

Leading Small Groups With Purpose, Lesson #5
Book by Steve Gladen; This Study Guide by Josh Hunt
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Chapters 9 - 10 Ministry

OPEN

Let's each share your name and, have your group ever done a service project? Who has a story?

DIG

- 1. Ephesians 4.11 – 13. Two questions. One, what is the role of church leadership? Two, whose job is it to do ministry?**

According to Ephesians 4:11 – 12, God has uniquely equipped some of these priestly servants to train others how to serve (emphasis added): “It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.”

Instead of the Old Testament temple system, we have congregations full of priests, with a few teachers, leaders, and pastors among the priesthood who are called to equip those priests for ministry. In most modern church settings, the “equipping servants” would be paid pastors and staff members. Those equipped to carry out the good works of ministry would be the “volunteers.” — Hybels, B. (2009). *The Volunteer Revolution: Unleashing The Power Of Everybody*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

- 2. What does this mean for our small groups, practically speaking?**

According to Ephesians 4:12, it is the job of those in the pastor/teacher role to equip the saints to minister to one another. Which is also to say, it is not only the responsibility of church members to put themselves in a place to be cared for, but also for them to position themselves to care for others. It is amazing to me that there are those who become concerned when they do not get the attention they feel they need, but then have no concern about the unmet needs of their fellow tribesmen.

Whenever there is a death, sickness, or another kind of crisis in a Lake Pointe member's life, we can tell immediately if that person has a meaningful connection to a Life Group. When I or another staff member show up, if that person is an active Life Group member, we find there is very little—if anything—that needs to be added to the ministry already taking place. The love expressed by the Life Group is both more meaningful and helpful because of the knowledge that comes from everyone involved having done life together deeply. If that person has not connected to a Life Group, we find most times that the ministry from our staff is the entire ministry they receive. — Stroope, S., Bruner, K., & Warren, R. (2012). *Tribal Church: Lead Small. Impact Big*. Nashville: B&H.

3. **Anyone have an Old King James? How does it translate this verse differently than other translations?**

One of the most famous biblical mistranslations in history is the “wicked Bible,” an edition of the King James Version issued in London in 1631. The word not was accidentally left out of the seventh commandment, so that Exodus 20:14 read “Thou shalt commit adultery.” William Laud, the Archbishop of Canterbury, ordered the printers to pay a fine of three hundred pounds.

As serious as this omission was, it is doubtful that it created long-lasting damage. God’s position on adultery is well-known, and few readers would have been misled by the typographical error. However, there is another translation mistake which has misled millions of readers over the centuries. The error is found in the King James Version of Ephesians 4:11, 12. This is one of the most important texts for mission strategy in all the Bible. Misunderstanding here is—and has been—disastrous.

The Misplaced Comma

In the KJV the verses read: “And [Christ] gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”

By this translation those who lead the church have three responsibilities:

1. the “perfecting” or maturing of the saints,
2. the “work of the ministry,” and
3. the “edifying” or growing of the church.

Is this not how most ministers are evaluated by their people? Does the pastor “feed” the people, do the ministry, and grow the church? If so, then the pastor is successful.

However, the first comma of verse 12 in the KJV was inserted by the translators and did not exist in the Greek original. With it, church leaders both mature the saints and do the work of the ministry so the church will grow. Without it, church leaders mature the saints so that they will do the work of the ministry. The difference is enormous.

This is how the New International Version renders these crucial verses: “It was [Christ] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.”

By this theology the work of missions is done by the entire church body, not just its leaders. Missions is not reserved for missionaries. We are all called to the task. This is the only method which can work. — Terry, J. M., Smith, E. C., & Anderson, J. (1998). *Missiology: an introduction to the foundations, history, and strategies of world missions* (p. 647). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

4. Ephesians 4.12. How does your translation have the word “equipping”?

to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up Ephesians 4:12 (NIV)

to train Christians in skilled servant work, working within Christ's body, the church, Ephesians 4:12 (MSG)

Why is it that he gives us these special abilities to do certain things best? It is that God's people will be equipped to do better work for him, building up the Church, the body of Christ, to a position of strength and maturity; Ephesians 4:12 (TLB)

to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, Ephesians 4:12 (ESV)

for the training of the saints in the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ, Ephesians 4:12 (HCSB)

For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Ephesians 4:12 (KJV)

His intention was the perfecting and the full equipping of the saints (His consecrated people), [that they should do] the work of ministering toward building up Christ's body (the church), Ephesians 4:12 (AMP)

so that his people would learn to serve and his body would grow strong. Ephesians 4:12 (CEV)

5. What do we learn about the pastors' job from this?

He grants gifts so we can “prepare God's holy people.” Paul reached into a medical dictionary for this term. Doctors used it to describe the setting of a broken bone. Broken people come to churches. Not with broken bones, but broken hearts, homes, dreams, and lives. They limp in on fractured faith, and if the church operates as the church, they find healing. Pastor-teachers touch and teach. Gospel bearers share good news. Prophets speak words of truth. Visionaries dream of greater impact. Some administer. Some pray. Some lead. Some follow. But all help to heal brokenness: “to make the body of Christ stronger.”

My favorite example of this truth involves an elder in our church, Randy Boggs. He loves the congregation so much he smells like the sheep he tends. Between running a business and raising a family, he encourages the sick and calls on the confused. Few men have kinder hearts. And yet, few men have had their hearts put on ice as his was the night his father was murdered and his stepmother was arrested for his death. She was eventually acquitted, but the deed left Randy with no dad, no inheritance, and no answers.

How do you recover from that? Randy will tell you: through the church. Friends prayed for him, wept with him, stood by him. Finally, after months of wrestling with anger and sorrow, he resolved to move on. The decision came in a moment of worship. God sutured Randy's heart with the lyrics of a hymn. Randy calls it a miracle. That makes two of us.

God heals his family through his family. In the church we use our gifts to love each other, honor one another, keep an eye on troublemakers, and carry each other's burdens. Do you need encouragement, prayers, or a hospitable home? God entrusts the church to purvey these treasures. Consider the church God's treatment center for the common life.

Don't miss it. No one is strong all the time. Don't miss the place to find your place and heal your hurts.

Discover what Gary Klahr and Steve Barbin did: friends and family in the same faces. By the way, the caseworker eventually identified that these two brothers had eleven other siblings. A workout partner was Gary's brother, and a former girlfriend was his sister. (That's a scary thought.)

Oh, the immensity, beauty, and surprises of family life.

In God's church, may you find them all. — Lucado, M. (2005). *Cure for the common life: living in your sweet spot* (pp. 81–82). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

6. This verse speaks of spiritual gifts. How do we go about discovering how God has gifted us?

Every so often we find ourselves riding the flow of life. Not resisting or thrashing it, but just riding it. A stronger current lifts, channels, and carries, daring us to declare, "I was made to do this."

Do you know the flow? Sure you do.

Go back into your youth. What activity lured you off the gray sidewalk of sameness into an amusement park of sights, sounds, and colors? Oh, the fireworks. Every nerve ending buzzed; every brain cell sizzled; all five senses kicked in.

What were you doing? Assembling a model airplane in the garage? Helping your aunt plant seeds in the garden? Organizing games for your playground buddies? To this day you can remember the details of those days: the smell of cement glue, the feel of moist dirt, the squeals of excited kids. Magical. The only bad moment was the final moment.

Fast-forward a few years. Let childhood become adolescence, elementary school become middle school, then high school. Reflect on favorite memories: those full-flight moments of unclocked time and unlocked energy. All cylinders clicking. Again, what were you doing? What entranced you? Energized you? Engaged you?

If age and patience allow, indulge in one more pondering. Analyze your best days as a young adult. No upstream flailing. No battling against the current. During the times you rode the tide, what activities carried you? What objects did you hold? What topics did you consider?

Do you note common themes? To be sure, the scenery changes, and characters drop out. The details may alter, but your bent, your passion, what you yearn to do, you keep doing. The current of life's river keeps dropping you at a particular bank.

Always

fixing things,
challenging systems,
organizing facts,
championing the small,
networking behind the scenes, or
seeking center stage.

Always doing the same thing.

And why not? It comes easily to you. Not without struggle, but with less struggle than your peers. You wondered why others found hitting a baseball or diagraming a sentence so difficult. Anyone can assemble a television from a do-it-yourself kit, right? — Lucado, M. (2005). *Cure for the common life: living in your sweet spot* (pp. 21–22). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

7. Think back on your life as a child. What inclinations did you have then that have come to full bloom as an adult?

[continued from quote above] Wrong. But David could. At the age of twelve, he did. He began the project with his dad. And when the navy called his father out to sea, David stayed at it. He spent after-school hours tracing diagrams, installing tubes, and soldering wires. By the time his father returned, the family had a new television. To this day, a quarter of a century later, David's eyes still dance when he describes the moment the first image appeared on the screen. No surprise that he earned a degree in civil engineering. David loves to put stuff together.

He still does. Just ask the one hundred or so kids who attend Carver Academy, a state-of-the-art inner-city school in San Antonio. David Robinson built it. Yes, he played MVP-level basketball, but he also builds things. If the past is a teacher, he always will.

"The child is father of the man," wrote William Wordsworth. Want direction for the future? Then read your life backward. — Lucado, M. (2005). *Cure for the common life: living in your sweet spot* (pp. 22–23). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

8. What do we learn about ourselves from Ephesians 2.10?

Scripture calls the church a poem. "We are His workmanship" (Eph. 2:10). Workmanship descends from the Greek word *poeo* or poetry. We are God's poetry! What Longfellow did with pen and paper, our Maker does with us. We express his creative best.

You aren't God's poetry. I'm not God's poetry. We are God's poetry. Poetry demands variety. "God works through different men in different ways, but it is the same God who achieves his purposes through them all" (1 Cor. 12:6 PHILLIPS). God uses all types to type his message. Logical thinkers. Emotional worshipers. Dynamic leaders. Docile followers. The visionaries who lead, the studious who

ponder, the generous who pay the bills. . . . Alone, we are meaningless symbols on a page. But collectively, we inspire. — Cure for the Common Life / Lucado, M. (2006). *Grace for the moment*® volume ii: more inspirational thoughts for each day of the year. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

9. Can we live out this potential all by ourselves?

All the billions of Christ followers over the last two thousand years have this in common: “A spiritual gift is given to each of us” (1 Cor. 12:7 NLT). God’s body has no nobodies. No exceptions. No exclusions. Our gifts make an eternal difference only in concert with the church. Apart from the body of Christ, we are like clipped fingernails, shaved whiskers, and cut hair. Who needs them? No one! They make no contribution. The same applies to our gifts. “Each of us finds our meaning and function as a part of his body” (Rom. 12:5 MSG).

And Christ gave gifts to people—he made some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to go and tell the Good News, and some to have the work of caring for and teaching God’s people. Christ gave those gifts to prepare God’s holy people for the work of serving, to make the body of Christ stronger. (Eph. 4:11–12 NCV)

He grants gifts so we can “prepare God’s holy people.” Paul reached into a medical dictionary for this term. Doctors used it to describe the setting of a broken bone. Broken people come to churches. Not with broken bones, but broken hearts, homes, dreams, and lives. They limp in on fractured faith, and if the church operates as the church, they find healing. Pastor-teachers touch and teach. Gospel bearers share good news. Prophets speak words of truth. Visionaries dream of greater impact. Some administer. Some pray. Some lead. Some follow. But all help to heal brokenness: “to make the body of Christ stronger.”

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10. Steve uses the acrostic S.H.A.P.E. to describe all the ways that God has gifted us. Spiritual gifts are important, but they're not the only thing. Natural talent and spiritual gifts come from God and are to be used for God. S stands for Spiritual gift. We have talked about that. What does the H stand for and why does that matter?

Kay Warren was living the dream. She had three great kids, two wonderful grandkids, and a comfortable home in Southern California's upscale Orange County. The daughter of a pastor, she and her husband, Rick, had cofounded one of the largest congregations in the United States. He had written a million-copy bestselling book. She was a Bible teacher, a popular speaker, and coauthor of a curriculum that teaches the essential truths of the Christian faith. She was, in her own words, the stereotypical "white, suburban soccer mom."

That all came crashing down in 2002.

Thumbing through a magazine at home, she turned a page and froze in horror at photos of African people ravaged by AIDS — children and adults with skeletal bodies whose eyes were covered in flies because they were too weak to brush them away. A box on the page said: "12 million children orphaned in Africa due to AIDS." "That was a shocking statistic to me because I didn't know a single orphan, and I couldn't believe there were twelve million orphans anywhere due to anything," Kay said.

When a month had passed and the images still haunted her, Kay realized she had come to a crossroads. She could either return to her comfortable life or hear the cries of the suffering and let her heart be engaged.

"I made a conscious decision to open my heart to the pain," she said. "When I did, God broke my heart. He shattered it in a million pieces, and I cried for days."

She cried in shame because the AIDS pandemic had been building for two decades and she'd done nothing. She also cried because God allowed her to feel the suffering those with AIDS felt. "I had no agenda. I wasn't thinking about anyone else's response but my own," she says. "I knew I couldn't stand before God when he called me home and look him in the face and tell him, 'Yes, I knew about the suffering of millions of people, but I did nothing about it.'"

She knew that obeying God would be hard. Other people — out of ignorance and fear — would reject her passion. She was afraid of contracting the disease or being seen as weak on moral issues. But she told her Lord: "If you ask my life, if that is what you ask to bring awareness, then I'll give it. That is what it will require ... a willingness to give at any cost."

Kay began reading about AIDS and talking with experts. She attended conferences on HIV and AIDS. She was mesmerized by the testimony of Bruce and Darlene Marie Wilkinson, who had moved to South Africa to serve the poor. She traveled to Africa to witness the devastation firsthand. She met Flora, a woman who was dying in the same home that her unfaithful husband, his mistress, and the mistress's baby also were dying — all of AIDS. She held Flora's three-year-old daughter. "God, where is the mommy who gets to sing to her at night?" she cried. "Where is the daddy who gets to throw her into the air?"

God broke Kay's heart, and now it throbs with passion for forty million people around the world who are afflicted with HIV/AIDS. She and Rick created Acts of Mercy, a foundation that "cares for hurting people the way Jesus did." She travels the world, taking advantage of every opportunity, challenging Christians to bring relief in Jesus' name to those in pain, sorrow, poverty, and illness.

"Today, I'm a woman seriously disturbed about the HIV/AIDS pandemic sweeping our world," she says. "God has changed my heart and revolutionized my dreams."

The Bible says, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving" (Colossians 3:23 – 24). God wants your heart to beat only for him. The ultimate contribution God has for you to make aligns with the passions he has given you for his kingdom. Identifying your passions reveals another aspect of the masterpiece God is creating in your life. — Rees, E. (2006). *S.H.A.P.E.: Finding And Fulfilling Your Unique Purpose For Life*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

11. I love this question: what would you do for God if you knew you couldn't fail? If you had all the time, all the resources, all the ability, all the connections, what would you want to do with your one and only life? What heartbreaking problem would you want to tackle?

Keeping the Moses account in mind, I want to come at the dynamic I've been describing from an entirely different angle in hopes of anchoring a couple of key ideas in your brain.

I'm part of a generation that grew up watching a short, balding, mischievous cartoon character on television. His name was Popeye—Popeye the Sailor Man, to be precise, and if you're ten years on either side of me, you're probably humming the tune right now. Kids crowded onto family room couches every Saturday morning with rapt attention as the sailor with a corncob pipe and one good eye engaged in his next exciting adventure.

Popeye had a special girl in his life named Olive Oyl. She was a real traffic-stopper, as I recall. Flat chest, pickle-shaped nose, spaghetti-thin arms—quite the looker! Whenever someone cramped the style of his special "goil" as he called her, Popeye typically took it all in stride. He had a long fuse, and on most occasions, he was the epitome of calm, cool, and collected. But if things took on a menacing tone—if it looked like something really terrible might befall his beloved Olive Oyl, then Popeye the Sailor Man's pulse would race, his blood pressure would skyrocket, and his anger would begin to boil. He'd take it as long as he could, but once his long fuse burned up, Popeye would blurt out the words that an entire generation had branded into their psyche: "That's all I can stand, and I can't stand no more!" (Dubious grammar, I know ... what else would you expect from a sailor?)

The now-enraged Popeye would rip open a can of spinach and swallow the green lump in one giant gulp. Immediately, a stream of supernatural strength flowed into his body—mostly into his forearms. They'd instantly bulk up to quadruple their normal size, giving Popeye the strength to be an unstoppable force for good in the world. He'd crush the opposition in no time and save his precious Olive Oyl from all sorts of distress. Then, once life had returned to its steady state, he'd sing himself off the screen, "I'm strong to the finish, 'cause I eats me spinach ... I'm Popeye the Sailor Man!"

What a show!

As you'd imagine, people started eating a lot of spinach after that cartoon came out. But I think Popeye left behind a much more significant legacy than that, and it has to do with his key line, "That's all I can stands, and I can't stands no more!"

Friends, this is an extremely important line to think about!

What happens when we reach the point where we can't "stands no more"? Well, for our Old Testament friend Moses, he could no longer tolerate his fellow Hebrews being oppressed and beaten. He just couldn't stand it! It was his "Popeye moment," if you will—the final ounce of frustration that flung Moses right over the edge. Because God couldn't stand the Israelites' mistreatment either, he used what I call a "firestorm of frustration" that was brewing in Moses' soul to launch this unlikely leader into a prominent role that resulted in the nation of Israel eventually inhabiting the Promised Land.

Certainly, Moses is not the only person in history who was motivated by a Popeye moment to make a difference in the world. In recent days, I've asked loads of people I know to reflect on how they got involved in the things that now consume their time, their money, and their energy. What were the experiences that compelled them to pursue the passions they are now pursuing? Those interactions, along with some personal study and reflection, led me to craft a theory in my mind about this subject.

Here is what emerged: I believe the motivating reason why millions of people choose to do good in the world around them is because there is something wrong in that world. In fact, there is something so wrong that they just can't stand it. Like Popeye, they too experience a firestorm-of-frustration moment when they grow so completely incensed by the present state of affairs that they throw their hands up in the air and shout, "That's all I can stands, and I can't stands no more!" As a result, they devote their vocational lives, their volunteer energies, and their hard-earned money to making sure it gets fixed. — Hybels, B. (2008). *Holy Discontent: Fueling The Fire That Ignites Personal Vision*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

12. Why is it important that we follow our heart?

Consider the younger days of Billy Frank, the elder son of a dairy farmer. His dad roused him out of bed around two thirty each morning to perform chores. Younger brother Melvin relished the work, tagging along at his father's side, eager to take his turn long before he was able.

Not Billy Frank. He and Melvin had the same father, but not the same bent. The minute he finished his chores, Billy Frank dashed into the hayloft with a copy of Tarzan or Marco Polo. By the age of fourteen,

he had traced The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. Missionary stories, accounts of brave servants in faraway lands, fascinated the boy most of all.

Later, as a college student at Florida Bible Institute, he visited with every evangelist who gave him time. He served their tables, polished their shoes, caddied for them, carried their luggage, posed to have his picture taken with them, and wrote home to tell his mother how much he “longed to be like this one or that one.”

Billy Frank bore one more trademark: energy. His mother remembered, “There was never any quietness about Billy.... I was relieved when he started school.” He was hyperactive before the term existed. Always running, inquiring, questioning. “He never wears down,” his parents told the doctor. “It’s just the way he’s built,” the doctor assured.

Study Billy Frank’s mosaic: fascinated with books and words, intrigued by missionaries and faraway lands, blessed with boundless energy ... What happens with a boy like that?

And what happens when God’s Spirit convinces him of sin and salvation? Young Billy Frank decided to drop his middle name and go by his first. After all, an evangelist needs to be taken seriously. And people took Billy Frank Graham very seriously.

What if Graham had ignored his heart? What if his parents had forced him to stay on the farm? What if no one had noticed God’s pattern in his life?

What if you fail to notice yours? — Lucado, M. (2005). *Cure For The Common Life: Living In Your Sweet Spot* (pp. 25–26). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

13. Let’s review. We are working through the acrostic S.H.A.P.E. S stands for? H stands for? A stands for? What are some natural abilities that the people in this room possess? Look around the room. What talent could you affirm?

God gave you, not a knapsack, but a knack sack. These knacks accomplish results. Maybe you have a knack for managing multitudes of restaurant orders or envisioning solutions to personnel issues. Synonymous verbs mark your biography: “repairing,” “creating,” “overseeing.” Perhaps you decipher things—Sanskrit or football defenses. Maybe you organize things—data or butterflies. I found my youngest daughter reorganizing her closet, again. Is this my child? I wondered. She straightens her closet more often in one month than her father has straightened his in his life! Will she someday do the same in a classroom, medical clinic, or library?

Strengths—you employ them often with seemingly little effort. An interior decorator told me this about her work: “It’s not that hard. I walk into a room and begin to see what it needs.”

“Not all of us see it,” I told her. I can’t even decorate my bed. But she can redecorate a garbage dump. Bingo! Knowing her strength led her to her sweet spot. And people pay her to live there! “God has given each of us the ability to do certain things well” (Rom. 12:6 NLT).

What certain things come to you so easily that you genuinely wonder why others can't do them? Doesn't everyone know the periodic table of elements? Nooooo, they don't. But the fact that you do says much about your strength (not to mention your IQ!). It also says something about your topic. — Lucado, M. (2005). *Cure For The Common Life: Living In Your Sweet Spot* (pp. 35–36). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

14. I have heard people say that spiritual gifts are important but natural talents don't matter that much. What do you think?

They both come from God and are to be used for God's glory.

15. S stand for? H stands for? A stands for? P stands for? Imagine you are single and were describing your personality on a dating website. How would you describe your personality?

In an effort to explain the differences in human personalities, experts have created many different methods of categorizing personality traits. Authors Gary Smalley and John Trent, for example, use animal names such as Beaver, Otter, Retriever, and Lion to explain how these animals' traits reflect our own personalities. Popular speaker and author Florence Littauer uses the words popular, powerful, perfect, and peaceful to represent various personal styles.

Psychologists also have developed various tests to identify and categorize specific personality behaviors. Arthur F. Miller Jr. explains that these kinds of tests can be limiting and much too generalized: “[The] highness or the lowness of a score is not a measurement of an individual's worth or value. Each person functions in a unique way. Traits have been separated out from the vast complexity of human functioning as a convenience to us.”

Rick Warren uses four traditional temperament styles — sanguine, choleric, melancholy, and phlegmatic — to talk about personality:

The Bible gives us plenty of evidence for the fact that God uses all types of personalities. Peter was a sanguine. Paul was a choleric. Jeremiah was a melancholy. If you take a closer look at the personality differences in the twelve disciples, it's easy to see why they sometimes had interpersonal conflict.

There is no “right” or “wrong” temperament for ministry. We need all kinds of personalities to balance the church and give it flavor. The world would be a very boring place if we were all plain vanilla. Fortunately, people come in more than thirty-one flavors.

As you can see, there is more than one way to slice and dice the individual personality. The one constant is this indisputable truth: God has instilled a unique personality in each one of us for his glory. — Rees, E. (2006). *S.H.A.P.E.: Finding And Fulfilling Your Unique Purpose For Life*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

16. How do our personalities inform how God might lead us to minister?

“My personality style is not one that is going to make me very visible. Does that mean I'm less valuable?”

Shelly used to think that the people who are outgoing and competitive are the ones used most by God. When she compared herself to their football-player-like aggressiveness, she felt inadequate for God's purposes.

God, however, doesn't measure people the way most of us do. While the world places value on externals like prestige, position, and wealth, God places the highest value on less visible aspects of our lives.

Eventually Shelly realized that the personality God had given her reflected qualities custom-designed by her Creator so she could fulfill a unique and valuable Kingdom Purpose. For years she has worked as an editor for various authors, which has resulted in helping readers better understand the author's message. Although the way she uses her talents and gifts keeps her behind the scenes rather than on the cover, in God's eyes she has no less star power than the authors themselves.

Just as the Lord gave you unique spiritual gifts, passions, and abilities, the personality you have also is his gift to you. He created it and gave it to you to use for his glory. — Rees, E. (2006). *S.H.A.P.E.: Finding And Fulfilling Your Unique Purpose For Life*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

17. One last time. S stands for? H stands for? A stands for? P stands for? E stands for? How do our past experiences shape God's calling for our lives? Who has a story?

An automobile accident in May 1996 took the life of singer and songwriter Jana Alayra's four-year-old daughter, Linnie. It was an excruciating loss. "It's every parent's worst nightmare," Jana says. "There were so many tears. I remember reeling and feeling as though I would stumble at any moment. I was reaching out to grab hold of something to stop the downward spiral — and found the hand of our Savior. I threw myself at the foot of the cross and said, 'Lord, you'd better be who you say you are, or there's no point in this life. Linnie is yours — and so am I.'

"The grace and love of God rushed in, in more ways than I can begin to tell you. Sometimes that comfort came in the words of a friend. Sometimes it was in a Scripture someone pasted to a flower they left on my door. Sometimes it was on a tear-soaked page of my Bible. But I grabbed hold of Jesus. He is the Rock. He is unshakable. He is hope. He is eternal life.

"Now, nearly a decade later, it seems that on a weekly and sometimes daily basis I hear about tragic losses like the kind I experienced. Someone will write or call and ask if there is a word I could share — a CD, a song, anything — with a friend who just lost a child. What a joy to be able to be that word of truth to afflicted moms and dads of all kinds who've said unexpected goodbyes to a child. What an honor to be a conduit of his love — to be his arms of love for hurting parents."

Jana Alayra is a wife, a mother of three young daughters, and a friend. She also is a musical artist who leads worship — in a small group with her guitar, singing for a thousand children and their families. In the mix of these things, Jana is expressing her unique Kingdom Purpose. Her enthusiasm and love for Christ are evident, sincere, and inspiring. You can see it in her character. — Rees, E. (2006). *S.H.A.P.E.: Finding And Fulfilling Your Unique Purpose For Life*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

18. Imagine a friend said to you, “I’m just a mom, I don’t have time for ministry. Besides, what can I do?” How would you respond? What would you tell her?

My wife stared at me from across our kitchen island. I knew she expected me to say something in reply to what she had just unloaded. I prayed for the right words.

“I’m just a mom,” she’d said. “I really don’t have much to offer at this season of my life, Erik. All I do is clean, cook, and shuttle kids from one activity to another. It is a twenty-four-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week assignment. There’s little time to rest and less time to think about fulfilling my special purpose from God.”

It was the end of a busy day — and she was nearing the end of her rope. By now I knew she didn’t need a strategic plan from me; what she needed and wanted was a sensitive ear and heart.

We took a piece of paper and wrote down ten things she loved to do: coach, inspire, run, counsel, encourage, listen, help, read, provide, and organize.

Then we looked at her current commitments, to see where these awesome abilities could be put to use for God at this time in her life. Every morning at 5:30 she exercised with a group of women — a perfect opportunity to coach, inspire, and encourage others. Then there were the women in our small group at church. They needed her gifts too. Her ability to organize and help could be used to orchestrate the annual pastors’ wives retreat and quarterly gatherings.

By evening’s end, she’d begun to see that God could use her natural abilities during any and every season of her life. All she needed was to be available and aware. It didn’t matter whether what she did was noticed by others. That is never the point of serving God. Willing hearts are his delight.

The point isn’t whether what she’s doing right now is her ultimate Kingdom Purpose, which it very well could be. The truth is, motherhood is a big deal. — Rees, E. (2006). *S.H.A.P.E.: Finding And Fulfilling Your Unique Purpose For Life*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

19. What you want recall from today’s conversation?

20. How can we support one another in prayer?