



Session 10

Know Yourself

Having explored the one who empowers us as Christians – the Holy Spirit - let's now turn to the other element in the equation – YOU!

God works through people. He never overrides our gifts, personality or unique character; instead, he works through them. So we must have a clear understanding of how he has made us. ***You must know yourself!***

Every individual Christian is unique and as such, they have a vital part to play in expressing the life of God through their unique personality, gifts and abilities. No one is better at being you than you! Once you understand this, you are well placed to connect with the specific things God has equipped you to do for him:

'For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do' (Ephesians 2:10).

In order to fulfil the *'good works which God prepared in advance for us to do'* we need to understand ourselves, our *'spiritual shape'*. Once we know ourselves, we are well placed to find the *'niche'* where we can serve God most fruitfully.

Where do I fit?

Our challenge is to understand ourselves so we can serve God to the best of our ability. That journey takes time. Along the way you will probably conclude that you actually share common abilities with other people, however you will express them uniquely. Each person is a product of their own journey in life, shaped to serve God in a fruitful and fulfilling way.

You must also bear in mind that from the moment you became a Christian a process started. The Bible calls it *sanctification*. This word describes the process of becoming more and more like Jesus, a process of continual growth and change. Along the way you discover that God uses everything about you to serve his people and greater purpose. This includes your experiences, the things you love, your natural and spiritual gifts, and your

personality. Understanding these is the key to understanding yourself and thus finding your best fit in the service of God – your NICHE. As God said to Moses, ‘What’s that in your hand?’ Because that is what God will use! (*Exodus 4:1-6*)

- What you **do** in ministry comes from what you **are**.
- Your personal ‘*shape*’ will therefore determine the ‘*niche*’ you serve in.

Your ministry will be most effective and fulfilling when you are using your

- **GIFTS** and
- **ABILITIES** in the area of your
- **HEART’S DESIRE**, in a way that best expresses your
- **PERSONALITY** and
- **EXPERIENCE**.

You need to ‘Know Yourself’ in these *five* areas. Together they will indicate where you can best serve at this time in your spiritual journey. Let’s explore them a little:

Tools to help you Identify YOUR NICHE

The rest of this session is aimed at helping you think through these five factors that make you who you are, and shape you for your ministry ‘niche’.

NICHE is an acronym for:

- N**atural abilities
- I**mparted gifts
- C**haracter and personality
- H**earth
- E**xperience

NICHE - Natural abilities

Here is a list of words that describe abilities you may possess.

Use this list to start you thinking and make a note of YOUR abilities and skills.

| | | | |
|--------------|-------------------|--------------|------------------|
| Entertaining | Recruiting | Interviewing | Composing |
| Researching | Artistic | Graphics | Landscaping |
| Evaluating | Planning | Managing | Decorating |
| Counselling | Teaching | Writing | Public relations |
| Editing | Promoting | Repairing | Welcoming |
| Feeding | Machine operating | Counting | Classifying |

NICHE - Imparted spiritual gifts

Spiritual gifts are special abilities given by the Holy Spirit to help every believer minister to others, both in the church and wider community. They equip and enable individual Christians and the corporate church to fulfil their vision and purpose.

(See: 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, 1 Peter 4:10-11, Ephesians 4:11-14)

Spiritual Gifts are abilities given to us by the Holy Spirit that help further God's purpose today and could be defined as follows:

Evangelism (Ephesians 4:11-13)

The ability to communicate the good news of the gospel to unbelievers in a positive, non-threatening way and to be able to encourage and equip other believers to do the same.

Teaching (Ephesians 4:11-13)

The ability to educate Christians by clearly explaining and applying the Bible in a way that causes them to learn. The ability to equip and train other believers for ministry.

Encouragement (Acts 14:22, Romans 12:7)

The ability to motivate God's people to apply and act upon biblical principles, especially when they are discouraged or wavering in their faith. The ability to bring out the best in others and challenge them to develop their potential.

Wisdom (1 Corinthians 12:8)

The ability to understand God's perspective on life situations and share those insights in a simple, understandable way. The ability to explain what to do and how to do it.

Discernment (1 Corinthians 12:10)

The ability to distinguish right from wrong, truth from error, and to give an immediate evaluation of a situation based on God's word. The ability to discern whether the source of an experience is evil, in the human self or the Holy Spirit.

Knowledge (1 Corinthians 12:8)

The ability to discover, collect, analyse and organise information that is vital to individual believers or the church family. The ability to hear specifically from God a word that is supernaturally relevant to the particular circumstances of a person or people, unknown to yourself.

Preaching (1 Peter 4:11)

The ability to publicly communicate God's word in an inspiring way that convinces unbelievers and speaks to believers. The ability to persuasively declare God's will.

Prophecy (1 Corinthians 12:6; Romans 12:10)

The ability to speak a specific word received from God and directed by the Holy Spirit to share with other people in order to challenge, strengthen, encourage or comfort them.

Prophetic tongue and interpretation of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:12-14)

The ability to speak a word from God in tongues and expect the tongue to be interpreted by someone else or yourself in order to challenge, strengthen, encourage or comfort God's people.

Service/Helps (Romans 12:7; 1 Corinthians 12:28)

The ability to recognise unmet needs and take initiative to provide practical assistance quickly, cheerfully and without need for recognition.

Mercy (Romans 12:8)

The ability to detect hurt and empathise with those who are suffering. The ability to provide compassionate and cheerful support to those experiencing distress, crisis or pain.

Pastoring/Shepherding (Ephesians 4:11)

The ability to care for the spiritual needs of a group of believers and equip them for growth in their Christian life.

Giving

(Romans 12:8)

The ability to give generously resources and/or money beyond the normal tithe and offering so that the church grows and is strengthened. The ability to earn and manage money so it may be given to support the ministry of others.

Healing (1 Corinthians 12:9)

The ability to pray in faith specifically for people who need physical, emotional or spiritual healing and see God answer.
The ability to sense when God is prompting you to pray this kind of prayer.

Miracles (1 Corinthians 12:10)

The ability to pray and see the suspension or acceleration of natural law take place.

Leadership (Romans 12:8)

The ability to clarify and communicate the purpose and direction of a ministry in a way that attracts others to get involved.
The ability to motivate others by example to work together in completing a ministry goal.

Administration (1 Corinthians 12:28)

The ability to organise and manage people, resources, and time for effective ministry. The ability to co-ordinate many details and execute the plans of leadership.

Faith (1 Corinthians 12:9)

The ability to trust God for what cannot be seen and act on God's promise, regardless of what the circumstances indicate.
The willingness to risk failure in pursuit of a God-given vision, expecting God to handle the obstacles.

NICHE - Identifying your Character and Personality

God has 'wired' our temperament in a unique way and this is another important element in matching you to the right ministry. God loves variety – look at the created world about you. There is no 'right' or 'wrong' personality type.

Character is developed and added to your personality type as two of the essential elements that make you, you.

There are many methods of personality assessment. Make a simple start by considering are you:

- Introvert OR Extrovert
- Self-controlled OR Self-expressive
- Do you like routine OR Do you like variety
- Do you like working in a team OR Working on your own

NICHE - Monitoring your heartbeat

The Bible uses the term 'heart' to represent the centre of your motivation, desires and inclinations. My 'heart' determines why:

- I **say** the things I do *Matthew 12:34*
- I **feel** the way I do *Hebrews 4:12*
- I **act** the way I do *Proverbs 4:23*

God has given each of us a unique emotional heartbeat that races when we encounter activities, subjects and circumstances that interest us. We instinctively feel deeply about some things and not others. Your 'heart' response determines what will bring you most satisfaction and fulfilment and also gives you motivation.

➤ **Think about your PAST accomplishments** – what did you really enjoy doing well?
These are pointers towards what you love doing the most.

➤ **Think about what CURRENTLY motivates you:** Do you love to...

- **Design/develop** – make something out of nothing.
- **Pioneer** – test and try out new concepts, not afraid to risk failure.
- **Organise** – bring order out of chaos, organise something already started but in a mess.
- **Operate/maintain** – efficiently maintain something already organised.
- **Serve/help** – assist other people in their responsibility, help others to succeed.
- **Acquire/possess** – to shop, collect, obtain things, getting good value for money.
- **Excel** – to be the best and make my team the best, setting and attaining high standards.
- **Influence** – to convert people to my way of thinking, shape the attitudes of others.
- **Perform** – be on a stage and receive attention of others.
- **Improve** – make things better, develop something already started.
- **Repair** – to fix what is broken and change what is out of date.
- **Lead/take charge** – to lead the way, oversee, supervise, enjoy determining how things will be done.
- **Persevere** – to see things to completion, persisting until something is finished.
- **Conform** – to operate by policy and procedure, enjoy meeting the expectation of an organisation or boss.
- **Prevail** – to fight for what is right and oppose wrong, overcome injustice.
- **Please** – to know that what I did brought great pleasure to someone else.

NICHE - Examining your Experiences

*'And we know that in **all** things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose' (Romans 8:28)*

*'Now I want you to know brothers that **what has happened to me** has really served to advance the gospel' (Philippians 1:12)*

You have been shaped by:

- Your **spiritual** experiences – meaningful decisions/times with God.
- Your **painful** experiences – problems, hurts and trials that have taught you.
- Your **educational** experiences – in school, college, training and employment.
- Your **ministry** experiences – how you have served God in the past.

Next steps...

Having thought about yourself in these 5 areas, now share them with a trusted Christian friend or leader. Begin to apply yourself to practical serving which best fits your personal profile and before long, you will have found your NICHE!