

SESSION  
FOUR



# DISCOVERING MY NATURAL ABILITIES

CLARIFYING YOUR  
GOD-GIVEN STRENGTHS

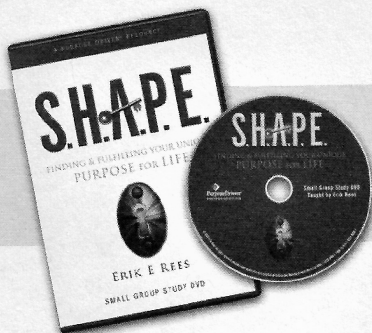
## CATCHING UP

- Did you consider the questions about your heartbeat for ministry from last week's Putting It into Practice section? Take a few moments to offer a new insight you gained.
- Here at the halfway point of this study, how is your perspective changing? Is God giving you a clearer picture of your unique life purpose? Share a thought or event with your group.
- Spend a minute or two sharing at least one thing for which you have a natural aptitude.

### KEY VERSE:

*"His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'"*

Matthew 25:23 (NIV)



*Watch the Session Four video now and fill in the blanks in the outline in this guide. Refer back to the outline during your discussion time.*



## DISCOVERING MY NATURAL ABILITIES

If we don't clearly identify our natural abilities, we can have a major problem down the road.

Natural abilities: a collection of strengths God wants us to use to fulfill our unique kingdom purpose in life.

All we need is to be available and aware.

God delights in willing \_\_\_\_\_.

The difference between an ordinary day and an extraordinary day is not so much what you do, but for whom you do it.

—Author Unknown

*And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

(Colossians 3:17 NIV)

. . . the abilities you do have are a strong indication of what God wants you to do with your life. They are clues to knowing God's will for you . . . God doesn't waste abilities; he matches our calling and our capabilities.

—Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven® Life*, p. 244

## Where do you naturally excel?

God is exceedingly qualified to put into action anything he has created. Remember: our \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ are there to show off his greatness and magnitude.

*The LORD has given them special skills as jewelers, designers, weavers . . . They excel in all the crafts needed for the work.*

(Exodus 35:35 NLT)

God has also given you special \_\_\_\_\_ to excel in certain areas for him.

Reevaluate the abilities God has given you in light of his eternal purposes and the life situation in which he has placed you. It could open the door to a ministry more fulfilling than you ever imagined possible!

You'll find a list of fifty specialized abilities on page 38. The goal is for you to embrace the things you love to do, not just the things you can do.

One day each of us will have to give an account to God for what we did with the talents he gave us, so make the most of them now!

*So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.*

(Romans 14:12 NIV)



### Parable of the Talents

Jesus told the story about a man who gave money to three of his servants before leaving on a journey. The first two put his money to work and gained a profit. But a third, fearing his master, buried the money. When the master returned, he rewarded the two who had increased his estate, praising them for being good and faithful. But the third wasn't as fortunate. His master shouted:

*<sup>28</sup>“Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. <sup>29</sup>For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.”*

(Matthew 25:28–29 NIV)

Life is too short to settle for doing less than our \_\_\_\_\_ for God.

If we hold back the natural abilities God gave us at birth, or if we use those abilities for purposes that don't include God, they will not be used to their full capacity.

**Closing Thought:** Do you know the abilities you were born with? Do you know the things you love doing? Start figuring out ways to express those abilities in your everyday life. Grab hold of your natural abilities and aim them high for God's glory!

*The greater danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it, but that it is too low and we reach it.*

—Michelangelo

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What characterizes an activity you love to do? Offer one or two top qualifications.
2. Talk about ways each of us can make deposits of love throughout a typical day, no matter what we are specializing in at the moment.
3. Think about the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14–30. Why does it matter that we make the most of our abilities now? What could be the harm in putting them off or neglecting them?
4. Share with the group something you know you do well, but that you no longer do at all. Why did you stop doing it? Is there a way you could include it again in your lifestyle? Ask the group to pray for you to find that answer.
5. How could your natural abilities benefit your group? Share one way you think God could use something you know you do well.



LIVING ON PURPOSE

**Ministry**

One of the best places to discover both what we love to do and what we do well is through ministry. In many ways, ministry can be a better “school” than our college major or our job, because in ministry we are working selflessly, just for the sake of serving others.

1. How do you think ministry can help you?
  - a) hear your heartbeat more distinctly, and
  - b) develop your unique abilities?
  
2. If you are not involved in a life-changing ministry by now, explore some options this week. Recruit the help of your spiritual partner if needed in making this choice.

PRAYER DIRECTION

Thank God for the fact that he has given each of you natural talents and abilities. Ask God to help you see more clearly how he wants you to use them. If you're already using them, ask him what more he has for you. Don't miss God's best for your life!

## PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

Set aside time this week to consider those things you naturally do well.

Use the list on pages 39 and 40 to help you recognize what God has gifted you to do. After you mark it, pick the top five you most excel at and love doing.

**Love It!**—You can't imagine life without these activities. They make your day complete. Given a choice, you would do these things full-time. These abilities are the way you will meet the needs of the people group you identified in the last chapter. They can be—but don't have to be—part of your job. Your nine-to-five life may be just tent-making, as it was for the apostle Paul. If you are unsatisfied by what you do full-time, finding what you love to do most could become what you do full-time.

**Like It!**—You may enjoy these abilities/activities, but don't need to do them on a regular basis in order to feel satisfied. Your attitude toward them is "I can take it or leave it." For example, you may enjoy coaching or teaching, but these things don't satisfy you like the things you really love.

**Live Without!**—These abilities/activities leave you feeling slightly deflated and disappointed, compared to what you love doing. When faced with the prospect of having to do these things, your immediate response is to think about not doing them. When you have to carry out these responsibilities on a frequent basis, you feel drained. You may be able to adequately perform these tasks, but you have little or no desire to do them.



# DISCOVERING MY NATURAL ABILITIES

## Fifty Specialized Abilities

ABILITY	LOVE IT	LIKE IT	COULD LIVE WITHOUT IT
1. Adapting: The ability to adjust, change, alter, modify			
2. Administering: The ability to govern, run, rule			
3. Analyzing: The ability to examine, investigate, probe, evaluate			
4. Building: The ability to construct, make, assemble			
5. Coaching: The ability to prepare, instruct, train, equip, develop			
6. Communicating: The ability to share, convey, impart			
7. Computing: The ability to add, estimate, total, calculate			
8. Connecting: The ability to link, involve, relate			
9. Consulting: The ability to advise, discuss, confer			
10. Cooking: The ability to prepare, serve, feed, or cater			
11. Coordinating: The ability to organize, match, harmonize			
12. Counseling: The ability to guide, advise, support, listen, or care for			
13. Competing: The ability to contend, win, battle			
14. Decorating: The ability to beautify, enhance, adorn			
15. Designing: The ability to draw, create, picture, outline			
16. Developing: The ability to expand, grow, advance, increase			
17. Directing: The ability to aim, oversee, manage, supervise			
18. Editing: The ability to correct, amend, alter, improve			
19. Encouraging: The ability to cheer, inspire, support			
20. Engineering: The ability to construct, design, plan			
21. Facilitating: The ability to help, aid, assist, make possible			
22. Forecasting: The ability to predict, calculate, see trends, patterns, and themes			
23. Implementing: The ability to apply, execute, make happen			
24. Improving: The ability to better, enhance, further, enrich			
25. Influencing: The ability to effect, sway, shape, change			
26. Landscaping: The ability to garden, plant, improve			

*Continued on page 40*

27. Leading: The ability to pave the way, direct, excel, win
28. Learning: The ability to study, gather, understand, improve, expand self
29. Managing: The ability to run, handle, oversee
30. Mentoring: The ability to advise, guide, teach
31. Motivating: The ability to provoke, induce, prompt
32. Negotiating: The ability to discuss, consult, settle
33. Operating: The ability to run mechanical or technical things
34. Organizing: The ability to simplify, arrange, fix, classify, coordinate
35. Performing: The ability to sing, speak, play an instrument, act out
36. Pioneering: The ability to bring about something new, ground-breaking, original
37. Planning: The ability to arrange, map out, prepare
38. Promoting: The ability to sell, sponsor, endorse, showcase
39. Recruiting: The ability to draft, enlist, hire, engage
40. Repairing: The ability to fix, mend, restore, heal
41. Researching: The ability to seek, gather, examine, study
42. Resourcing: The ability to furnish, provide, deliver
43. Serving: The ability to help, assist, fulfill
44. Strategizing: The ability to think ahead, calculate, scheme
45. Teaching: The ability to explain, demonstrate, tutor
46. Translating: The ability to interpret, decode, explain, speak
47. Traveling: The ability to journey, visit, explore
48. Visualizing: The ability to picture, imagine, envision, dream, conceptualize
49. Welcoming: The ability to entertain, greet, embrace, make comfortable
50. Writing: The ability to compose, create, record



## DISCOVERING MY NATURAL ABILITIES

List below your top five natural abilities.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

(Be sure you transfer these to your S.H.A.P.E. Profile on page 67.)

**How can you use these abilities to serve others this next week?**

As you complete this list, note whether or not you are currently using that ability and if so, where.

Now review the list and ask yourself, “Where have I lost focus?”, “Where do I need to sharpen my focus?” or “Where do I think God wants to stretch me?”

For added insight, share this list with your spiritual partner or with your group’s ministry champion.

Now have a brainstorming session with God. How might he want to use the talents and abilities he has given you? Write down what he is revealing to you.

## DIVING DEEPER

Explore your natural abilities in greater depth by reading chapter 4—“Abilities,” in the book *S.H.A.P.E.: Finding and Fulfilling Your Unique Purpose for Life*.

