



Shaped for Serving God

Chapters 31 & 32

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Notes: This Bible Study is intended to be a companion to "The Purpose Driven Life" by Rick Warren. The Scripture references in this Bible study are taken from the New King James Version.

Chapter 31: Understanding Your Shape

SHAPE: Abilities

What is the difference between our spiritual gifts and our abilities?

Our spiritual gifts were given to us when we were saved, our abilities were given to us at our physical birth. Abilities are natural talents we were born with.

What does 1 Peter 4:11 tell us about our abilities?

1 Pet 4:11 - If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

It is God who supplies our abilities and, like our spiritual gifts, we are to use our abilities to serve others.

Is saying that I don't serve because I don't have any special abilities valid?

No, all of us have skills and abilities that may be used in God's service.

Do people have skills and abilities that should not be used for serving God?

No, since all of our ability came from God, we should use all of them to glorify Him...

1 Corinthians 10:31 - Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

How about abilities that enable us to sin, are they from God?

Yes, all abilities are from God...

1 Corinthians 12:6 - And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.

Abilities may be used or abused so we need to choose wisely how we apply our abilities.

How about those who believe that their abilities are better suited for the secular world, such as the ability to generate wealth; what attitude should such people have?

All abilities are from God even those that are valued by the secular world. Certainly what a person does with his wealth may glorify or grieve God...

Deuteronomy 8:18 - And you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.

What should the wealthy do with their wealth?

They should give a proportion of it to the church to be used directly in God's work. This principle was established in the Law...

Deuteronomy 14:23 - And you shall eat before the LORD your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide, the tithe of your grain and your new wine and your oil, of the firstborn of your herds and your flocks, that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always.

Scripture says that if a person does not give at least a tenth of their wealth back to God, that it is the same as robbing God...

Malachi 3:8-10 - Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, even this whole nation. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this," says the LORD of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.

But isn't the concept of a tithe an Old Testament concept that was done away with in the Age of Grace?

The principle of giving a portion of your wealth directly for God's work is still a valid principle. Jesus acknowledged that this is a practice that was valued by God...

Matthew 23:23 - Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.

Giving at least a tithe was certainly the practice of the early church...

Acts 4:34-35 - Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses

sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.

How do our talents relate to God's will for us?

Our talents are an indicator of God's will for us because God equips us to do His will...

Hebrews 13:20-21 – Now may the God of peace... make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Did God give us certain abilities just to make a living?

God wants us to use all our abilities to minister to others...

1 Peter 4:10 - As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

Which characteristic is more like God, uniformity or variety?

Variety, God loves diversity. No two people are alike, even identical twins who look alike have discernable differences to people who know them... no two personalities are alike because people have different mixes of personality traits.

1 Corinthians 12:6 - And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.

How will a person's personality affect the use of their spiritual gifts and abilities?

A person's personality affects how and where they use their spiritual gifts and abilities.

When you minister in a manner that is consistent with the personality God gave you, how does this make you feel?

You will experience fulfillment, satisfaction, and fruitfulness. It feels good to do what God made you to do.

How does God use our experiences to SHAPE you into the kind of person He intends for you to be?

We learn from our family, our education, our vocation, spiritual experiences with God, ministry experiences, and especially painful experiences.

How does God use our painful experiences to make us better at ministry?

These experiences enable us to be a more effective witness to those going through the same thing...

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 – God... comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

For God to use our experiences with our faults, failures, and fears, what must we do?

For God to use us, we must be willing to share our faults, failures, and fears instead of covering them up.

Chapter 32: Using What God Gave You

What does Ephesians 5:17 command us to do?

Ephesians 5:17 - Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

We are obligated to find out and clarify what God wants us to be and do.

Since God wants us to know His will, why doesn't He spell it out to us more clearly?

There are many things that God has clearly spelled out for us in His Word. Other things are for us to discover as part of our relationship with Him. Part of our growth is in exercising the process of learning details of God's will for us

What does Romans 12:3 have to say about how we may begin to learn God's will for us?

Romans 12:3 - For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

We need to begin by making an honest assessment of the gifts and abilities God has blessed us with.

How can we make an honest assessment of the gifts and abilities God has blessed us with?

- Ask yourself, where have you been successful?
- Ask yourself, what have you enjoyed doing?
- What have I been doing when I've lost track of time?
- We should ask others for their candid opinion, spiritual gifts and natural abilities are always confirmed by others.
- Discover what you are good at by experimenting with different areas of service.

What is a good way to review the spiritual lessons we have learned so that we may consider them when assessing God's will for us?

Rick Warren recommends keeping a spiritual journal to help us remember the lessons we've learned from the Lord...

Galatians 3:4 - Have you suffered so many things in vain-- if indeed it was in vain?

We usually do not appreciate the purpose of our pain or failure when we are in the midst of it. It is only in hindsight

that we understand how God intended a difficult time for good...

John 13:7 - Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this."

Should we seek after certain gifts or abilities that we'd like to have?

It is admirable to work on expanding our abilities, this makes us more useful to God. But we should not try to pursue spiritual gifts that God has not given us, we should be content with what we have...

Romans 9:20-21 - who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?" Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?

Instead of trying to make ourselves into someone other than what God intended for us, we should embrace what God has given us...

Ephesians 4:7 - But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.

What does 2 Corinthians 10:13 have to say about how we should view the limitations of God's purpose for us?

2 Corinthians 10:13 - We, however, will not boast beyond measure, but within the limits of the sphere which God appointed us-- a sphere which especially includes you.

We should remember that God has a particular area of ministry that he has equipped each of us for. This means there are set boundaries for us as to what we can be the most effective at. We will find that effort outside the boundaries God has established for each of us will be a waste of time. Paul understood this in regards to his own calling...

Galatians 2:7-8 - But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles),

Why shouldn't we spend time in ministry beyond that which God has equipped us for?

We will eventually suffer burn-out which will impact the ministry God did equip us for...

Hebrews 12:1 - let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

Per Hebrews 12:1, it is actually sinful to spend time on even good things that God has not called us to be part of.

Is it a good practice to compare your ministry to that of other Christians?

No, we need to focus on what God has called us to do and not be tempted to conform to the expectations of others...

Galatians 6:4 - But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.

God wants us to take pleasure in His plan for us not in His plan for another. True satisfaction comes from seeking to please our audience of One, we should see pleasing other people to be a by-product of pleasing God...

2 Corinthians 10:12 - For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

How does comparing our own ministry limit our spiritual growth?

- You will always find someone who has been more successful and this will cause you to become discouraged.
- On the other hand, you will also find others who are less successful than you and this can cause you to be full of pride.

Proverbs 16:18 - Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

What should we be doing with the talents and abilities God has given us?

We should be using them to exercise our own spiritual growth and as an encouragement to others...

2 Timothy 1:6 - I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you

What happens if we do not exercise our gifts and talents in ministry to others?

Just like exercising muscles, if they are not used, they will weaken and atrophy. This is a biblical principle: if you don't use them, you'll lose them...

Matthew 25:28 - Therefore take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents.

Why should we be driven to do that which God has intended each of us to do?

We will stand before Him in judgments some day...

2 Timothy 2:15 - Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

How we've used the gifts God has given us will have eternal ramifications...

1 Corinthians 9:25 - And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.