



“You are shaped by God to be part of the picture”

Shaped for the Church

A single piece of puzzle is not much to look at. A single piece of a puzzle is quite useless because it serves no purpose on its own. For your puzzle piece to serve any purpose whatsoever you must use it to link up with others to complete the puzzle.

The same goes for the gifts and talents that God has given you. Paul says, “There are varieties of gifts, ... and to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.” Now in order to complete any puzzle, you don’t have to be a professional “puzzler.” All that is required is that you have all the pieces. I suggest that this puzzle represents the church. And each piece, being a different shape, size and colour represents a different spiritual gift, skill or talent that God has given to each of us. Just like the different colours and shapes of this puzzle, we all have different spiritual gifts and skills, different God-given gifts... and we are made up of all sorts of sizes and shapes, but together we form the very thing that God desires – the body of Christ! I think it is incredible that individually we are all diverse, but collectively we make up

the picture that the world sees of God and Jesus. And it is the fact that we can work together with all our oddness and diversity that makes the church something wonderful to behold.



In a jigsaw puzzle, each piece has a unique shape and plays an important part in building the complete picture. It is the same with Christians. Each member of the Church has a unique shape. Each one of us has a special role in building God's Family. During the next 5 sessions, we will be examining ourselves to see how each one of us is shaped and where each one of us fits.

Shaped by the Holy Spirit

After Jesus' resurrection, God sent the Holy Spirit to create the Church. The Holy Spirit is a wonderful gift of God. When I receive this good gift, something special happens. The Holy Spirit shapes me to be part of the Church, the Body of Christ. That means I am not alone – I belong to the Family of God, and all God's children are my brothers and sisters.

Shaped by the Gifts of the Spirit

Being part of God's Family is a privilege. But if I belong to a Family, I also have responsibilities. Children in a Family must learn and grow until they mature. Each child has a role to play. This is true in God's Family too. The Holy Spirit gives every believer special spiritual gifts, which shape us for service to God's Family. Some of these are listed in Ephesians 4 – you will find other lists in 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12.

NB: The most important thing to notice is that the list of gifts in each Scripture is different. Yet, both are written by the same author. Whilst personality profiles are archetypes that may be applied to different individuals, spiritual gifts are not. Anything, absolutely anything that contributes to building up God's world in love and unity is a spiritual gift. I have a friend who tells the worst "dad jokes" ever – yet I believe this is his spiritual gift. His humour brings people closer together – thus it is a spiritual gift.

Shaped to Build Up God's Family

It is my responsibility to "ask, seek and knock" until I find out what my spiritual gifts are. God has made you and me part of God's Family so that we can use our unique spiritual gifts "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ" (Ephesians 4: 12 – 13). Then, through Jesus at work in us, God will save the world!



Overview of the five weeks

During the five weeks we ask, "Where do I belong?" and "How do I belong?" In asking that question, over the five weeks, we will see that

Spiritual Gifts for my Vocation -

God's Gifts make me Belong

Heart for my Vocation -
 Abilities for my Vocation -
 Personality for my Vocation -
 Experience for my Vocation -

My Passion makes me belong
 My skills make me belong
 Who I am makes me belong
 My past makes me belong

The material is called

“You are shaped by God to be part of the picture.”



The basic message is that each baptised person is a minister. Each person is shaped by God to be part of God’s picture for the world. Each person belongs and can exercise their belonging through answering God’s call and purpose for their lives. As you can see we are using the acronym of S.H.A.P.E.

The theme for the five weeks are:

- S = Spiritual gifts;
- H = Heart – where is your heart (passion)?
- A = Ability - what are you good at?
- P = Personality
- E = Experience – what experiential knowledge do you have?

Week 1 – S (Spiritual Gifts)									
THEME	God’s Gifts make me Belong <i>Spiritual Gifts for my Vocation</i>								
THEME NOTES	“Where do I belong?” The themes for the series explore how God has shaped each believer uniquely to fit into the “jigsaw puzzle” of the Body of Christ.								
READINGS	<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">Joel 2: 26 – 29</td> <td style="width: 50%;">The promise of the Spirit</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Psalm 63: 1 – 8</td> <td>You are my God – I seek You</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ephesians 4: 1–7; 11–16</td> <td>Gifts to build the Body of Christ</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Luke 11: 9 – 13</td> <td>God gives the Holy Spirit to those who ask</td> </tr> </table>	Joel 2: 26 – 29	The promise of the Spirit	Psalm 63: 1 – 8	You are my God – I seek You	Ephesians 4: 1–7; 11–16	Gifts to build the Body of Christ	Luke 11: 9 – 13	God gives the Holy Spirit to those who ask
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Luke 11: 9 – 13	God gives the Holy Spirit to those who ask								
BLESSING	<p>May God our Creator bless you with humility, gentleness and patience, that you may bear with one another in love;</p> <p>May Christ our Saviour strengthen you to grow up in every way into Him, who is your head; May the Holy Spirit empower you to use your spiritual gifts to build one another up.</p>								

Note: Remember to ask people to bring, next week, something to offer to God which represents their passion. For example, a champion runner might bring one of his medals; a knitter might bring a ball of wool; a musician, a sheet of music; a gardener, some seeds – the possibilities are endless.

Week 2 – H (Heart / Passion)	
THEME	My Passion makes me belong <i>A Heart for my Vocation</i>
COLLECT	<p>Living God</p> <p>Your Word judges the thoughts and intentions of the heart: cleanse our hearts and give us Godly desires so that out of the treasure of our hearts we may produce good fruit in the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord.</p>

READINGS	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
BLESSING	May God our Creator give you the desires of your hearts; May Christ our Saviour give you fruitful hearts; May the Holy Spirit empower you to follow your hearts to the glory of God.

Week 3 – A (Abilities)	
THEME	My skills make me belong <i>Abilities for my Vocation</i> May my skill fit the bill!
COLLECT	Creative God source of all skill, intelligence and knowledge: help us to remain yoked to Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord so that by Your Holy Spirit we may learn from Him and faithfully use our abilities in Your service and to the glory of Your Holy Name.
READINGS	Exodus 35:30 – 36:3 God gives skill to artists and artisans Psalm 18: 30 – 37 God leads and teaches me 1 Corinthians 3: 5 – 15 Building on the foundation of Christ Matthew 11: 28 – 30 Yoked with Jesus and learning from Him
BLESSING	May God our Creator lead you and teach you; May Jesus our Saviour give you rest as you take on His easy yoke; May the Holy Spirit empower you to use your skills for the glory of God.

Week 4 – P (Personality)	
THEME	Who I am makes me belong A Personality for my Vocation? I will be uniquely me!
COLLECT	Loving God You created each of us in our mother's womb You know us by our names and have counted every hair on our heads: give us courage to trust in You to complete the work that You have begun in us through Christ so that by Your Holy Spirit, each of us in a unique way may produce a harvest of righteousness to the glory of Your Holy Name.
READINGS	Isaiah 43:1 – 4 God the creator knows us by name Psalm 139: 1 – 16 I am fearfully and wonderfully made Philippians 1:3 – 11 God will complete His work among you Matthew 10:26 – 30 God has counted every hair on your head
BLESSING	May God our Creator call you by your name; May Jesus our Saviour free you from fear; May the Holy Spirit produce in you a harvest of righteousness as you live out your unique calling to the glory of God.

Week 5 – E (Experience)	
THEME	My past makes me belong <i>Experience for my Vocation</i>

	From the past lessons last!
COLLECT	Counsellor God You show us the path of life and work for good in those who love You: enable us to hold You always before us trusting in the Holy Spirit to teach us in our experiences and help us in our weaknesses so that we may joyfully live out the hope of our calling and bring glory to You in the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
READINGS	Exodus 4: 10 – 15 God promises to teach Moses and Aaron Psalm 16 I bless the Lord who gives me counsel Romans 8: 22 – 28 All things work together for good John 14: 18 – 26 The Holy Spirit will be our teacher
BLESSING	May God our Creator be with you and teach you what you should say; May Jesus our Saviour reveal Himself more and more to you; May the Holy Spirit intercede for you and help you in your weakness.

Notes for week one

God's Gifts make me Belong: Spiritual Gifts for my Vocation

WHAT IS VOCATION??

Vocation is a calling.

WHAT IS A CALLING?

Calling is a Biblical word to describe how each person has something beautiful to do for God. The Spirit calls us to fulfil a task as our unique way of celebrating the Spirit's presence in the world. Each of us has an assignment to do that has our name written on the tag. Each of us has a song to sing, a message to deliver a special gift of love to offer that no one else can offer.

WHISPERS OF RESISTANCE

The experience of calling is never a smooth path. A calling unfolds slowly and changes shape as it grows and develops. The process involves a bit of searching and testing. Often there are whispers of resistance, of negativity or self-doubt. Thoughts like: "Someone else can do it better" "I do not know enough about God." "What happens if I fail?" Take heart, the Bible is full of good examples of whispers of resistance: Jeremiah says he is too young, Moses complains that he stutters, Isaiah says that he is a man of unclean lips.

A CALLING BRINGS NOURISHMENT

We answer a call because a calling is something that brings nourishment to our lives and the lives of those around us. Jesus himself said: it is my meat and drink to do my Father's will. What does he mean? To carry out our calling offers us deep satisfaction, a deep sense of joy and fulfilment. Not only does it nourish our souls but it nourishes the souls of those around us. When we carry out our calling there is a deep and profound sense that our souls are fulfilled. This is the message that the writer of Ephesians wants to communicate to us.

CONCLUSION



In conclusion the definition of calling that I have offered is that a calling is a biblical word that describes how every person has something special to do for God.

The Spirit calls us to fulfil a task as our unique way of celebrating the Spirit's presence in the world. It will be different for each of us. Some of us are called to be mothers and fathers, some of us are called to teaching, or music or art. My own calling which I have surrendered to is to be a priest. My calling came when I was very

young, and it was an experience combined with a settled knowledge that I would be a pastor. At many points along the road I tried to ignore it, it is not a comfortable life and my gut feeling is that it can't be sustained unless there is a sense of call. Yet it is not the only call I have. For a long time I have felt called to prayer particularly contemplative prayer or prayer of silence and have played with this for many years now. I also feel called to stand in solidarity with the poor, it is not an easy call, I try to ignore it but it doesn't go away, yet my life has been completely changed through saying yes to it. I also feel called to make music and know that my life is empty without it. The most important call I have is to celebrate life through relationships, especially those with my husband and children, when I have neglected this call I know how it has wounded my soul and the soul of others. I wish you God's richest blessing and joy as you continue to unravel God's call on your life, remembering that before you were formed in the womb God knew you and before you were born God called you. Have fun doing it.



God's Gifts make me Belong Spiritual Gifts for my Vocation

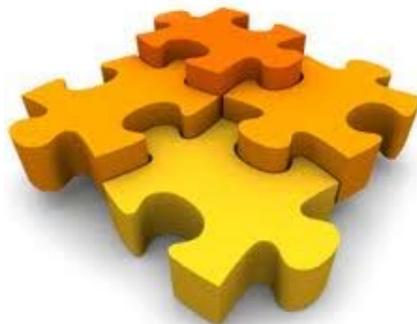
Spiritual Gifts to Build the Church

Read Ephesians 4: 1 – 7; 11 – 16; Romans 12: 4 – 8; 1 Corinthians 12: 4 - 11

- How do we live a life “worthy of our calling” (Eph 4:1 – 6)?

- What is the purpose of the spiritual gifts (Eph 4:12 – 13)?

- How are you fulfilling the instruction in Ephesians 4: 14 – 16?



What are other spiritual gifts that are not listed that nevertheless grow the community in love?

A sense of humour

The Holy Spirit – a Good Gift

Read Luke 11: 9 - 13

Who receives the Holy Spirit (vs 13)?

- Do you know what spiritual gifts you have received from the Holy Spirit?

- If you do not know your spiritual gifts, what will you do to “ask, seek and knock” until you find them out?

What can you bring next week that demonstrates your passion?

