

**S.H.A.P.E week 2**  
**Sermon prepared by The Revd. Darryl Cotton**

Proverbs 4: 20 – 27   Guard your heart, the wellspring of life  
Psalm 37: 1 – 7   He will give you the desires of your heart  
Hebrews 4: 12 – 13   The word of God judges the heart  
Luke 6: 43 – 45   The fruit of the heart

May the Words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts, be acceptable to you, O Lord, our Strength and Redeemer. Amen

So as you know, we are working through a 5 week teaching series entitled: **“You are shaped by God to be part of the picture”** which focuses on the topic of vocation; and for each of the five Sundays we will be taking an in-depth look at one aspect of vocation.

Last week, we saw that God has made each member of the Church a unique shape because each one of us has been given a special role in building up God’s Family. We saw that in order to determine what our special role is, we need to figure out what is the unique shape that God has made us.

And so using the acronym S.H.A.P.E. we saw, in looking at the S of SHAPE that the first step is to identify our Spiritual Gifts. Spiritual Gifts are those gifts which God gives to each and every one of us. They are unique and special spiritual gifts which we receive for a purpose; and the purpose of Spiritual gifts is so that we can use them to build up the Family of God.

Now this week we are going to focus on the ‘H’ of SHAPE. H stands for Heart.

**1. My Passion makes me Belong: A Heart for my Vocation**

The psalmist says that if we take delight in the Lord, God will give us the desires of our hearts (Psalm 37:4). And so from the Heart flows our Passions. Now just as God has given each of us a unique fingerprint and just like God has given us a unique personal physical appearance, so God also has given a unique and personal emotional heartbeat. To illustrate

this, think of certain subjects, or activities, or circumstances that really interest us. When something really interests us we sit up and our heart beats faster, doesn't it.

[I remember when I was a little boy, my mom would be cooking dinner at about 5pm, and then suddenly she would say, "Ooh your daddy is getting home soon!" or "Daddy will be here in one minute" and then sure as anything, not more than a minute later we would hear my dad's car at the gate. Then we would ask my mom, "How did you know daddy was just about home" and my mom would answer, "My heart began to beat faster, so I knew he must be near." Only years later did we discover my mom could see through the window in front of the stove down the street and she would see his car coming.] *(Note to preacher: you are welcome to use this illustration or alternatively think of your own example where a passion for an activity caused your heart to beat faster)*

But the truth still remains that from the heart flows our passion, and where our passion is there are our interests. So in order to discern the ministry that God intends you to have, you need to listen for the inner promptings from the heart. When we listen to our heart we can become passionate about the work that we are doing.

## **2. The Heart: a Spring of Life**

Now as we have already discovered, God gives spiritual gifts to every Christian so that we may help to build up God's Family, the Church. And what we learn today is that more often than not, these spiritual gifts are very closely tied to "what makes us tick" – to the deepest passions / desires of our hearts.

You know, everyone is passionate about something. The writer of Proverbs says that from our hearts flows "the spring of life" (Proverbs 4:23), and he is right. Some of us are passionate about sport, or cooking, or art or technology etc. And when you think about it, when you are fulfilling your passion you are most satisfied. But whatever we are passionate about, our greatest creativity comes from what is close to our hearts.

Let's take a look at three examples of passionate people:

Firstly, we have Chris Barnard who in the 1960's made headlines all over the world. Chris Barnard wanted to find a way to give those with heart problems the chance to live a normal life again, by means of open-heart surgery and later, heart transplants. His passion to accomplish this has led to open heart surgery taking place every single day in almost every major hospital all over the world. Men, women and children have their lives extended thanks to his passion and dedication. A single passionate person had such an impact.

Secondly, we have the theologian Albert Schweitzer, the Frenchman/German who was passionate about spreading the Gospel of Christ. However he wanted to do this through the example of his Christian labour of healing, rather than through the verbal process of preaching. So he studied medicine and eventually practiced as a missionary doctor in the Congo in Africa. His passion for Christ lead him to win the Nobel Prize for his work.

Then thirdly, we have Mother Theresa of Calcutta, who because she believed her mission in life was to care for the poorest of the poor, she ministered to the sick and dying in Calcutta in India. After her death, her passion for her work is now world-wide, through many communities of the sisters and brothers who live out the same calling passionately.

So in each of these examples we come face to face with two main issues: 1. Being passionate about what you do and enjoy; and 2. having certain gifts to make this passion work.

The truth is that our greatest achievements come from what is closest to our hearts. Look at the cricketer, Glen McGrath, who is using his gift of playing 1st class cricket for assisting women suffering from breast cancer. His gift for playing cricket is combined with a passion to help others who are in a similar situation as his late wife.

### **3. The Abundance of the Heart**

So how do we know what is in a person's heart? Well Jesus said, "No good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit" (Luke

6:43). In other words, we can see a person's heart by what fruit they bear in their lives.

Furthermore, not only can you tell a person's passion by their actions, but also by what they talk about. You can hear the passion of my heart in what I say. This is what Jesus meant when he said, "it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks" (Luke 6:45). So most likely, your passion is extremely obvious – it's what you love doing, and it's what you love talking about. Your passion is most likely that thing you stuck on your C.V. under interests/hobby.

#### **4. The Heart and the Shape of my Passion**

Now one of the most wonderful things about the church is that we have many different kinds of people in the Church, and so consequently there are also many different passions. This means that we are able to bring Christ into all these different areas! You may be passionate about cooking, I may be crazy about art, and another person spends night and day thinking about technology. Someone else loves sport; another one loves study; another person just enjoys being with people. None of these passions are an accident! Each one of them is planted in the person's heart by God. Your passion is part of your unique shape by which you fit into the "jigsaw puzzle" of God's Family.

#### **5. Matching Spiritual Gifts with Passion**

Finally, let us conclude by saying that we all know that God does not want lukewarm Christians – What God wants is passionate Christians! What God wants is people who have their heart in their ministry.

Unfortunately, so often when someone is faithful to God's calling to serve, what we do is put them in an area of greatest need in the Church. But the problem with that is that unless that person is passionate about a particular ministry, they will simply either get bored, or hate doing it so much that they fall away. It is a bit like we have stuck a square peg in a round hole.

#### **Conclusion**

So to bring last week's sermon and today's sermon together: In order to discern our vocation, the first thing we need to do is discover our spiritual gifts. Then secondly, we need to say what we are passionate about. There

are three further steps which we will look at over the next three weeks, but as we progress I would like you to start filling in the blanks for yourself by answering for yourself - What are your spiritual gifts? What are you passionate about?

Amen