



# FRESH START

**You are beginning life's most satisfying adventure – your walk with God! As you start this adventure, here's what God says to you:**

*Count yourself lucky, how happy you must be —you get a fresh start, your slate's wiped clean. Psalm 32:11 (MSG)*

When you make a commitment of your life to Jesus, not only is your "slate wiped clean", you also get a "fresh start" – a new lease on life. This class is designed to help you have a good start to your fresh start. During these weeks together you'll discover and begin to unwrap ten gifts that God gives you:

- F**ORGIVENESS – Accepting God's Grace
- R**ELATIONSHIP – Worshipping
- E**NCOURAGEMENT – Handling Failure
- S**CRIPTURE – Understanding God's Word
- H**ELP – Following God's Guidance
  
- S**HAPE – Being You
- T**OGETHERNESS – Living in Community
- A**UTHORITY – Serving Others
- R**ECOGNITION – Being Baptized
- T**ESTIMONY – Telling Your Story

## **This session: SHAPE – Being You**

The moment we're born, we start a journey. And we ask ourselves this question, "Who am I?" We want value, meaning, significance. And then we ask ourselves a second question: "Do I matter to anyone?" Our search begins at birth and many times lasts for a lifetime. What we have to learn is that it's okay to be you. Let me put the caution in here—being you is being who God made you to be. It's not an excuse for sin, it's not an excuse for being insensitive, mean, uncaring. We can't justify actions or attitudes that are wrong by saying, "That's just who I am." That's rationalization, it's not being you.

I'm talking about enjoying your inner worth, finding healthy self-esteem by living the life God designed for you, and "gifted" you to live.

God has given **gifts to each of you** from His great variety of spiritual gifts. **Manage them well** so that God's generosity can **flow through you**. 1 Peter 4:10 (NLT)

Most individuals spend their entire lives searching for fulfillment of their inner need for significance and worth in three areas.

## Where are common places where we look for our value?

### 1. Style

That's appearance. And we say, "Surely style will give me value, meaning, and significance. I know I'll find my worth in style. What are some advertisements that say you can find your personal value in style?"

*Charm can be **deceptive** and beauty **doesn't last**.... Proverbs 31:30 (LB)*

That verse reminds me of two elderly golfers on the eighteenth tee when they saw an elderly woman streak by totally naked. One golfer said to the other golfer, "Did you see what that woman was wearing?" The other golfer said, "No I didn't, but whatever it was, it sure did need ironing."  
Some people have bad days because they have bad hair days; or because their outfit doesn't match; or because they've got a pimple.

*The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the **outward appearance**, but the LORD looks at the **heart**. 1 Samuel 16:7 (NIV)*

### 2. Status

Have you ever stopped to think what you're really doing when status becomes a driving force in your life, in the establishment of your self-esteem? There are two words in status, stat and us.  
When you're into stat-us you keep stats on us - you and me. You keep up with who's who, who's got what, where they live and what they drive. Status is finding self-esteem, self-worth, confidence in our belongings.

*Confidence placed in riches comes to nothing. Proverbs 11:7 (TEV)*

### 3. Success

Why, do we do what we do? To be successful. We ask ourselves, "Do I matter to anyone?" And we answer, "I will if I'm successful."

*The LORD says, "The wise should not boast of their **wisdom**, nor the strong of their **strength**, nor the rich of their **wealth**. If any want to boast, they should boast that they know and understand Me.... Jeremiah 9:23-24 (TEV)*

Wisdom, strength and wealth: the "Big Three" in America's value system. We compare, compete, and contrast in all three of these. Why? Because they are what we consider to be success.

Now, let's be clear...listen up. Some of you will leave here and say that I said that none of us should be concerned about our appearance. We should live our entire lives in burlap sacks; never shave or bathe and never use deodorant.

Number two, I said we should never have any goals and it's a sin to make more than \$10,000.00 a year.

Third, I also said we should never be successful. Anybody who's successful should feel bad and repent.

Not so. In God's Word, many of His people were very successful, stylish and had some level of status. But here's the key...listening?...those things were not their sources of personal worth and value. Those things aren't necessarily wrong, unless they are necessary in your life for you to have an understanding of your worth.

### How can I discover my real value?

*The Lord gives me honor; He is the source of my strength. Isaiah 49:5 (TEV)*

#### 1. **Realize I am a masterpiece.**

Let's say that together...I am a masterpiece.

VanGogh's Starry Night: <https://www.vangoghgallery.com/painting/starry-night.html>

Check out the painting on the screen. What is that? Right, VanGogh's, "Starry Night" – and it's a masterpiece. What if you actually owned that painting? What would you do with it? I don't think any of us would want to hide it, we'd want to put it on display where people could enjoy it.

God's Word says we are masterpieces. We're originals. Each of us is a one of a kind.

#### **We're much more than works of art, we're works of heart.**

Yet we tend to hide ourselves away instead of putting ourselves on display. Are you doing that with your originality? You shouldn't. Why? Because your originality is a gift from God.

When you die and stand before God, He's not going to say, "\_\_\_\_\_, why weren't you more like \_\_\_\_\_." (Billy Graham, Mother Teresa, the Church Pastor) What He might say is, "Why weren't you more like you?" If you're not you, who's going to be you. Stop trying to be somebody else. If you try to be somebody else, you're making a mockery out of God's creative genius. There's no one past, present, or future, who has ever had the exact thoughts going through your mind right now. There's no one who can relate to people exactly like you. There's no one who has your hairline, your build, your laugh, your sneeze – you are one of a kind.

*You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit them together in my mother's womb. Thank You for making me so wonderfully complex! It is amazing to think about. Your workmanship is marvelous—and how well I know it. Psalm 139:13 (LB)*

## 2. Recognize I was bought with a price.

Say this with me...I was bought at a price.

Have you ever had a garage sale? What happens? We put all of our junk out and people buy it. They'll buy anything, even outdated clothes, toys with missing pieces, and broken appliances. Why? Because an object is as valuable as the price someone is willing to pay.

If you're still struggling with the question of your value: If you're still asking the question, "Do I matter to anyone?", you are struggling with a price tag. Let me tell you about your price tag.

You're so valuable to God, it cost Him the death, burial, and resurrection of His Son - all just for you. That's how much you matter to God.

*It cost God plenty to get you out of the dead-end, empty-headed life you grew up in. He paid with Christ's sacred blood, you know. He died like an unblemished, sacrificial lamb. 1 Peter 1:18-19 (MSG)*

The bottom line is this:

**I am made to matter!**

You are made to matter; and you're not going to figure out how much you really do matter until you stop striving in the areas of style, status, and success. When you realize you are a masterpiece and recognize you have been bought with a high price, amazing and exciting things will begin to happen as you learn it's okay to be you.

An old country preacher once said, "Be who you is. 'Cause if you is who you ain't, you ain't who you is." One more time... "Be who you is. 'Cause if you is who you ain't, you ain't who you is."

I want you to know this—God sees your incredible potential, and you are more valuable to God than you can even begin to imagine.

*God's **children** are even **more precious** than fine gold. Lamentations 4:2  
(Paraphrase)*

Tom Brokaw of NBC News said, "It's easy to make a buck in our society; it's tough to make a difference."

I want you to know this, and you need to listen closely You are designed to make a difference.

I am designed to make a difference!

Say that with me, "I am designed to make a difference."

Here's the catch...to do that—for you to make a difference—you've got to be you.

"'Cause if you is who you ain't, you ain't who you is."

Zig Ziglar once said, "If man can take molded bread and turn it into medicine, what can an awesome God make out of you?"

And that takes us to number 3.

### 3. Reflect my shape.

*Your hands **formed** and **shaped me**.... Job 10:8a (GN)*

#### There are five personal factors that determine your SHAPE:

These are all covered in detail in 301, but I just want to introduce you to them now.

#### 1. Spiritual Gifts

Spiritual gifts are special abilities given by the Holy Spirit to every person when they become a Christian. These gifts are to be used to minister to others, and to help build up the body of Christ, the Church.

*There are different kinds of **spiritual gifts** but the same Spirit gives them. There are different **ways of serving**, but the same Lord is served. There are different **abilities** to perform service, but the same God gives ability to everyone for their service. The Spirit's presence is shown **in some way** in each one, for the good of all. 1 Corinthians 12:4-7 (GN)*

#### 2. Heart

*God has put it into their hearts to accomplish His purpose. Revelation 17:17 (NIV)*

The heart, the passions you have, God placed them in your life. He wants to help you see how that part of your shape, your design can be used to make a difference in our world.

#### 3. Abilities

*I (God)...have given him skill, ability, and knowledge in all kinds of crafts.*

*Exodus 31:3 (NIV)*

All of us have some natural talents and abilities. When we combine those with our spiritual gifts and use them in our area of passion, they multiply their effectiveness.

#### 4. Personality

It's obvious that God doesn't use a cookie cutter to stamp out people. He loves variety. Just look around this room. And there is not a "right" or "wrong" personality. We need variety to keep balance. When you take a look at your personality, you'll be able to see the best places to plug your spiritual gifts, abilities, and heart to work in the church.

*For you have heard of my past...I persecuted the church with a fanatical zeal...and did my best to destroy it...I was ahead of most of my contemporaries in the Jewish religion, and had a boundless enthusiasm. Galatians 1:13-14 (Ph)*

That's the apostle Paul's own description of some of his personality traits: zeal and enthusiasm.

## 5. Experiences

What experiences have you had? Educational? Vocational? Spiritual?

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

One of the most ignored elements in seeing where your life can make a difference in the future is what has happened in your life in the past. Your victories, your failures. Your joys, your hurts, your problems. They all help make you you, and they're valuable for making a difference in other people's lives. Sometimes, we get frustrated in the process of trying to reflect our shape. Life seems chaotic. When that happens for you, I want to encourage you to pray this prayer of the Psalmist.

**God, make a fresh start in me,** shape a Genesis week from the chaos of my life.  
*Psalm 51:10 (MSG)*

**In our next session:**

**T**OGETHERNESS – Living in Community

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