

SERIES: MAKE A DIFFERENCE
PART 4: UTILIZE YOUR ABILITIES

Welcome back home, family. If you are a guest today we welcome you to our family and trust you will sense that we are so pleased that you are with us today. We see you as part of our family. This is our fourth week in this life-changing series entitled MAKE A DIFFERENCE: SHAPED FOR SERVICE.

God has never made a copy of anything. He only makes originals. You are unique. There is no one else in the world like you. There never has been, and there never will be. Why? Because originals are always worth more than copies. If you have missed any of these teachings you can go on our website and watch them for free. God says in His Word, “Before you were born, I planned you. I have a purpose and a plan for your life, and I have uniquely shaped you for a specific purpose.” In Job 10:9 the Bible says, **“God’s hands shaped me and made me.”** In Jeremiah 29:11 God says this to you personally, **“‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ says the Lord. ‘They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.’”** Regardless of what you’re experiencing now in your life, God says He has good plans concerning you. You have a bright future and an exciting hope when you put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

Here at CVCHURCH we use the acrostic **S.H.A.P.E.** to represent the five elements of your life that make you you. Your **Spiritual gifts, Heart, Abilities, Personality,**

Experiences. Today we're going to look at "A," which stands for the abilities you have been given. I want to give you an overview of what the Bible says about your God-given abilities and why and how He wants you to use them for His Kingdom purposes and plans. I want to thank all of you that went to our different tables at our Ministry Fair last week. Your response was wonderful. More of you signed up to express your God-given shape in serving Jesus and others by getting involved in the different ministries that we have offered and that we have online to get started.

I. Understanding your abilities

Here are two very important scriptures that are important for you to know about your abilities that God has given to you. Romans 12:6-11 says, **"God has given each of us the ability to do certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. ⁷If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. ⁸If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly. ⁹Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. ¹⁰Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other. ¹¹Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically. ¹²Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble, and keep on praying. ¹³When God's people are**

in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality.” God has given to every one of us abilities to serve Him. If you say you don’t have any abilities, you are wrong, loved friend. Research shows that you have at least 500 different abilities in your body, and most of them you don’t even know you have. Most of these abilities come naturally, and you don’t even know that you have them. None of us learn the same way. We don’t see things the same way. We take these standardized tests like the SAT or ACT or PSAT. Those things only judge one form of intelligence. A developmental psychologist Howard Gardener has described nine types of intelligence: **Naturalist (nature smart), Musical (sound smart), Logical-mathematical (number\reasoning smart), Existential (life smart), Interpersonal (people smart), Bodily-kinesthetic (body smart), Linguistic (word smart), Intra-personal (self smart), Spatial (picture smart).** I wanted you to see this because every one of us here has different forms of intelligence, and God wants you to use it for His purposes and plans for your life, the life of this church and in your community and culture. Whatever your ethnic group, whether you’re male or female, young, middle-aged or elderly, whatever your socio-economic status, God has given you gifts and abilities to serve Him and others with them. Hebrews 13:21 says, **“May God equip you with all you need for doing His will. May He produce in you, through the power of Jesus Christ, every good thing that is pleasing to Him. All glory to Him forever and ever! Amen.”** It is so important that we don’t compare ourselves with each other either to think we’re worse than others, or we put others down

so we can think we're better than we really are. The truth is we desperately need each other. Let's look at least 5 ways our abilities are to be used.

My abilities are to be used:

A. To honor God

First, your abilities are to be used whether they are musical or mechanical, theatrical or tree trimming, greeters or gardening, parking or packing. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 10:31, **“Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”** That means any of the abilities that I quoted from the Bible, or just mentioned, or any of the hundreds of gifts that you have, whether they're cooking or caretaking for those who need help—these are all meant to be used to bring honor, glory and praise to God. Carpentry is as important as teaching, and masonry is as important as preaching. Managing is as important as music. Learning is as important as leading. That means you bring glory to God by repairing cars, and you honor God by balancing the books. Loved ones, how might your career change if you begin to understanding and relate to people and do your work because you want to bring glory to God? How might the ministry here at CVCHURCH move forward as you engage the multiplicity of skills and abilities that you have to empower the existing ministries that we have, and you use your skills to start new need-ministering ministries that we don't have yet? We're getting ready to start Trail Life, and we're talking with a team about starting a Tutoring ministry for students in this area that can use that

encouragement. What is God laying on your heart concerning a need-meeting ministry that you intandem with a team can start? Everything we do is to bring honor, glory and praise to our God.

B. To serve others

Loved friends, every skill and ability you have is for the benefit of other people. God says they're not just for your benefit. 1 Peter 4:10 says, "God has given each of you some special abilities. Be sure to use them to make a ton of money for yourself." That's the Reviled Substandard Perversion translation. No the NLT says, "**God has given each of you a gift from His great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another.**" What this means is that there is no one here that is good at everything. And if you are, you will only block the way for others to get involved. We do not favor those who are superstars. We would all get blinded in their light. Jesus is the light, and we are all lights under Him. We need each other. The person who says they don't need anyone else doesn't realize just how needy they really are. We did our 40 Days of Community campaign, and our motto was, WE'RE BETTER TOGETHER. I need you in my life. You need me in your life. We need each other. One of the keys to being successful in life is to team up with other people who are good at what you're not good at. This is one of the purposes of marriage. In a marriage we're put together to complement each other's strengths and to compensate for each other's weaknesses. The problem is in many marriages is they criticize each other's weaknesses. Loved ones, this is not what

marriage is for. In marriage you compliment each other. Our goal is to have each one of you serve in your God-given SHAPE. We find people who are good at certain things and say, “Go for it,” as long as your heart is in the right place. In other words you have a passion to honor God and to serve others and not to serve yourself instead of serving others.

C. To make a living

God says, “I gave you your abilities in order to make a living so you can provide for yourselves and you do not have to live off of others. God says, “I want you to be self-supporting. I don’t want you to be a parasite and live off of others.” God says, “If you can work you should work. Some people can’t because of disabilities, problems or certain circumstances. But if you can work, God expects you to work. What is important to realize is that in the 21st century, since we’re all going to most likely live longer than our parents, the average person could have at least anywhere from 2-6 different careers. Deuteronomy 8:18 says, **“Remember the Lord your God. He is the one who gives you power to be successful (to produce wealth) in order to fulfill the covenant He confirmed to your ancestors with an oath.”** Can you make money for the glory of God? Of course you can—if you’re grateful for what you have and you remain humble, and you give Him the credit for what you have, if you’re living ethically for Him, and if you are generous and you give to those in need, you give to those ministries that are fulfilling His purpose for them. You bring glory to God if this is your home church and you tithe and give your offerings to all of the

different things we do here. One of my greatest joys has been the fact that my father taught me to tithe and give, and I have been doing that for 53 years. I started tithing at age 11. I know that God has blessed my family and our CV family because my family tithes, our staff tithes and many of you tithe. It all begins by honoring God, serving others and using the abilities and talents He has given us to provide for ourselves so we can give to others.

D. To be an example to others

God says, “I want you to be a witness, a testimony and an example by how you bring honor to Me by serving others, and how you work so you can provide for yourself and your family needs, and also to be able to offer hospitality to others. 1 Timothy 4:15, Paul writes to his son in the faith and partner in ministry, **“Give your complete attention to these matters. Throw yourself into your tasks so that everyone will see your progress.”** Did you know that God wants people to notice your good work? He says, “I want people to see how gifted you are and how humble you are in how you go about your work for God’s glory.” God says, “I want them to see your progress, how you’re developing the skills, the abilities and the talents I gave you.” He says, “That makes Me look good as your heavenly Father. I want people to know that My children, the people in God’s family, are the best workers on the planet. They’re reliable. They’re hard working. They have integrity. They’re dependable. They’re skilled. I want you to be an example.”

E. To build up His church

What is the church? It is God's family. It is His people. If you believe this is where you are to be, you are then to use your gifts, abilities and talents to help your CVCHURCH family to grow in our purpose and mission. One of our leading statements, and I teach this to everyone who comes to our membership seminar LD 101, **A GREAT COMMITMENT TO THE GREAT COMMANDMENT AND THE GREAT COMMISSION WILL GROW A GREAT CHURCH.** It all begins with every one of us willing to commit our lives to Jesus and then to His purpose, plan and mission for our own individual lives and for the plans He has for CVCHURCH to make a difference in our community and culture because **WE'RE SHAPED FOR SERVICE.** There is no talent that you have that cannot be put to use in this church. In fact, God places each person specifically in each church the talent that He knows that group of people is going to need. Have you ever thought about why am I here? Why? Because you can benefit from what we have to give to you as a local church family, and you have something to offer that this church family—your church family—needs. None else can offer what you have to give like you can. He knows exactly who's here because He knows exactly what He wants to do through all of us here at this particular church. One of my greatest frustrations is seeing so much incredible talent just sitting on the sideline. I know every week there are people with talents, abilities and skills that our leadership team doesn't know about, and we won't know unless you step forward to volunteer. This is why I am so proud of how many of you

came to our Ministry Fair. I like “the team ministry expo.” We will have another ministry expo next week on October the 7th. We will have another 8 different ministries that were not on display during our last expo.

A leading principle in using our talents, skills and abilities for Jesus through His church, and it's a universal truth, is that you can lose it if you don't use it. The Bible says I miss out on rewards that God has for me in eternity if I don't use His gifts and abilities He has given to me for His church, but I also can lose the gift, or even better yet, not discover it. This is true in every area of life. If you don't use specific muscles in exercise your muscle atrophies. If you don't use your talent in practice and keep it up, you can lose it or it will diminish greatly. If you don't use your mind and keep it active your mental abilities can become dull and you can lose capacity. Some people simply say that is to be expected as you get older, but it doesn't have to. In the story of employer and his employees known as the parable of the talent, the employer says this in Matthew 25:28 (NIV), **“Take the talent from him (who didn't invest it) and give it to the one who has ten talents.”** Jesus has the right to diminish and to increase our talents and abilities based on our willingness to honor Him with them. Serve others with our abilities, to provide for ourselves and others, and to be an example to others and to be willing to build up His church.

Let's look at the way God wants us to use our abilities for Him through our church family and in our culture and community.

II. Using your abilities the way God wants you to use them

A. You estimate your abilities

Romans 12:3 in the Philips translation says, **“Try to have a sane estimate of your capabilities by the light of the faith God has given to you.”** To estimate your abilities means to do an assessment of your life. What am I good at? Do an audit of your abilities. Make a list. If there’s one thing I could say to young people here today if you want to prepare for your future it is, know your strengths. You know your weaknesses. You must know your strengths and build on them. Google “Strength Finder.” Estimate your capabilities by the light of faith God has given you. Parents, this is one of the key goals of parenting. Help your kids understand their SHAPE and what they are good at. There’s a myth that you’re aware of all your abilities. You’re not. You are only aware of some of your abilities. You have far more abilities that you think you have. If you’re a good manager the trait of a good manager is the ability to recognize ability. If you’re a parent look for the abilities of your kids and point them out. CVCHURCH, let’s start being more vocal with each other about the strengths we see in each other. Cut down the criticism and judgmentalism and amp up the affirmation about what we see as strengths in each other.

B. Dedicate your abilities to God

This is where you commit them to God for the use He intended. Romans 12:1 in the GN translation says, **“Offer**

yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to His service and pleasing to Him.” This is where you say, “Jesus Christ, You gave me abilities. Now I am actively giving them back to You. I want to use them for the five reasons you gave them to me. 2 Timothy 2:21 says, **“If you keep yourself pure, you will be a special utensil for honorable use. Your life will be clean, and you will be ready for the Master to use you for every good work.”** God-given abilities can be used for the wrong purpose. A God-given ability can be used for the wrong reason. You can be a brilliant organizer, and you can either organize a rescue or organize a robbery. There are all these brilliant criminals—they’re using God-given abilities. Sharpening your skill is important, and you want to make sure that you use them for the right reasons and not for selfish reasons. A leading example in the Bible of a wasted life was Samson. He was one of the strongest and most gifted person in the Bible, and he wasted his life and his abilities, and one of the driving factors was a sexual desire that he let get out of control, and it dominated him.

C. Cultivate your abilities

This means to practice, improve, sharpen, develop, and cultivate your gifts, skills and abilities. Any ability that God has given you can be increased with use and practice. The Bible says in Ecclesiastes 10:10, **“Using a dull ax requires great strength, so sharpen the blade. That’s the value of wisdom; it helps you succeed.”** To sharpen your ax means your increase and advance your abilities, your aptitudes, your skills. It is your spiritual responsibility. Just like many of you

have enhanced your skills so you can make more money. The Holy Spirit says to you that you are to focus on sharpening your abilities so that they bring greater honor and glory to God. You sharpen them so you can better serve others. You become an example, model and mentor for others. The Lord says to you that, “I want you cultivate your abilities so you can build up, strengthen and increase the influence and power of your own CVCHURCH family and other local churches and Christians.”

I want to speak frankly with you. God has made an enormous investment in you. First He created you. Second He shaped you and put spiritual gifts in you, gave you a passion for certain things in life that are wrong that need to be righted. He gave you abilities, a personality and many experiences, especially your painful ones. He sent Jesus to die for you. He has made a huge investment in your life, and one day you will stand before Him and He will ask you, “What did you do with what you were given? Did you use your abilities to honor Me, to serve others, to make a living to help others and to be an example? Did you use them to help other people? Did you use them to help the church? Did you use your skills to make money so you could be generous to those in need and to live a life of hospitality? What did you do with what you were given?” As we go to prayer, what did you see or hear or feel God communicate to you today? The day of receiving something from God and saying that is good and then do nothing about it is over, church. We want to be doers of the Word.

Let's pray. I want you to thank God right now. Thank God for the abilities He's given you. Say, "God I don't even know all the abilities I have, but I thank You for them. Help me to discover them today. And today I dedicate them back to You. I want to use what You've given me for Your purposes. I want to cultivate them. I want to get better at what I'm doing. I want to honor You by being the best I can be. I want to use my abilities to honor You, to serve others, to make, a living so I can bless others and to be an example. I want to use my abilities to have money to share with those who are poor and to help my church grow and reach out. I pray this in Your name, Jesus."