

Called: Your SHAPE for God's service

Participants Workbook

Name:



Contents

Session 1: Disciples.....1
Personal reflection.....3

Session 2: Identifying Our SHAPE.....8
Personal reflection.....13

Session 3: Using Our Gifts In God’s Service.....14
Personal reflection.....16

Individual Review: Information.....18

Session 1: Disciples

Activity One

'And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'

Matthew 28:18–20 (NRSV)

"Discipleship is the ongoing, lifelong process of growing to live more fully as a follower of Jesus Christ."

Bible Study One

Acts 2:41–42: 'So those who welcomed his message were baptised, and that day about three thousand persons were added. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.'

- Can you remember any of the words or actions that form part of the baptism or confirmation services?
- In what ways might the act of baptism or confirmation be significant in the life of a disciple?
- How might you explain to people the significance of baptism or confirmation?
- If we all have gifts, how can we learn more about them and about our role in the church?

Activity Two

- How do you 'view' the church – as bricks and mortar, as a body, as the people who worship there?
- What does 'church' mean to your growth as a disciple?
- In what ways do you see yourself as part of the church?

Bible Study

'For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.' (NRSV)

'I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.

My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

Your eyes beheld my unformed substance. In your book were written

all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed...'

Psalm 139:14-16 (NRSV)

- What do these passages have to tell us about how we have been created?
- What implications does this have for us?

Experience

The person we are today has been moulded by both the positive and the challenging experiences we've gone through. God can use all of these experiences for good, at work in and through us all.

Write down three experiences that have been most influential in shaping the person you are today.

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Summary

- How does your church offer opportunities to use our gifts?
- How do we help one another to grow as disciples of Christ?

Personal Reflection: Session 1

Growing As A Disciple

A disciple is someone who has made a commitment to following Christ and is seeking to live their life as a Christian.

Jesus summarises the disciple's call in [Mark 8:34](#); "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

Accomplishing such a challenging assignment requires growing in our understanding of what it means to be a Christian, expanding our personal knowledge of biblical truth, and applying daily what we learn. Through the presence of the indwelling Spirit, we are enabled to know, follow, and serve God.

Scripture also encourages personal examination as an element of growth as a disciple:

'Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.' Psalm 139:23-24 (NRSV)

'All must test their own work; then that work, rather than their neighbour's work, will become a cause for pride.' Galatians 6:4 (NRSV)

'Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise' Ephesians 5:15 (NRSV)

In this Personal Reflection we invite you to use the discipleship reflection questions to help you to think carefully about your spiritual development. This can take the form of devising your 'rule of life', adopting specific spiritual disciplines to help you to grow as a disciple. The following rule focuses on the transformation that Christ brings both to our own lives, and to the way that we interact with God's world.

Before completing your responses, spend some time in prayer, asking God to guide your thoughts and responses as you consider your journey as a disciple. This is a personal reflection exercise designed to aid you personally, however if you would find it helpful to discuss your responses with someone, we would encourage you to speak to your parish priest or minister, or perhaps one of the group leaders.

As you complete this reflection, the temptation might be to think your efforts are central to growth as a disciple. Remember, becoming Christ-like centres on God's work in us and not our work for God. Our role as a disciple is to listen, abide and follow faithfully.

Step one Discipleship reflection

As you complete the reflection, avoid rushing. Listen for God's voice to encourage and challenge you.

Transforming your life

- How has your relationship with Christ shaped and influenced you?
- How is your faith nurtured and expressed in your everyday life?
- How easy do you find it to see Christ in others and show a Christ-like attitude: understanding, respectful, listening, servant-hearted?
- What pattern of prayer sustains you in your relationship with God?
- How well do you feel you know God's story in Scripture and tradition?
- How often do you study the Bible? What helps you to do that?
- Where can you think of examples of Scripture impacting your life choices?
- What opportunities do you have to discuss with others their interpretation and application of Scripture?
- How often do you attend public worship with other Christians?
- What makes you thankful? And how do you express that?

Transforming God's World

- What sort of relationships do you tend to form with family members and people you come into contact with?
- How do you receive feedback from others?
- What ways have you found of sharing your Christian faith with others?
- What part do you play in enabling your church to flourish and grow?
- How encouraging are you of other Christians?
- How do you decide on an appropriate level of commitment of money and time to your church?
- How do you feel about sharing your faith with non-believers?
- What is your role in welcoming people who are new to church?
- Where are your opportunities for practical service that speaks of God's love for the world?
- How do you care for God's earth?

Step 2: Discipleship Growth Actions

The following suggestions may help you to identify the actions you plan to commit to taking as you take the next steps in your discipleship journey. We suggest you choose four initial actions, (no more than one from each block of suggestions) and write them in the space after these lists.

See these as suggestions to get you started rather than as a list of the only possibilities. Trust God to guide you as you identify those actions that you are committing to, and review them in a few months' time.

Transforming your life

Pray regularly

1. Set aside a specific time and location for a regular quiet time.
2. Use an app on a smart phone such as Lectio 365 or Daily Prayer to help you establish a regular pattern of prayer.
3. Participate in the prayer ministry of your church.
4. Enlist a prayer partner and meet regularly for prayer.
5. Create a weekly pattern of prayer, praying for a different topic on each day of the week.
6. Participate in the global 'Thy Kingdom Come' annual prayer movement.
7. Plan to take a retreat, a dedicated space where you can spend some time growing in your faith.

Read and reflect on the Scriptures:

8. Read books that help you to learn about your identity in Christ.
9. Memorise one Scripture verse each week.
10. Take notes from the sermons you hear and other Bible study experiences each week. Spend time evaluating how the study applies to your life.
11. Establish a regular time for personal Bible study. Take notes from the study and evaluate how what you study applies to your life.
12. Use commentaries and other study resources to enrich your Bible study.
13. Read one chapter from the Bible each day and seek to apply it to your life.
14. Read one chapter from the Bible each day. Meditate on the character of God described in the chapter.
15. Sign up for a course at Sarum College or other place of theological education.

Participate in the life and worship of the local church

16. Participate in an ongoing small group Bible study.
17. Attend a corporate act of worship each week.
18. Participate in an ongoing small group to build relationships with other believers.
19. Send encouragement notes to people who have helped you in your discipleship journey.

Enjoy God's gifts with gratitude

20. Keep a gratitude journal, writing down small things to be grateful for.
21. Take a few minutes outside every day to appreciate God's creation.
22. Listen to music that makes you feel thankful.
23. Invest in your family relationships by spending time doing positive things with them.

Transforming God's world

Give generously to others

1. Ask family members to identify ways you can improve your relationships with each one.
2. Ask friends to identify ways you can improve your relationships with each one.
3. Make a list of people who have hurt you in the past and ask God for help to forgive them.
4. Visit or arrange to meet someone who is lonely or housebound.
5. Review the amount of money you give regularly to your church.

Serve and use your gifts

6. Volunteer for a ministry in your church where you can use your spiritual gifts, interests, and natural abilities.
7. Respond to requests for help with filling church rotas for practical tasks such as serving coffee, cleaning or gardening.
8. Volunteer with a community project in your area.
9. Try doing something you haven't done before.

Share the good news of Jesus

10. Write your testimony and practice sharing it.
11. Make a list of non-Christians you know and begin praying regularly for them.
12. Invite an unchurched friend to a service, Bible study or church event.
13. Include a specific mission focus in your prayers.
14. Think of creative ways of witnessing to the people you meet regularly in the places you spend time each week.

Challenge injustice and care for God's creation

15. Decide which things will reduce your carbon footprint and see them through.
16. Review your diet and purchasing habits from an environmental perspective.
17. Commit to donating food to a Foodbank each week.
18. Gather a group together to identify the needs in your community.
19. Review your giving so that it focuses on supporting those that Jesus prioritised.
20. Include themes of justice in specific areas in your prayers.
21. Encourage your church to reach the next Eco-church award.

My next discipleship actions

- 1)
- 2).....
- 3).....
- 4).....

Session 2: Your SHAPE

Spiritual Gifts: God's unique gifts to us as members of Christ's Body.

Heart's desire: what motivates and excites us; what we most long to do.

Abilities: our strengths, knowledge and skills.

Personality: our character, style, preferences, personal qualities.

Experiences: our life experiences – both good and bad – and what we have learned and gained from them.

Spiritual Gifts

They're not natural talents, personality traits or the same as the Fruits of the Spirit.

They are special abilities that God gives to individuals to serve others. Paul tells us that it is the Holy Spirit who decides which gifts to give to each person.

'Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed.'... 'there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.' 1 Corinthians 12:1 and 4 (NRSV)

- Romans 12:4-8
- 1 Corinthians 12:1-11, 27-28
- Ephesians 4:11-12

'Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ' 1 Peter 4:10-11 (NRSV)

All God's people have spiritual gifts but we have to use them for them to grow. The Bible says we can ask God for other gifts and at any time God may give us new gifts for the benefit of the Church.

Spiritual Gifts

Mark in the table which gifts are:

1. definitely me

2. maybe me

3. definitely not me

| Gift | Description | Bible reference | Identified in me? |
|---------------------------|--|------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Administration | To organise | 1 Corinthians 12:28 | |
| Apostle | To see the big picture and pioneer new things | Ephesians 4:11 | |
| Discerning spirits | To discern whether something is from God | 1 Corinthians 12:10 | |
| Evangelism | To effectively communicate the good news to people who aren't Christians | Ephesians 4:11 | |
| Exhortation | To encourage others | Romans 12:8 | |
| Faith | To confidently trust in God for particular things | 1 Corinthians 12:9 | |
| Giving | To provide resources for people's needs | Romans 12:8 | |
| Healing | To call on God to heal supernaturally | 1 Corinthians 12:9,28 | |
| Helping | To help others | 1 Corinthians 12:28 Romans 12:7 | |
| Interpretation of tongues | To understand and communicate the meaning of an unknown language | 1 Corinthians 12:10 | |
| Knowledge | To know God's way forward | 1 Corinthians 12:8 | |
| Mercy | To empathise with those who suffer, and provide practical help for those in need | Romans 12:8 | |
| Miracles | To call on God to do supernatural acts | 1 Corinthians 12:10,28 | |
| Pastor | To care for the growth of believers | Ephesians 4:11 | |
| Prophecy | To speak out truth from God | 1 Corinthians 12:10 | |
| Leadership | To set a vision for others and motivate others to fulfil it | Romans 12:8 | |
| Teaching | To understand and communicate the truth of God in a clear and relevant way | Romans 12:7 | |
| Tongues | To speak an unknown language | 1 Corinthians 12:10 | |
| Wisdom | To discern God's way forward in complex situations | 1 Corinthians 12:8 | |

Questions

- What do you really love to do?

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- What are the areas in which you would love to make a difference?

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Abilities

Use this space to make a note of the things you are naturally good at?
The list provided below may help to ignite your thinking about this.

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A disciple is someone who has made a commitment to following Christ and is seeking to live their life as a Christian.

Acting
Hosting
Building
Listening
Analysing
Singing
Designing
Cooking
Talking
Facilitating
Organising
Writing
Directing
Performing
Motivating
Learning
Enthusing
Competing
Planning
Advising
Serving

Repairing
Recruiting
Welcoming
Pioneering
Critiquing
Teaching
Translating
Encouraging
Dancing
Sewing
Drumming
Exploring
Introducing
Supporting
Discerning
Reporting
Envisioning
Advocating
Empathising

Personality

There is no such thing as a good personality or a bad personality. We can be people of good or bad character, but personality is a different thing. Whilst passion will help us work out the 'where' of using our spiritual gifts and abilities, understanding our personality will go a long way to helping us work out 'how' we will use our gifts and abilities.

We discover what our personality is like in two main ways:

1. how we relate to people
2. how we respond to different situations. Mark below on the line where you think you are as a scale.

Outgoing

Reserved

Self-expressive

Self-controlled

Cooperative

Competitive

Situations

Put a mark on the scale where you think you are:

High-risk

Low-Risk

People

Projects

Team

Alone

Routine

Variety

Personal Reflection Session 2: Your SHAPE for God's service

This Personal Reflection exercise invites you to spend some time reflecting on your SHAPE in light of the person God has created you to be. Take the notes you made during the session and spend some time prayerfully reflecting upon them and what they mean for your life as a disciple in God's service.

You might find it helpful to talk to some trusted friends, asking them what they would say your personal gifts and skills are.

Use the space below to write a concise statement about yourself, based on what you now know about your SHAPE. What has God revealed to you about the person you are through this process?

Having done this, spend some time in prayer, thanking God for each element of your SHAPE and the person God has created you to be.

Session 3: Using Our Gifts In God's Service

Session Introduction

'Anyone who wants to be important among you must be your servant.'

- We must approach our service with a servant heart.
- We must develop our 'character of service'.
- We should test out any calling – how do we do this? Is now the right place, context, time?
- Having resilience skills so that when service is hard, we remember that God has called us to this.
- Serving in the widest possible contexts – not just within the church but in the wider world as Christ's ambassadors.

Bible Study One

'You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them.' John 13: 13–16 (NRSV)

In what ways do you use your gifts to serve others and what difference does this make?

Bible Study Two

'Whatever your task, put yourselves into it, as done for the Lord and not for your masters, since you know that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward; you serve the Lord Christ.'

Colossians 3: 23–24 (NRSV) 'So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.' 2 Corinthians 5:20 (NRSV)

Reflect on your experiences of serving others outside of the Church. How do you see yourself as an Ambassador of Christ and his Church in how you use your gifts?

In what ways are you currently serving the Lord Christ?

Activity

Think of a time when you have found serving God hard work and how you have seen God at work as you have used your gifts even though you haven't seen an obvious result or outcome until much later.

Reflect and Share

Firstly, consider individually, and then briefly with the group, how might the Church – both local and wider – test any calling and why should we do this?

Then in pairs, consider how we might go about identifying whether God is calling us to serve in a particular way.

How will we test that call and how might we say no to opportunities we are presented with that where we do not feel called to serve?

Personal Reflection Session 3:

Your SHAPE for God's service

This Personal Reflection exercise invites you to review the places where you already serve, to consider how aligned this service is with your SHAPE. It also leads you to prayerfully consider, in light of what you have learnt through the sessions, what new opportunities God may be calling you to explore as you serve.

Before you begin, you should make sure that you have your response to the Session 2 Personal Reflection to hand.

Step One | Current service:

List below all the ways in which you feel you are currently serving God and making Jesus known. This could be volunteering within your church, serving in the community, or other commitments that you have made, motivated by your faith.

For each area or act of service you list, give it a score based on how in tune with your SHAPE it is. (10 = completely attuned, 1 = not attuned at all).

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Step Two | Future Service

Spend some time asking God to reveal to you those areas or acts of service which you are being invited to explore and to possibly step into. Again, for each area or act of service you list, give it a score based on how in tune with your SHAPE it is. (10 = completely attuned, 1 = not attuned at all).

Step Three | Re-alignment

Consider whether there are any areas of service, perhaps those that are not attuned with your SHAPE, that you feel it may be time for you to step away from. Make a plan to discuss this with your parish priest, minister, group leader or someone in a leadership position within that area or act of service.

Make a plan to discuss one or more of the areas or acts of service that you feel God may be inviting you to explore with your parish priest, minister, group leader or someone in a leadership position within that area or act of service. Make a note of those plans below:

Individual Review: Information

One-to-one Individual Review meetings are a really important final part of the SHAPE sessions. These meetings are entirely optional and it is your decision whether to take up this opportunity or not. The meeting is designed to provide you with the opportunity to reflect on your participation in the sessions and what God has been saying to you through them.

We suggest the meeting lasts for approximately one hour.

These meetings should be relaxed and informal and are designed to be of benefit to you. They should not be used by the person you are meeting with to simply try and get you to sign up to a particular volunteering role they have in mind for you, and we have given them instruction regarding this!

It is your responsibility to arrange this personal one-to-one session with someone of your choosing: this could be your parish priest or minister, or perhaps one of the group leaders.

During the session, you will be invited to discuss how you can put the insights about your SHAPE and gifts into practice – for example, looking at practical ways in which your unique SHAPE might enable you to serve God more fully through the Church or in your job, in the community, or through your other relationships and activities.

This meeting should also provide you with an opportunity to pray with your parish priest or minister about what God has been saying to you through your participation in the sessions.

Step One | Invitation

Decide who you will ask to have the Individual Review meeting with you. Invite them to support you in this way.

Step Two | Information

Give them a copy of the 'Individual Review: Information for Individual Review Facilitators' handout which you should have been given at the end of Session 3.

Step Three | Prepare

Make sure you prepare for the meeting, arrive in good time, and thank your facilitator afterwards.

Potential SHAPE questions to explore

- What stood out to you most about the SHAPE sessions?
- What did you learn about yourself and your SHAPE?
- How would you describe your SHAPE?
- What area of service are you going to explore in the light of your personal discoveries?
- What can others do to support you as you embark on this journey?
- How are you planning to follow up this meeting?