

English Transcript

Discover How God Has SHAPED You for Ministry

Lesson 8: Next Steps

Welcome back to the final lesson of this course. In your handout this is Lesson 4, starting on page 29. In this audio course, we up to Lesson 8. Lesson 3 in your handout was expanded to include Lessons 3 through 7 in this online course with a lesson dedicated to each of the five SHAPE discovery assessments.

In this lesson we will discuss some next steps for you to take to apply your SHAPE discoveries as well as introduce some helpful thoughts to guide others in this process.

What is involved with serving the Lord?

It does not take great *ability*; it takes great *availability* for God to make an impact with your life!

You have begun the SHAPE discovery process.

You have examined your spiritual gifts, your heart's desires, your natural abilities, your personality style and your life experiences.

Now you need to consider how you are going to use the way God has SHAPED you to serve within the church.

Real servants make themselves available to serve.

They want to be ready to jump into service when called on. Much like a soldier, a servant must always be standing by for duty:

"No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him." 2 Timothy 2:4

If you only serve when it's convenient for you, you should rethink your priorities.

Real servants do what is needed, even when it may be inconvenient.

Are you available for God anytime?

As you think about committing time to serve, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Are you making service a priority?
2. In your current season of life, how much time do you think you can make yourself available for serving?

"Whoever serves Me must follow Me; and where I am, My servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves Me." John 12:26

As we begin to discuss next steps to apply the things you have discovered about how God has SHAPED you for ministry, allow me to review a few tools that are associated with this course. You may download the following documents from the website. These are posted under the Course Handout button.

1. Course Handout – If you have not done this already, download this document to review the course content of spiritual gifts as well as your SHAPE assessment results.
2. SHAPE Booklet – This short booklet summarizes the key points from the training along with a page where you can transfer your SHAPE Profile results from page 27 in your handout. This 4-page booklet will be a helpful tool to introduce others to the SHAPE concept.
3. Ministries and Corresponding Spiritual Gifts – This 4-page booklet will help you connect spiritual gifts to different ministries. This can be used for yourself as well as a tool to coach others about where to begin serving based on the results of the SHAPE assessment.

After reviewing your course handout, I encourage you to review your personal SHAPE Profile. Your Profile will help to review and tell the story of God's grace in your life. Look for opportunities to share your SHAPE Profile with others who know you well. Ask for their feedback. You may incorporate their input into your results. Based on your Profile, assess where you are serving now and determine if you may need to make some changes or additions to where you are serving. You may be serving in the appropriate ways but your new learnings of how God has SHAPED you may influence how you serve with greater sense of purpose and intention.

As you apply your learnings, you will be best positioned to begin to teach others and help them understand God's story of grace in their lives as well.

As you consider ways to help yourself and others apply this training, let us read the following article together that provides some helpful ideas on introducing the SHAPE concept in a small group context within your church. This begins on page 30 in your handout. This article speaks primarily about spiritual gifts. As we read the article, every time spiritual gifts are mentioned, we may expand this to include all that we have been talking about how God has SHAPED each of us for ministry.

Call Out the Spiritual Gifts in Your Church

Recognize your members' gifts in both direct and indirect ways.

By Sam O'Neal

This article was written to help a small group leader help the members of his/her group discover their God given SHAPE and begin serving with passion and purpose within the group and the church. These principles can apply to any believer within a local church.

During my first few years as a small-group leader, I became very interested in the spiritual growth of my group members. I learned early on that a group needs to be more than social interactions and intellectual stimulation, otherwise it becomes a country club or a Bible class—neither of which is a pathway to Christian community.

I wanted deeply for my group members to experience spiritual transformation. I wanted them to be changed through our experiences together. I wanted them to be better people and better disciples of Jesus. I wanted that for myself, as well.

Become a Spiritual Leader

Unfortunately, no sooner had I developed these goals than I ran into a pretty big problem: I didn't want to take any direct initiative in encouraging my group members to grow. In other words, I wanted my group members to experience spiritual change, but I found myself unable to push them toward that change in any direct way.

Part of my hesitation came from my philosophy of ministry. I believed then (and still believe now) that the Holy Spirit is responsible for spiritual transformation in the lives of people. I knew I couldn't push people to grow, nor could I "trick" them into spiritual growth using clever questions or innovative techniques.

However, the main factor in my hesitation was a lack of confidence in myself as a spiritual leader. I've never been a pastor, which meant I didn't feel qualified to speak directly to my group members about their spiritual lives. I also dislike confrontation, so I didn't want to imply that anyone in my group was struggling in a certain area or needed to get better.

In short, I decided to lead the group in a passive way and wait for the Holy Spirit to "do his work." The results were mixed. I know I grew spiritually in those years, and I believe some of my group members did indeed respond to the Spirit's work in their lives. But I can't say so with any kind of certainty because I never got directly involved.

Recently I've learned to take a more active role in the spiritual lives of my group members. I still believe that the Holy Spirit is the only source of transformation, but I also believe I have a role to play in helping my group members respond to what the Spirit is already doing in their lives. After all, the apostle Paul wrote these words to the *members* of the churches in Thessalonica, not just to the leaders of those churches:

Now we ask you, brothers, to give recognition to those who labor among you and lead you in the Lord and admonish you, and to regard them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. And we exhort you, brothers: warn those who are irresponsible, comfort the discouraged, help the weak, be patient with everyone. See to it that no one repays evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good for one another and for all (1 Thessalonians 5:12–15).

Help Group Members Identify Their Gifts

One of my favorite ways to encourage growth within my group is to help my group members understand and use their spiritual gifts. Here are some suggestions for how you can do the same.

The Direct Approach

Take it from me: it's okay to take a direct approach when it comes to the spiritual gifts of your group members. Even if you're not a pastor, even if you don't consider yourself a spiritual leader, and even if you've never done it before—you can still make a positive impact in your group members' lives by directly and specifically encouraging them to identify and use their spiritual gifts.

Here are a few suggestions on how to make that happen:

- **Study the gifts.** Because many people who join a small group are already Christians, group leaders often assume their members already have a strong knowledge of their own spiritual gifts. In reality, many Christians have only a vague knowledge of what their spiritual gifts are and how they influence our lives as Christians. It's very possible that the majority of your group members are unaware of their spiritual gifts.

For that reason, consider studying the spiritual gifts as a group using this training packet. If you choose to lead your group in a study of the spiritual gifts, be honest and up-front about your motivations. Encourage everyone to engage the study with the goal of identifying their gifts and discussing ways to use those gifts for God's kingdom.

- **Initiate a spiritual conversation.** When you feel like one or more group members could use some encouragement or affirmation regarding their spiritual gifts, invite them to talk about it. If appropriate, ask them to join you for a meal or for coffee. Don't ambush your group members by suddenly turning a normal conversation into a spiritual discussion. Instead, be direct about your goals when you initiate the meeting: "I'd like to talk about some of the ways I've seen God at work in your life."
- **Use "I see" language.** Some group members may feel a bit put off if you make definitive statements about their character and personality. For example, telling someone "You have the gift of service, and you need to use it in our group" may not be the best approach during

your conversation. While such a statement may be accurate, it can come across as invasive or overly personal.

Using "I see" or "I hear" language allows you to be direct in your observations without crossing a line. For example: "I see how your eyes light up when we talk about serving our community. What would you think about leading the group in a service project?" Or: "I've heard you talk about the different conversations you've had with your neighbors. Would you be willing to lead some evangelism training for our group?"

Taking this approach has the side benefit of letting your group members know that you've noticed God working in their lives, and that you care about their spiritual health.

- **Keep an open mind.** You may come into the conversation with several ideas for how your group member might use his or her spiritual gifts to benefit your community. However, don't hold on too tightly to your own plans. Your group members will find more success using their gifts if they're spurred on by their own passions and motivations. Be open to group members applying their gifts in ways you hadn't considered.

The Indirect Approach

While it's appropriate for you as a small-group leader to be direct in initiating spiritual conversations, there may also be times when it's best to be more subtle. Perhaps you initiated a conversation with a group member, but he or she is hesitant to move forward immediately. Or, you may know based on someone's personality that a direct conversation would be more frightening than encouraging.

For these situations, there are also indirect ways for calling out the spiritual gifts of your group members. Most of these methods involve positive reinforcement.

For example, you have a number of chances to highlight and affirm the giftings of your group members during each group meeting. You don't have to make these affirmations obvious or startling, but you can be intentional about speaking the truth in an encouraging way. "That's a great point, Lisa; you really have a gift for explaining Scripture in a way people can understand." "Thanks for making everyone so comfortable, Roger. We appreciate you sharing your gift of hospitality with us each week!"

You can also offer positive reinforcement outside of the group setting by sending notes, cards, texts, tweets, e-mails, and more. These don't have to be long or especially profound, nor do they need to be sappy or jam-packed with emotion. Rather, you can take a few minutes to communicate an "I see" statement to group members in a way that highlights their gifting and encourages them to continue contributing to God's work in your community. Indeed, in a culture where communication typically stays at the surface, you may be surprised at how meaningful a kind and encouraging note can be when someone receives it out of the blue.

Finally, you can encourage group members to own their spiritual gifts by giving them resources that point them in the right direction. If a group member has the gift of evangelism, for example, you could give them a book like *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, by Robert Coleman. Coupled with a note of encouragement, such a gift will both affirm your belief in your group member's gift and offer a way to learn more.

Such gifts don't have to be expensive, either. You could text someone a link to an article explaining a specific gift, or tell someone about a podcast that you feel would be helpful to a person of their gifting.

In the end, you have a responsibility to help your group members move toward spiritual transformation. And working to highlight their spiritual gifts—whether directly or indirectly—is a great place to start.

Questions to reflect upon:

1. What role do you have in the spiritual growth of the members of your church? Are you doing too little or trying to do too much?
2. How might you use "I see" language to talk with other believers about their spiritual gifts?
3. When might an indirect approach to spiritual gifts be more appropriate?

In your role as a pastor or leader within the church, remember Ephesians 4:11-16. God has called you to equip the believers in your local church for works of service and ministry so that the body of Christ may grow in the unity of the faith, knowledge of the Son of God, and become mature, with every member doing his or her part.

Once you understand the theology of spiritual gifts taught in this course, along with the SHAPE model, plus your personal application of the SHAPE assessments, you are ready to teach others and help them begin to grow and experience the joy of serving in ways that God has already been preparing them to serve.

I encourage you to incorporate this course into the training that you offer new believers as well as those who have a desire to serve within the church. Once you have introduced people to the SHAPE concept, the most important next step is to help them begin to serve in the context of how God has SHAPED them for ministry. This next article we will read together offers some practical ideas for this next step of engagement. Once again, whenever the author mentions “spiritual gifts”, we should expand the context to include SHAPE with a focus also on their passions, abilities, personality, and life experiences. This article assumes that your church may have small group bible studies which are an excellent place to introduce the SHAPE model. If you don't have small groups, you may apply this within the various serving groups that exist within your church.

I might begin teaching this course with the ministry leaders in your church and then have them teach the members of your church who are serving in the respective ministry areas.

Put Your Spiritual Gifts To Use

Practical tips to leverage your gifts in a small group, at church, and in the community

By Carter Moss

Have you ever watched Michael Jordan fly through the air to dunk a basketball? Ever watched Tiger Woods swing a golf club? Ever seen Eric Clapton or John Mayer get lost in playing a guitar? Ever heard Billy Graham preach a sermon?

Or let's bring it a bit closer to home—have you ever seen someone in action who just seems to have the "magic touch" when it comes to entertaining kids? Ever seen someone find their way around a car engine like it's the simplest thing ever? Ever watched a real grill master joyfully cook up some amazing food?

It's a beautiful and often inspiring thing to watch people doing what they're gifted to do, what they were born to do, what they're passionate about. And part of the beauty of the Kingdom of God is that it's *not* just a few special people who are extraordinarily gifted. In God's Kingdom, we *all* get spiritual gifts. The Apostle Paul makes this clear in a number of places, like in 1 Corinthians 12:7 when he says "A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other" (NLT).

The fun part comes in discovering what our gifts are and how best to use them for the kingdom of God. The even better part is helping others to do the same—an opportunity you have right in front of you with your small group! So how do we do go about doing that?

Identifying Spiritual Gifts

It all starts with helping our group members understand the theology behind this idea that God gives each of us spiritual gifts when we begin our relationship with him, and that he intends for us to use them to build up his church and to advance his kingdom.

Discuss: How helpful was this study on SHAPE and what did you learn about yourself as you began the journey to discover how God has SHAPED you for ministry?

Using Spiritual Gifts

Once you've helped your group members identify their gifts, you'll want to coach them on how to use them. Help your group members use their imagination to dream of ways that they may use their gifts.

Discuss: What new possibilities for using your SHAPE were uncovered?

Serving in the Group or within the Church

One easy place where people begin using their spiritual gifts is right inside of your own small group. For example, if someone is gifted at administration, let him or her be the group administrator by organizing the snack list, sending weekly emails, planning group outings, and more. They will feel more ownership of the group, be able to use their gift, and it even takes these tasks off your plate! If someone is gifted at investing in kids and you have some kids in your group (who are often relegated to childcare somewhere else in the home), consider having that person teach a short lesson to the kids at the start of group each week. If someone is gifted in prayer, let him or her lead the prayer time each week.

Think through ways each group member might be able to use his or her gifts within your group. By discovering their gifts and thinking through how to apply them, your group members could begin to experience growth like they haven't before.

Serving in Church

Another way to encourage group members to use their gifts is to serve at your church. Find out what your church's specific ministries and serving opportunities are, and let your group members know. You can even do a "meet the staff" night where you invite the ministry directors from your church to come to your group meeting to cast vision for and share details about serving on their teams. The goal is to help group members see that their gifts are highly valued within the church. As Paul describes in Ephesians 4:12, spiritual gifts are given "to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church".

You get to help people come to see that we don't serve at the church because the church is desperate and has holes to fill, or because we want to earn brownie points with God. It's much more inspiring for people to serve at church when they discover that their unique gifts actually help build up the church, and the church gives them the opportunity to use their gifts consistently and do things they are passionate about.

Serving in the Community

But let's be careful not to stop here. God is not just interested in us building up the existing church—he wants to use us and our gifts in his mission to redeem the world through restoring our local communities and drawing more and more people into his kingdom. The opportunities to serve in the community are endless.

Consider how your group might serve together in the community. Let the spiritual gifts of your group members guide your discussion of service opportunities. If you have some people who have the gifts of compassion and mercy, you may want to find a way to serve the local under-resourced. If people are gifted with building and construction-type gifts, it would be powerful to find opportunities to build and repair things for local widows or single moms in need. You might also find great construction projects at a local school, library, or playground. If many of your group members are gifted artistically, there are all sorts of ways to serve the local

community. Consider a community mural, an art show, or even arts and crafts classes for children in the community. It will be eye-opening and spiritually motivating for your group members to see how God can use their spiritual gifts to benefit the world.

Serving in our Circles of Influence

As we think through our spheres of influence and relational circles, we can begin to discover that God has perhaps put us where we are for a reason. Rather than wondering why we always have to be the one to organize a neighborhood BBQ or a family reunion, we can begin to see it as our calling—that God gifted us with administration or networking skills, and this is one important way he wants us to use those gifts. Rather than wonder why we end up watching the kids at gatherings, we can come to realize that God has given us incredible gifts in teaching and relating to kids and he wants us to use those. Maybe we start to realize that our tendency to figure out how to meet financial needs when we hear about them is because we have the spiritual gift of generosity, and then we can start intentionally praying for God to show us those opportunities. God may have placed you in your circles of influence specifically to use the spiritual gifts you have there. Consider how you might use your gifts more intentionally in your spheres of influence.

The Christian life was never meant to be about merely making a one-time decision and then returning to "life as usual" while we wait around for eternity. We were meant to join God in his mission here and now. A huge part of our spiritual journey is discovering what spiritual gifts God has wired us with and then finding ways to use them for God's mission. By doing this, we'll build up the church, help redeem our local communities, help people find a relationship with God, deepen our own faith, and discover the purpose and mission that God has for us.

Questions to reflect upon:

- Is it okay to think about using your spiritual gifts (SHAPE Profile) outside of the church? Why or why not?
- How might you leverage the gifts (SHAPE) of those in your church to serve the Lord and build up His church?
- When have you used your spiritual gifts (SHAPE) in your circles of influence? What was the result?

The next step for anyone who has completed this training is to understand the opportunities to serve in a small group, within the local church, or even in the community, and then begin to serve. The affirmation you will receive from others and the Holy Spirit will help you to know if you are serving in a manner that makes the most of the way that God has already SHAPED you for ministry.

There is one more tool that we have included with this training. You may download this from the website under the Course handout tab. In addition to the course handout and the SHAPE summary booklet that are posted, you may also download the handout that is called, *Ministries and Corresponding Spiritual Gifts*.

This handout lists most of the spiritual gifts listed in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4, and 1 Peter 4, along with suggested ministry or areas of service within a local church that correspond with each of the spiritual gifts. Based on one's SHAPE Profile, potential serving opportunities will become more visible.

The understanding of their SHAPE Profile results will help to guide them to where they might serve while considering their passion areas, natural abilities, personality, and life experiences along with their spiritual gifts.

As we conclude this lesson and the course, I pray that this has removed some of the mystery about spiritual gifts.

I hope you now understand that this is not a test you must take to find just the right answer before you begin to serve, but rather, you can see that this is much more of an ongoing self-discovery process guided by the Holy Spirit, to better understand God's story of grace in your life.

God is shaping and preparing each of us to serve him and the church for His glory, our transformation and the building up of the church. Enjoy the journey of growing and serving the Lord in your areas of giftedness, passion, abilities, personality flowing out of your life experiences.