

Many people have a hard time getting started when it comes to serving. They don't know what they should do, or what they would be good at, or what would be effective. Seeing an obvious need is the first step. Even if you don't think you would be good at filling that need, if nobody else is, your efforts are probably better than nothing. If you don't see an obvious need being neglected, then the next step might be working through your S.H.A.P.E, which is your spiritual gifts, heart, abilities, personality and experience. Let's spend some time doing that this week.

Day 1

Spiritual Gifts

When you are given the Holy Spirit at the time of your baptism, you are given at least one spiritual gift to use in service in the body of Christ. These spiritual gifts are a necessary part of building up the body and making it productive and fruitful in ministering and glorifying the world. Many people find the idea of spiritual gifts to be spooky or hard to understand, but it really isn't. If you go from hating something to loving it, it would make sense that the inward transformation would lead to the discovery of new interests, desires, and abilities. The total transformation that occurs in us leads to a complete inward transformation of our lives including greater love, joy, peace, etc. In that transformation you will look at the world much differently, and consider, desire, and evaluate things from a completely new perspective. In doing this, things that previously seemed out of the question or beyond your abilities, or perhaps things that you never even noticed or considered will be things that you now desire and endeavor to do. In exploring these new interests and desires you will discover new skills and abilities that you did not know you have. Your spiritual gifts will not express themselves exactly like anyone else's, and the Holy Spirit will decide what gifts you have, not anyone else. In order to begin to explore what your gifts might be, try taking one or more of the many online spiritual gifts tests like the one at gifts.churchgrowth.org or any other one that you find helpful.

Verses: Romans 12:6-8, Ephesians 4:11-16, 1 Corinthians 12:1-11

Prayer Topics: Strengths, Talents, Purpose, Generosity

Day 2

Heart

What do you love? Now that you are in Christ Jesus, have your loves changed? What are you passionate about, to the point that you don't need the compensation of money to take joy and find satisfaction in it? Spend some time thinking clearly about what really motivates you. If you had all the resources in the world, how would you use them? If you could retire right now, how would you spend your time? When you are moved to compassion for others, what is the issue that spurs on that love? When you look at the world and see some kind of problem, what is it that really gets you angry? Emotions are the inner drives that put us in motion, that motivate us to work and act, and understanding them is important to understand how we might serve in a way that is both fruitful for those we serve and rewarding for us. We are almost always more effective when our heart is engaged, and we are certainly more joyful in a work that is important to us. God wants all of us to be engaged in our worship of Him, for we are to love

Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, not just with a feeling of obligation. Explore today how you might serve God in a rewarding and fruitful way by engaging your heart more fully, finding that area of service that you love.

Verses: Matthew 22:36-40, John 13:34-35, Galatians 5:22

Prayer Topics: Intention, Admiration, Genuine

Day 3

Ability

What can you do? This is an important question, for many reasons that we will explore today. Many times, we see needs that we are not able to meet, and many times we focus on those needs and raising awareness that “someone” should do “something” about it. Having had these feelings, we go on to feel like a rather good person for the simple reason of their existence, and we can then be at peace feeling like having the feeling is our good deed done. In reality, nothing has changed and no one has been served. We might go so far as to protest, demanding that someone else do something. But the question before us, is what ability has God given you to transform the world into something that more fully resembles His kingdom? What can you do? If you never look and consider this, you will never actually do anything at all. What are the abilities you possess that you could employ right now to ease some suffering in the world, to glorify something, or to make something or someone more fruitful and blessed. You may feel like your abilities are small compared to the needs of the world. They are. This is good, for if your abilities define your responsibilities to a large extent, it is a grace to us that we are limited in what we can achieve. Sometimes, though, we have responsibilities in excess of our abilities, in which case we may need to invest in gaining greater abilities to meet a need that is specifically ours to meet or to meet a need that we uniquely see. In any case, spend some time today thinking about what you can do, why you have not done it yet, and how you can do it.

Verses: Galatians 6:9, Ephesians 2:10, Proverbs 13:4

Prayer Topics: Action, Ability, Responsibility

Day 4

Personality

What is your personality type? It may seem like a small consideration, and yet it will affect how you serve others. I had the privilege of visiting a fair number of countries and cultures when I was younger, and some I felt I fit into quite well, while others were a significant struggle for me. When I visited cultures that were more relaxed, I could relate to them in a natural way, while when I visited more passionate cultures, I felt a little lost. When I was younger, I felt called to the mission field, and having experienced how my personality fit into these cultures, I realized my effectiveness in ministry would depend greatly on finding a match between the culture and my personality. Later, as an adult, I found myself ministering as a youth pastor and again my personality played a part in my effectiveness. I realized that my personality fit in better with older students, so I recruited differently gifted people to work with those ages that I would struggle with. In finding your place of service, it is important to recognize that you are not a cog in a wheel in God’s kingdom, but a unique person. God has not given you a personality as an afterthought, but it is an important part of who you are and how you serve in the kingdom. If you have not thought about your personality and how it affects your potential for service, spend some time doing that today. Think about where you fit in, and where you are appreciated. There are lots of people who need to know the love of Christ, and you are perfectly suited to reach some of them. Are you into

technology, hunting, business, or cars? Can you relate to some people better than others? Who are they, and what are their needs? How does your personality affect your service?

Verses: Romans 12:4-6, Psalm 139:14, Jeremiah 1:5

Prayer Topics: Uniqueness, Disposition, Character

Day 5

Experience

What have you done in your life? What mistakes have you made that made an impression on you? Experience is often an expensive teacher, so we should put the lessons we learn to good use so the investment has a return. Many times, we look at our past, especially our mistakes, and think that there is no way that God could redeem them. This is such a wrong way to think. There is a great kingdom investment in your experience, and our effectiveness in any kind of service is perhaps determined by experience over most other factors. Our experience is like money in a bank or a mattress. If you leverage that experience for eternal reward, you are getting a great return on the investment. If you don't leverage it for eternal reward, it is like putting it in a mattress, which not only doesn't earn a return but gets a little less valuable every year. You have a whole lifetime of experience to think about, so spend some time today evaluating how your experiences can be used in the kingdom. There are riches in your life that you have completely forgotten about, so uncover them today.

Verses: Job 12:12, Proverbs 3:1-2, Psalm 71:20

Prayer Topics: Repentance, Redemption, Transformation