

# **Romans: The Good News of God**

## **Discovering Your S.H.A.P.E. for Ministry**

*Romans 12:3-8*

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# Discovering Your S.H.A.P.E. for Ministry

## Scripture

For the past two Sundays we have been looking at Romans 12:3-8, in which the Apostle Paul has been teaching us how Christians are to serve in the body of Christ. The first Sunday I gave you a general overview of the text. Last Sunday we looked at what the Bible has to say about ministry. Today, I would like to examine how you discover your S.H.A.P.E. for ministry.

So, let's read Romans 12:3-8:

**<sup>3</sup>For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. <sup>4</sup>For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, <sup>5</sup>so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. <sup>6</sup>Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; <sup>7</sup>if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; <sup>8</sup>the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. (Romans 12:3-8)**

## Introduction

A few years ago Eric Swanson surveyed the church he serves to see if people saw a relationship between ministering to others and spiritual growth.

When asked, "To what extent has your ministry or service to others affected your spiritual growth?" 92% answered "Positive," 8% answered "Neutral," and 0% responded that ministry had a negative effect. Ministry to others enhanced their spiritual growth.

Sixty-three percent indicated that active involvement in ministry was equally significant in their spiritual growth compared to other spiritual disciplines, such as Bible study and prayer. And 24% responded that active involvement in ministry to others had been “a more significant factor” to their spiritual growth than Bible study or prayer.

Over half (58%) of those who were not actively ministering to others felt either “not satisfied” or only “somewhat satisfied” with their level of spiritual growth.<sup>1</sup>

If you have been born again by the Spirit of God, you want to grow and mature as a Christian. You want to grow in your love for God. You want to become more like your Savior, Jesus Christ. And one of the ways to do so is by getting actively involved in ministry. Swanson discovered that active involvement in ministry was a significant factor in the spiritual growth of Christians.

## Lesson

So, to help you understand what Christian ministry is I am taking you through what we call Class 301, which is also called “Discovering My S.H.A.P.E. for Ministry.” Today, I want to help you discover your S.H.A.P.E for ministry.

### I. God Has Shaped You

Let me begin by saying that God has shaped you for ministry.

The Old Testament saint, Job, said to God, “Your hands fashioned and made me” (Job 10:8a). The *Good News Translation* puts it this way, “Your hands formed and *shaped* me.”

God has been forming and shaping you for ministry since you were born. In fact, God started shaping you uniquely before you were even born. King David said in Psalm 139:14-16 (in the *Living Bible*), “Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex!

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<sup>1</sup> Eric Swanson, “What You Get from Giving” (*Leadership Journal*, Spring 2003), 38.

It is amazing to think about. Your workmanship is marvelous. . . . You were there while I was being formed. . . . You saw me before I was born and scheduled each day of my life before I began to breathe. . . .”

I want you to notice three truths from this text. *First, you are wonderfully complex.* Now, at this point husbands are saying quietly to themselves so as not to be heard by their wives, “No. I am a simple man. It is my wife who is complex!” Well, I want you men to know that it is King David—a man—who says to God, “Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex”! David is affirming that God has created each one of us with astonishing intricacy and delicacy. We are stunningly composite and multifaceted.

*Second, you are unique.* There is no one else in the world quite like you. Even if you are an identical twin, you are a unique creation of God.

When I was a young boy I sometimes used to wish that I had different hair or eyes or so on. However, after I was born again and read King David’s words I realized that God created me to look and be exactly who I am. I am unique. And you are too.

*And third, you were shaped for a purpose.* God has scheduled each day for you before you ever began to breathe. God has a plan for your life, and he has shaped you to fulfill the plan that he has for your life.

There was a time when I wanted to question how God had shaped me. I wanted to be different. I wanted a different shape. However, I was rebuked when I read what the Apostle Paul said in Romans 9:20-21 in *The Message* version of the Bible, “Who in the world do you think you are to second-guess God? Do you for one moment suppose any of us knows enough to call God into question? Clay doesn’t talk back to the fingers that mold it, saying, ‘Why did you shape me like this?’ Isn’t it obvious that a potter has a perfect right to shape one lump of clay into a vase for holding flowers and another into a pot for cooking beans?”

So, what I have learned and gladly accepted is that I am wonderfully complex, unique, and shaped for ministry by God.

And what I have also learned is that in ministry *function follows form*. Now, in my former life, when I was working in the construction industry, we had a saying, “Form follows function.” And this is what we meant by that saying. Let’s say that my company, the South African Railways, wanted to build a railway station. We would ask questions about how the station was going to function:

- Is it going to have a single or multiple railway lines?
- Is it a station for passengers? Or cargo? Or both?
- How many passengers? How much cargo? And so on.

We would first determine the function of the building, and then design (or form) the building to suit the function.

But in God’s economy, it is exactly the opposite: *function follows form*. In other words, in order to determine God’s plan for your life, you need to understand first how God has formed you. Then, having determined how God has formed you, you will then have a much clearer understanding of what God wants you to do. What God made you to *be* determines what he intends for you to *do*. Your ministry (function) is determined by your makeup (form).

## II. Your S.H.A.P.E. Will Determine Your Ministry

Rick Warren uses the acrostic S.H.A.P.E. to help you understand how God has formed you. S.H.A.P.E. stands for Spiritual gifts, Hearth, Abilities, Personality, and Experiences.<sup>2</sup> Let’s look at each in turn.

*First, God has given you a Spiritual gift.* The Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:1-7, “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. . . . Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. *To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.*” And then Paul gives a partial list of spiritual gifts. These spiritual gifts

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<sup>2</sup> Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message & Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing Co., 1995), 370.

include prophecy, teaching, exhorting, service, leading, giving, mercy, administration, evangelism, shepherding, and so on. Each Christian at the moment of the new birth is given a spiritual gift by God. And the reason God gives each Christian at least one spiritual gift is, as Paul says, “for the common good.” That is, God gives you a spiritual gift to use in your service in the body of Christ.

And so the question you must ask yourself is, “What am I gifted to do?”

*Second, God has given you a Hheart.* As you know, the word “heart” is used in many different ways. In this context I am using it to refer to your innermost feelings and desires, the way that Paul uses it in Romans 10:1, where he says, “Brothers, my *heart’s* desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.” In relation to ministry it has to do with what you are passionate about. And one way it comes into play may be in relation to the area of ministry in which you will serve. For example, God has given you the spiritual gift of teaching. Now, you may be able to use that spiritual gift in all kinds of settings, but you love to work with teenagers. You are passionate about helping young people come to an understanding of the truth. And so your spiritual gift is teaching, and your heart is to work with teenagers.

And so the question you must ask yourself is, “What do I love to do?”

*Third, God has given you Ailities.* When Moses was told by God to build the tabernacle in the wilderness, God also gave Moses men with abilities to do the task. Listen to what the Lord said to Moses in Exodus 31:1-6, “See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with *ability* and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, to work in every craft. And behold, I have appointed with him Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. And *I have given to all able men ability*, that they may make all that I have commanded you. . . .” It has been said that the aver-

age person actually possesses between 500 and 700 abilities.

And so the question you must ask yourself is, “What ability do I have? What natural talents and skills do I have?”

*Fourth, God has given you a Personality.* Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:11a “For who knows a person’s thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him?” God has given each person a unique personality. Some are introverted; others are extroverted. Some are thinkers; others are feelers. Some like routine; others like variety. Some are self-controlled; others are self-expressive. And so on.

And so the question you must ask yourself is, “Where does my personality best suit me to serve?”

*And fifth, God has given you Experiences.* All of the experiences in your life can be used by God in his service. Let’s notice a number of different kinds of experiences.

You must ask yourself, “What kind of *spiritual* experiences have I had?” You may have used your gifts to serve God, and you have gained spiritual experiences from using those gifts. A negative example is the Hebrews. The writer to the Hebrews rebukes them for their lack of spiritual maturity. He says in Hebrews 5:12-13 (in the *Good News Translation*), “There has been enough time for you to be teachers—yet you still need someone to teach you the first lessons of God’s message. . . . (you are) without any *experience* in the matter of right and wrong.”

You must also ask yourself, “What *painful* experiences have I had?” Some people go through incredibly painful experiences. God can use those experiences to help others. When my wife Eileen was serving as a psychotherapist at the first church I served, she helped a number of women deal with sexual abuse. Now, Eileen has never been sexually abused. In fact, she grew up in a wonderful Christian home. But she was able to point these women to Christ and they found freedom. Interestingly, after a while some of the ladies who had been sexually abused started a support group for sexually abused women in the church. Since they had been sexually abused they understood the pain that women who had

been sexually abused go through. And they were able to minister to them. They were simply applying what Paul said when he said that God “comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God” (2 Corinthians 1:4).

Further, you must ask yourself, “What *educational* experiences have I had?” Proverbs 4:13 (in the *Good News Translation*) says, “Always remember what you have learnt. Your education is your life—guard it well.” Whatever education you have had—formal, informal, or non-formal—can be used by God in service.

And finally, you must ask yourself, “What *ministry* experiences have I had?” Paul said in 2 Corinthians 9:13 (in the *New International Version*), “*Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves*, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ. . . .” Most young Christians don’t have a good idea about how to serve in the body of Christ. And so my suggestion is to do something, anything. If you don’t like it, or if you are not good at it, move on to something else. But if you do like it, or if you are good at it, then that may be an indication of how God wants to use you. All of your ministry experience, however, will be used by God as you continue to serve him.

So, to summarize: your ministry will be most effective and fulfilling when you are using your *spiritual gifts* and *abilities* in the area of your *heart’s* desire in a way that best expresses your *personality* and *experience*.

### **III. The Apostle Paul’s S.H.A.P.E. Determined His Ministry**

Let me now illustrate how the Apostle Paul’s S.H.A.P.E. determined his ministry.

*First, God gave Paul Spiritual gifts.* Paul said in 2 Timothy 1:11, “I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher.” God gave Paul the gifts of preaching, apostleship, and teaching.

*Second, God gave Paul a Hear*t. Paul’s passion was to

preach the gospel to the unconverted. He said in Romans 15:20, “And thus I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else’s foundation.” Furthermore, Paul was particularly concerned about preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. He said in Galatians 2:8, “For he who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles.”

*Third, God gave Paul Abilities.* We read in Acts 18:3-4 that Paul went to see Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth, and “because he was of the same trade he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade. And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks.” So, just in these two verses, we see that Paul had the ability to make tents, and he also had debating skills.

*Fourth, God gave Paul a Personality.* Paul said in Galatians 1:14, “And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely *zealous* was I for the traditions of my fathers.” Paul was no slouch; he was extremely zealous. And that affected the way he did ministry. Paul was also compassionate. In his ministry to the Thessalonians he said, “But we were *gentle* among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children” (1 Thessalonians 2:7).

*And fifth, God gave Paul various Experiences.* Concerning Paul’s *spiritual* experiences we think of him prior to his conversion when he stood by watching while Stephen was being stoned for his faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 8:1). Then Paul was converted on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-20). He then went and spent three years studying in Arabia (Galatians 1:18). Later he had a special vision from God (2 Corinthians 12:2-7). All these spiritual experiences impacted the way he did ministry.

Concerning Paul’s *painful* experiences we read Paul saying in 2 Corinthians 11:23-27, “(I had) far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was

shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.”

Concerning Paul’s *educational* experiences Paul said in Acts 22:3, “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as all of you are this day.” Scholars believe that Paul had the equivalent of two Ph.D. degrees. He was a highly educated person. He understood Judaism as well as the Greco-Roman culture.

And finally, concerning Paul’s *ministry* experiences we simply have to read the book of Acts or his letters! Paul is still the greatest theologian and church planter in the history of the church.

## Conclusion

At this point I would like you to take out the booklet you received when you came into the service today titled, “Personal Profile: My SHAPE for Ministry.” We use this tool in Class 301 to help you discover your S.H.A.P.E. for ministry.

This booklet actually is a combination of two sections. The first five pages (including the cover) have a grey bar down the left hand side. This is the first section. The second section has the title “Spiritual Gifts Inventory” at the top of the page.

What I would like you to do this week is to fill out this booklet. Begin with the Spiritual Gifts Inventory section. After you have completed that, transfer the information to the appropriate place in the first section. Then continue filling out the first section, which asks you about your spiritual gifts, heart, abilities, personality, and experiences. I think the document is relatively easy to follow but, if you have any difficulty at all, please call me. I want to help you discover your S.H.A.P.E. for ministry, and I think that

this is a useful tool for doing so.

When you have completed your Personal Profile, I would be glad to sit down and talk with you about how you can use how God has shaped you in ministry. Or, you can simply volunteer for a ministry and get involved.

Right now all our ministries are gearing up for the fall. We have talked a lot about the upcoming 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration on the Labor Day weekend. We need volunteers to help set up and clean up for the various events. That is not an ongoing ministry, but it is a good place to help out.

We also need people to teach Sunday school for children, youth, and adults. We need volunteers for Pioneer Clubs, Hospitality, Music ministry, nursery, Children's church, missions, evangelism, greeters, ushers, welcome table, and so on.

If you asked to serve on a particular ministry team, I doubt that you will find any ministry leader say, "No thank you. We have so many people serving in our ministry that we don't need you right now"!

My goal is to get every communicant member involved in some ministry at the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church. I want to get *you* involved in ministry. So, take this booklet home, fill it out, call me if you have any questions, and get involved in ministry! Amen.



# Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ  
and **membership** in his church family,  
develop them to Christlike **maturity**,  
equip them for their **ministry** in the church  
and life **mission** in the world,  
in order to **magnify** God's name.*

## Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

This sermon, and other sermons, by the Rev. Freddy Fritz can be found at:

1. [www.tampabaypresbyterian.org/Sermons](http://www.tampabaypresbyterian.org/Sermons)
2. [www.sermoncentral.com/contributor\\_profile.asp?ContributorID=11181](http://www.sermoncentral.com/contributor_profile.asp?ContributorID=11181)
3. [www.sermonaudio.com/search.asp?SpeakerOnly=true&currSection=sermonsspeaker&keyword=Freddy%5EFritz](http://www.sermonaudio.com/search.asp?SpeakerOnly=true&currSection=sermonsspeaker&keyword=Freddy%5EFritz)

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## Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church (PCA)

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**PRAYER:**

O Lord our God, you have shaped each one of us for ministry. Help each communicant member of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church know what his or her shape for ministry is. Then spur each person to get involved in some ministry in our church.

There is so much that can be done. There is women's ministry, men's ministry, children's ministry, youth ministry, Emptynesters, pacesetters, nursery, hospitality, prayer, ministry deployment, missions, NTCA, music, choir, greeters, ushers, Sunday school, adult Christian Education & Fellowship, Growth Groups, and so much more. Help each one here today to get actively involved in a ministry of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church.

And all of this I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

**CHARGE:**

As you leave here today, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and always. Amen.