

## SESSION ONE

### PURPOSE

**You needn't do anything with these Notes! They are just to remind you of the content of the session, and help you to reflect and pray more about it if you wish to do so.**

### Am I a particular shape? (A reflection/meditation)

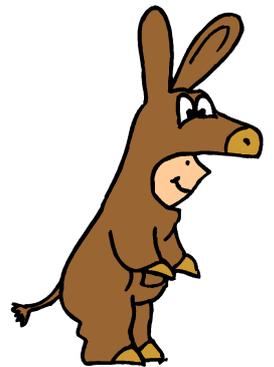
a) **What sort of shape do you see yourself as being?** Mind and spirit as well as body.

b) **What has your life been like?**

Many people see the shape of their lives as fixed and fated. Others think everything is random chance and we are shaped by our own reactions and choices. The Christian belief is different from both of those. We aren't the product of chance – God has lovingly designed and created us in His image, for a purpose. But he doesn't fix the shape of our lives in advance either. He's made us free, so we can choose either to work with him in shaping the process or to turn our backs on him and to try to do it on our own. What has your response been?

c) **Some questions to meditate on:**

- (i) When you look at your life and your "shape" as a whole person, do you see God as having been involved in shaping you?
- (ii) Do you pray, asking God to shape you?
- (iii) Do you see the "shape" that you are, as being God's gift to you?
- (iv) How do you think God sees you?



### "Help I'm useless"

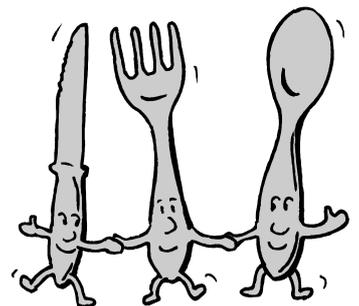
Many people think that they don't have any particular gifts, and are unaware of the gifts they have. It is God who creates us, shapes us, and gives us gifts so when we fail to recognise or accept his gifts, it wounds God. A gift is free. I don't deserve it. I just need to accept it gratefully and use it. So during this course, let's help each other to recognise God's gifts.

### Does God really have a purpose and plans for my life?

My **SHAPE** points to my **PURPOSE**. (Like a spoon!)

**This course will help you to work out your SHAPE** (your Spiritual gifts, Heart's desire, Abilities, Personality and Experience) so that you can discover what God is calling you to be and do for him, here and now.

**But we can only see the shape we are now.** We can't see into the future. God will continue to grow and shape us, if we let him.



God may call you to let go of something you've been doing for a while, something you are good at. He may call you to risk doing something new, perhaps in a new context. It's only as you launch out in faith, that you'll discover the new gifts he's giving you to serve him in this different way.

For the rest of your life, you need to keep listening to God and asking him to show you each step of the way, what he's wanting you to do and become. **Our gifts and ministry will evolve and change throughout our lives.** But don't worry about it! God has promised that whatever he calls us to, he will give us the gifts and resources we need for it.

## What does the Bible say about service and ministry?

- That all Christians are called to service and ministry; (no exceptions!)
- That *ministry* grows out of just using whatever God has given you, to serve God and other people. As you do that, it will focus down into a few particular forms of ministry which God is calling you to be and do. An area of ministry, or a particular role, will develop around the particular gifts you have. (See separate sheet, *Handout 1B "Am I called to ministry and God's service?"*)

## God's Purpose

God does not give us gifts just to make us feel good and fulfilled. God has gifted, shaped and equipped us for a **purpose**, which goes beyond ourselves. So what is our purpose?



Jesus gave his followers:

### a) A great commandment (Matthew 22 : 36 - 40)

- "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind" (WORSHIP)
- "Love your neighbour as yourself" (MINISTRY)

### b) A great commission (Matthew 28 : 18 - 20)

- "Go make disciples....." (MISSION)
- "Teach them.....all things" (LEARNING to be Jesus' disciples)

This is what the Church exists for.

The gifts which God gives us are to enable all of that to happen, through God's church living out his love in the world.

It's a wonderful vision and your part is absolutely crucial.

## At the heart of what it's all about is LOVE!

I may have all sorts of amazing gifts, "but if I have no love, I am nothing" (1 Corinthians 13:2) It is no use discovering your gifts on this course, if you do not have a loving and growing relationship with God and with other people. So if you can, do spend a bit of extra time in prayer and listening to God during this course.

## Some things to think and pray about this:-

- Do I believe God loves and values me enough to give me his gifts and use me in his service?
- Do I seek to "love God with all my heart, soul and mind"? Ask God to fill you more and more with his gift of love.
- Am I willing to keep trying to "love my neighbour as myself"?

## Personal Reflection

Next time we meet, we will be looking at the first of the five aspects of our SHAPE (Spiritual gifts, Heart's desire, Abilities, Personality and Experience), but we'll take them in reverse order, starting with the "E": Experience.

**In order to prepare for our next meeting, please use the paper headed *Personal Reflections on your Experience* and think about the questions on it.**