

WHY AM I LIKE THIS?

God loves variety. Everything in this world God made is original and nothing is a copy. Every tree is different. Every plant is different. Every animal is different. When was the last time you went to the zoo and were amazed by the diversity? Certainly every human being is different. There's nobody like you in the entire world. You don't have to realize that God has done almost creative overkill. He never makes copies of anything. Even twins aren't exactly alike. God makes everything an original. Did you know that in one cubic foot of snow there are eighteen million snowflakes? In those eighteen million snowflakes not one of them is like any of the other eighteen million. That's creative overkill. Nobody would even know that except the scientists. Every snowflake is different.

God could have made us all alike. We could have all looked the same, talked the same, have the same color, the same hair. Everything. But God didn't want to do that. Why? Because an original is always worth more than a copy. God says you are valuable. The Bible is very clear that God specifically shaped every human being to His customized standard. You are unique. You're not one in a million - you're one in over six billion.

Psa 139:13 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. 14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. 15 My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, 16 your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

This passage says that God made you the way you are. He formed you and put you together. He knit you and wove you together. He made you. Every day of your life was planned out in advanced before you were even born.

This is why I believe abortion is wrong. Abortion short circuits a human being that God had planned from creation. There are accidental parents but there are no accidental children. God chose every detail of your life, even the stuff you don't like, the stuff you consider weaknesses and He chose it for you. You're never going to find anybody with the exact combination of your personality, with the exact combination of experiences and all the things God has given to make you, you. You're unique.

The problem is that most people don't like the way they are. They are always saying "I wish I were taller, I wish I were smaller, I wish I were thinner. I wish I had red hair, brown hair, black hair. I wish I had a different skin color. I don't like my nose. I don't like my teeth. I wish I had more talent. Why couldn't I be like him or her?" When you do that it causes all kinds of problems in your life. As a result of that they live frustrated lives.

In response to our uniqueness we try to hide by becoming just like everyone else. Most people start off as originals and end up as carbon copies because they try to imitate those around them.

Your SHAPE determines many things about you. It influences what you should study in school and the kind of friends you should have. It determines the type of person you should marry. It determines the temptations you're most likely going to be tempted by and you need to be prepared for. It determines your best career pick and your best work environment. When you know what God made you to do, it reduces your stress, it increases your satisfaction, it raises your self-esteem. It increases the odds of your success.

Today we are starting on a new series looking at discerning and using our SHAPE. This is an acrostic that stands for Spiritual Gifts, Heart, Abilities, Personality and Experiences. Let me give you four reasons why knowing your SHAPE is important

1. IT REVEALS GOD'S PURPOSE FOR ME

The way you find out what God wants you to do with your life is to discover how He shaped you. Architects have a phrase that goes like this: form follows function. All architects know this. Form follows function. What that means is this, tell me what you want the building to be used for then I'll tell you how to form it. In discovering your SHAPE function follows form. In other words figure out how God shaped me and then I'll know what His purpose is for my life.

No one builds a refrigerator and then sits down to figure out what it will be used for. You start with the function, you design the object to meet it's function (keeping things cold) and then build the object according to the blueprint.

Jer 1:4 The word of the LORD came to me, saying, 5 "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."

Before Jeremiah was even born God had in mind what it is that he would do with his life. God would not make you one way and then have you focus your time and energies in another area. This is often the opposite of what happens growing up in school.

God won't force you to do His plan. You can waste your life. You can blow your life. You can use it on all kinds of personal, self-centered things and totally miss God's plan and purpose for your life. In fact, most people do. That's why they're so frustrated. God says before you were even born I had holy plans for you.

Nancy Jones was an elderly women who lived in a small Midwestern community. She had the notoriety of being the oldest resident of the town. One day she died and the editor of the local newspaper wanted to print a little caption commemorating Miss Jones' death. However, the more he thought about it, the more he became aware that while Miss Jones had never done anything terribly wrong (she had never spent a night in jail, or had ever been drunk), yet she had never actually done anything of note. While musing over this, the editor went down to have his morning coffee and met the owner of the tombstone establishment in the little community. He poured out his soul to him. The tombstone proprietor stated that he had been having the same problem. He wanted to put something on Miss Jones's tombstone besides: Miss Nancy Jones, born such-and-such a date and died such- and-such a date, but he couldn't think of anything of significance that she had ever done. The editor decided to go back to his office and assign the first reporter he came across the task of writing up a small article suitable for both the paper and the tombstone. Upon returning to the office, the only fellow around was the sports editor, who usually covered the baseball games. They tell me if you pass through that little community you will find the following statement on her tombstone:

Here lies the bones of Nancy Jones, Her life held no terrors. She lived alone. She died alone. No hits, no runs, no errors.

2. IT EQUIPS ME FOR SERVICE

God has a mission for you, something that He's commissioned you to do. We are SHAPED to serve. There is something God wants us to do, a life mission for you that nobody else on this planet can do. One of the things I would love to see this church involved in is encouraging people to find out what they are good at and then helping them to excel in those areas.

You heard about the man who asked a mail-order company to send plans for a birdhouse. Instead of sending him the plans for a birdhouse, they sent him plans for a sailboat. He tried to put it together, but it just wouldn't work. He couldn't figure what kind of bird was going to live in this dumb birdhouse. So he wrote a letter and sent the parts back to the people. They wrote a letter of apology and added this post script: "If you think it was difficult for you, you should have seen the man who got your plans trying to sail a birdhouse." A lot of people are trying to operate on the plans of Christ when they aren't even Christians. So a word of caution: make sure you know him before you apply the principles.

3. IT REMINDS ME LIFE IS A TEST

This life is preparation for the next. We will only spend a limited number of years on this earth. We will spend eternity in the next. What we do with this life will determine what God gives us to do in heaven for eternity.

One day you're going to stand before God and He's going to ask you two questions. Sometime within the next one hundred years you will take your final exam. Fortunately God wants us to pass so it is an open book test and He has already given us the questions. My job as your pastor who loves you is to help you prepare for that exam.

The first question God's going to ask you is this: What did you do with My Son Jesus Christ? He's not going to ask you what you did in the name of religion. The issue is whether we accepted the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross for us. The answer to this question is to trust in Jesus and accept the gift of salvation that God offers us. This question determines whether we get into heaven or not.

The second question is this: What did you do with what you've been given here? What did you do with the time, treasure and talents that I entrusted to you? Remember the parable that Jesus told about the talents in Matt 25? The faithful servant was put in charge of more things while the one who buried it in the ground got nothing.

Matt 25:20 The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.' 21 "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

God wants us to be actively involved in the plans He has for us.

4. IT SHOWS GOD'S GLORY

When you use your SHAPE and you do what God made you to do, it not only feels good to you, but it brings glory to God. Iranaeus was a great Christian leader in the first century. He once said "The glory of God is a human being fully alive."

Anytime something fulfills the purpose it was intended to fulfill it brings glory to it's creator. E.g. the thing for putting in new lights in Kuwait.

How can a pencil bring glory to God? By being a pencil. By doing what it was intended to do. Pencils are made for writing. When a pencil is used for the act it was intended then it brings glory to its creator. If you use a pencil to get earwax out of your ear that is a misuse and abuse.

Everything you have in your life is a total gift from God. It could be either used or it could be abused. E.g. using a clock as a hammer.

When people fulfill their purpose they bring glory to God. Sometimes we think only really bright people and really beautiful people are important. That is not true. Every person has a part to play. Society may say that you have to be smart rich and beautiful but God says you just have to be you. If the only value you give people is based upon what they do and how they look, what about all the people who do not make a noticeable contribution to society?

What about these older folks who are in the rest homes? Have you ever thought God wants them alive because He just wants to love them? They're alive not to give anything back to society but to teach us to learn to love unconditionally.

What about people born with physical or mental defects? We are fallen people and we live in a fallen world. All life is sacred. If everybody who had a defect was aborted, you would have been aborted. Everybody enters life handicapped in some way. It is this mentality that some lives matter more that caused the holocaust. Hitler's solution was to just wipe out the weak, the sick, the aged, or people we disagree with. Our value is not determined by what we do in life but by who made us.

All of us are born with a corrupted makeup from birth. That means it is up to us to discover what that SHAPE really looks like. How should I respond to my SHAPE? You can't build your SHAPE, develop your SHAPE, use your SHAPE, until first you take these three steps.

b. The first step is SALVATION

Life will not make sense until you put God in the equation. Without a relationship with Jesus your life is not going to have meaning and purpose. You will never find peace with others or peace within yourself until you make peace with God. That is why we are coming to the communion table today. It is a reminder of the sacrifice of Jesus, what God was willing to do so that we could be saved.

a. The second step is ACCEPTANCE

Acceptance means to believe that God knows best. When He made me He knew what He was doing. It all comes down to the matter of trust. Do I believe that God made a mistake when He made me or do I trust Him knowing that He has a plan for my life?

Actually, when we say we do not like who we are we are basically telling God that He blew it. That He made a mistake when He made us. When you reject yourself you are in essence rejecting God.

Whenever we doubt God's love and whenever we doubt God's wisdom we always get into trouble. The root behind all of your problems is you don't trust God. You don't believe God really loves you. You don't believe that He really has your best interest at heart.

c. The third step is to REFOCUS

We need to refocus and develop what's inside you rather than focusing on what's outside of you. The next few weeks we are going to focus on developing the inside of you.

1 Sam 16:6 When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, "Surely the LORD's anointed stands here before the LORD." 7 But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

My goal for you in this series is to help you become a confident person. I know a lot of people. I don't know very many confident people. Most people I know are masking insecurity. But when you know your shape. This is what God made me to be. I like me and God likes me. If you don't like me that's your problem. I want to help you become a confident man, a confident woman.