the Bible and see examples of each type. It is not a “doctrine” of the Bible and therefore is not on the same level as the spiritual gifts. Having said that, let’s look at the four basic personality types.

The **Sanguine** also called the “I” personality is the Extroverted Feeling Type of a person. His goal in life is to have fun. He is a people-person. He likes to talk and to be the center of attention. They are usually the life of the party. They bring life to a room when they enter. They usually dress flashy or colorful. They are also forgetful, not very time-conscious and are “happy-go-lucky” type persons. They are a joy to be around for short periods of time but can get on your nerves in the long run. They make great sales people or public relations people. Two people in the Bible who seem to have been sanguines are David and the Apostle Peter.

The **Choleric** or D type personality is the Extrovert Thinking Type. He or she is a task-oriented person whose goal is control. If you don’t stop them they will take control over any situation in which they find themselves. They are the leaders, the drivers and the “get the job done no matter what” type. They are “over achievers” who accomplish a great deal in life. They are more concerned with facts than with feeling, so they may hurt some feelings in the process of getting the job done. Two Bible characters who seem to have been choleric are Paul and James.

The **Melancholic** or “C” type personality is the Introvert Thinking Type. They are task-oriented people whose goal in life is to have everything perfect. They are perfectionists. They like charts and graphs. They want to know the facts. They are usually very sensitive. Many of the great musicians and artists have been people with a melancholic personality. Two people in the Bible that seem to have this personality are Moses and Thomas.

The **Phlegmatic** or “S” type personality is the Introvert Feeling Type. They are people-oriented people whose goal in life is to have peace. They are calm, easy going and very likable. They are peacemakers who usually like to work behind the scene. While most phlegmatics accomplish a lot in life, they appear to be lazy and not energetic. Two Bible Examples of people who seem to have this personality type are Abraham and Timothy

EXPERIENCE

The “E” is the acrostic SHAPE that stands for experience. Your experience can help a lot in determining what God wants you to do for him now. Be sure to consider all types of experiences. Several are listed below but don’t limit yourself to just these types of experiences.

Your **Educational experience** will include both formal schooling and other training you have had. For instance, if you are a trained accountant, God may want you to use that training to be the treasurer of the church or of some para-church ministry.

Your **Vocational experience** would include jobs you’ve had whether paid or volunteer. Ask yourself, is it possible to use the skills I developed at work to do something for the kingdom of God?

Your **Spiritual experience** has to do with your spiritual life and your Christian maturity.

Spiritual maturity is very much needed in certain areas of ministry.

Your **Painful experiences** such as suffering, divorce, overcoming certain problems, serious sickness, death of a loved one, etc. can sometimes be very helpful in a particular job that needs to be done now.

CONCLUSION

Discovering your serving ministry is an ongoing lifelong process. You discover your serving ministry by discovering your S.H.A.P.E. (**S**piritual Gifts, **H**eart, **A**bilities, **P**ersonality and **E**xperiences). Then you line those things up with God's commands and the needs of people. Nearly always this process will point you to one or two specific activities that you should be involved in. As you look at these five areas, you will discover your purpose in service. Your service purpose may be different from everybody else you know. Be careful that as you fulfill your purpose that other people should also be fulfilling their purpose and it all works together to accomplish God's purpose on earth! Are you willing to be used by God to do whatever He wants you to do? Most of the time, using the ideas in this chapter will help you determine what you should be doing for God. Occasionally God will call you to do something totally out of line with your 'SHAPE.' But that is the exception rather than the rule.

FINAL SUMMARY

God loves you and has a purpose for your life. That purpose involves three phases. God desires that you be (1) saved, (2) sanctified and (3) serving. You are saved when you realize that you are a lost sinner and you receive Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior. Sanctification is a process of spiritual maturity as you grow to be more like Christ. That involves both a positive and a negative aspect. There are things you should do to 'grow' in Christ, things like Bible study, prayer, church attendance etc. On the negative side, you need to learn how to deal with sin as it comes into your life. After you are saved and are in the process of being sanctified, you need to get involved in serving. One way to help you determine what service you need to render is to determine your S.H.A.P.E. This acrostic stands for Spiritual Gifts, Heart (passion), Abilities and Experience. Knowing and fulfilling God's purpose for your life will bring a joy and satisfaction not found in any other way.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

(And Lee's comments about the books)

The Bible is the primary book that you should read and study. Everything else you read should be evaluated in the light of the Bible. I like the New American Standard Bible or the New International Version. In addition to your regular devotional reading, I encourage you to memorize key verses of Scripture and to master one or two books of the New Testament.

Bolles, Richard Nelson The 1995 What Color Is Your Parachute? Ten Speed Press P O Box 7123 Berkeley, California 94707 copyright 1995 (This book is updated every year, so be sure to get the most recent edition. The subtitle of the book explains the subject: "A practical Manual for Job-Hunters and Career-Changers." The premise of the book is that you are a unique person with special gifts and abilities that should be nurtured and developed and that you should select a career that is closely related to your uniqueness. It is a very revealing and helpful experience to work through this book. It will help you find a job and/or career that will not only provide a livelihood but also joy and satisfaction.)

- Brandt, Henry Ph.D. and Skinner, Kerry L. The Word for the Wise Broadman & Holman Publishers Nashville, Tennessee copyright 1995 (The book is a little difficult to locate unless you have a Baptist Book Store in your area. It is about making Scripture the heart of your counseling ministry. It is the best book on Biblical Counseling I have ever read. It could be very useful for any Christian in learning how to deal with life's problems and difficulties in a godly way.)
- Carbonell, Mels, Ph.D. Discover Your Gifted In Christ Uniquely You P. O. Box 490 Blue Ridge, GA 30513 1-800-501-0490 copyright 1996 (This is one of several profiles available on human behavior from a Biblical perspective. It includes tests to determine spiritual gifts as well as personality types)
- Delbridge, Lee Bible Based Christianity Smyrna Christian Church 910 Concord Road SE, Smyrna, GA 30080 770-435-1723 (This is a handbook of Scripture verses arranged by topic.)
- Jones, Laurie Beth The Path, Creating Your Mission Statement for Work and for Life. Hyperion New York copyright 1996 (This is probably the best book I have read on how to discover your purpose in life. Ms. Jones gives some very practical steps to help you discover your purpose in life.)
- MacDonald, William; Edited by Art Farstad Believer's Bible Commentary Thomas Nelson Publishers Nashville, TN copyright 1995 (I disagree with this author's position on water baptism and on whether a saved person can be lost or not, but other than those two issues this is the best one volume commentary on the Bible that I have ever seen.)
- McCarthy, Kevin W. The On-Purpose Person, Making Your Life Make Sense Pinon Press Navpress Publishing Group P O Box 35007 Colorado Springs, CO 80935 copyright 1992 (This is a modern parable of one man's search for his purpose in life. I really enjoyed and benefited greatly from reading this book.)
- LaHaye, Tim Your Temperament: Discover Its Potential Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. Wheaton, Illinois copyright 1984 (This book is now available as a paperback under the title Why We Act the Way We Do Mr. LaHaye is a Baptist minister and this is an excellent book on personality types. If you only get one book on personality types, get this one.

Appendix

How much time should a Christian give to the church and to his Christian activities?

A Christian should be a Christian 24/7 (24 hours per day, 7 days per week). The minimum amount of time a Christian should give to his or her Christian activities are:

At least one hour per week in public worship

At least one hour per week in group Bible study

At least one hour per week in private devotion

At least one hour per week in Christian service.

How much money should a Christian give to the church?

There are three simple principles to guide a Christian about his or her material possessions:

It all belongs to God

You are the manager of what we normally say you own

You are to manage it according to God's principles that are revealed in the Bible. (*The Old Testament Jews were required to give 10% of their increase.*)