**Pastor Lloyd’s Sermon Notes from 20/03/2022**

**What is your SHAPE? - Ephesians 2:10**

**We come in all sizes and shapes!** Today I want to speak to you about a topic that in my lifetime has become a life changing insight for particularly my baby boomer generation. You see in the last 50 years there has been a change about **who does ministry**. Prior to this most of the ministry was done by the minister who we paid to do it. The best everyone else could do would be to serve in the kitchen, or on the end of a musical instrument, or welcome people at the door. But there was a major shift towards an empowered and gifted laity…. Who have discovered **they are the ministers**… they have been **shaped for a purpose by God** and the role of the paid professional turns **from doing the ministry more towards encouragement, facilitation and releasing of people into their ‘shape’.**  So, discovering your SHAPE and exercising your gifting is a major key to your spiritual growth.

***If ministry was like a rugby game*** *it used to be 30 exhausted people running around the field watched by 30,000 onlookers…. but what God really intended was for the 30,000 onlookers to be playing the game on the field and the 30 players with jerseys on are there too - but their role is to release, encourage, exhort and enable everyone to have a go!*

**Today I want to share a message which is a summary of material about SHAPE**. Much of this message is based on Rick Warren’s material, entitled SHAPE. **Your SHAPE determines how you look at the world around you.** I’m hoping today’s message will be like an appetizer for you, a teaser, and it will give you a taste of wanting to explore this more in your life. But by the end of the next 30 minutes, you will have a broad outline of the unique you that God made and then some idea of how God might take you and use you. I hope today’s message will give you an áhaa moment, which will appetize you for going more into this.

*“You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit them together in my mother’s womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! It is amazing to think about. Your workmanship is marvelous–and how well I know it. You were there while I was being formed in utter seclusion! You saw me before I was born and scheduled each day of my life before I began to breathe.” (Ps. 139:13-16 TLB).* In all the world there is no one exactly like you!

**Some biblical truths upon which this SHAPE message is based:**

1. God shaped you for a **purpose** *–‘we are Gods workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works’* ***Ephesians 2:10***
2. You are **unique** – *designed in secret – like* ***Psalm 139 -*** nobody else can become you!
3. You are **complex** – *every day of your life is recorded and every moment is noticed, nothing happens that is not significant.* ***Job 10:8*** *“ Your hands shaped me and made me”*

You are a **composite of many different factors**, summarized in the acrostic, **S.H.A.P.E.**– Let’s look at each of these:

1. **Spiritual gifts – They need to be unwrapped**

The Bible teaches that God gives every believer certain spiritual gifts to be used in ministry (1 Cor. 12, Rom. 8, Eph. 4).

**These are gifts, they are not awards!** They are of great variety; no gift is given to everyone and none has them all! So, these are given for us to learn how to work together as a team. **They are given not for you but for others** to receive something through you. We are commanded to discover or unwrap these gifts, discover what we have, develop them, and share them together so we all are built up together. There is no room for envy or **jealousy** where we compare gifts with what others have or **projection** where we think everyone else should have what we have and see the world through the lens we have. Have you heard the saying **when you are a hammer everything looks like a nail!** Spiritual gifts and their use in church life is one of the most underutilized resources we have, and something that I believe we will need to see a release of in our church. You need to know what you have and use it. If you don’t use it, it will get rusty, or rotten and you may even lose it.

Start experimenting with different ministries and then you’ll discover your gifts! Until you actually get involved, you’re not going to know what you have.

1. **Heart – it needs to be listened to**

The Bible uses the term “heart” to represent the center of your motivation, desires, interests, and inclinations. Your heart is what you “treasure’’ and determines

**-Why you** **say the things you do** (Matt. 12:34), Your heart speaks/inside you

**-Why you** **feel the way you do**

**-Why you** **act the way you do** (Pr. 4:23). “Guard your heart above all else”

Another word for heart is **passion**. What are you passionate about? That reflects your heart!! People rarely excel at tasks they don’t enjoy doing.

Some years ago, for my **annual medical** I had a cardiograph done, and had about 20 wires attached to various places around by chest and arms…sure enough once the machine turned on it printed out a picture of my heartbeat…that was sent with me through to the doctor who read it and interpreted its message. By this he could tell a number of things about me, in particular whether or not my heart was **regular** in rhythm, whether its **valves** and chambers were working like they should and even if it was **enlarged** resulting from some stress. Listening to your heart tells you how healthy you are because the things that motivate you find a way of expressing themselves in your life. **On another occasion** when I was in business and at a crossroads in my life – I was sensing that God was calling me back into pastoral ministry one of the great questions was asked to me by a friend – **if you could write your own job description – what would it look like?** He was trying to find out what I was passionate about. **Your heart is the seat of what you are passionate about**…those passions are a key component in finding out who you are and what you are to do…and when you get that right, enthusiasm then fruit will flow from your efforts.

1. **Abilities – Your Natural Abilities - they need to be applied and developed**

These are the natural talents that you were born with. Some people have a natural ability with **words**. Others are naturally good with **numbers**. Others are good with **cooking, or music, or art, or engineering, or fixing things, making money, administration, problem solving, counseling, technical and electrical stuff, building, listening, etc….**One of the most common excuses people give for not getting involved in ministry is, “I just don’t have any abilities to offer.” Nothing could be further from the truth. There are some things you can do that others cannot. The real problem is two-fold: *First*, people to **identify what they have.** *Second*, they need a **process to help them** **match their abilities with the right ministry.**

*Here let me show you a huge list of abilities that are possible. Now add to this that* ***no one else has the exact ability gift mix as you!***

1. **Personality – it needs to be used**

It’s obvious that God has not used a **cookie cutter** to create people. He made **introverts and extroverts**. He made people who love routine and those who love variety. Some people work best when given an individual assignment while others work better with a team. Some people love being **flexible and adapting and others hate even the idea of change.** There is no “right” or “wrong” temperament. We need all kinds of personalities to balance the church and give it flavour. The world would be a very boring place if we were all plain vanilla. Fortunately, ministry comes in more than 31 flavors. **When you minister in a manner that is consistent with the personality** God gave you, you experience fulfillment, satisfaction, and fruitfulness. It feels good when you do exactly what God made you to do.Some people have found the **Myers Briggs** personality test helpful, for me it helped me understand how I function and why other people see things differently from me. Are you basically a thinker or a feeler? Introvert or extrovert? How do you process information? How do you make decisions? Myers Briggs attempts to classify where you can fit in several key areas. I have also found **Strengthfinders** extremely helpful. It lists your top five strengths, where you best operate. It’s interesting that my wife and I are very different. My top five came out as *Strategic, Activator, Focus, Communicator and Woo.*

1. **Life Experiences – they need to be employed to understand yourself.**

God never wastes an experience. **Romans 8:28** reminds us, *“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”* For me this is probably the **most powerful and redemptive component** of the five. Yes you have spiritual gift, natural abilities, heart passions, and personality but all these are molded and tempered through your life experiences. Take a moment this morning and think about your:

* **Family** experiences: What did you learn growing up in your family?
* **Educational** experiences: What have you studied and learned/achieved?
* **Vocational** experiences: What jobs have you enjoyed and achieved results while doing? In what vocation did you best thrive?
* **Spiritual** experiences: What have been the meaningful or decisive times with God?
* **Ministry** experiences: How have you served God in the past?
* **Painful** experiences: What are the problems, hurts, and trials that you’ve learned from?

**Adous Huxley** great quote: *“Experience is not what happens to you, it is what* ***you do*** *with what happens to you!”*

Instead of trying to reshape ourselves to be like someone else, we should **celebrate the shape God has given to each of us.** Wise stewardship of your life begins by ***understanding*** your shape. Here is a great final thought on this.

**What God made you to *be* determines what God intends for you to *do*.** **We will be the most effective when we use our spiritual gifts and abilities in the area of our hearts desire and in a way that best expresses our personality and experiences.**

*Acknowledgement - Much of this message is taken from Rick Warren’s book on SHAPE!*