

SESSION
SIX



UNDERSTANDING MY EXPERIENCES

GOD USES OUR EXPERIENCES
FOR HIS GLORY

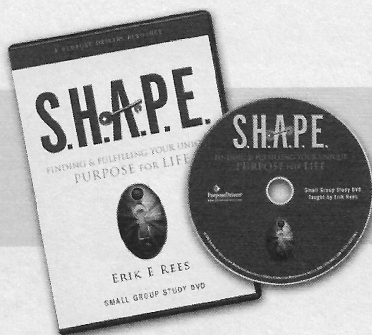
CATCHING UP

- What did you learn through the review of your personality tendencies? Did the additional list help you recognize more possibilities? If possible, share one new insight with the group.
- Tell the group one new lesson you've learned about your God-given personality, or share a story about how God has used you already to impact others' lives.
- As you head in to this last session, briefly share what this series has meant to you so far and how you think it will impact your future.

KEY VERSE

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

2 Corinthians 1:3–4 (NIV)



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

UNDERSTANDING MY EXPERIENCES

There is purpose in your _____.

And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.

(Romans 8:28 NLT)

God desires to take all of our experiences—the good and the bad—and use them for his glory.

JOSEPH Genesis 37–50

- Betrayed by his brothers
- Sold into slavery
- Thrown into prison
- Rose to become the second most powerful man in Egypt
- Saved the lives of millions
- Never forgot that God was in control

You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

(Genesis 50:20 NIV)

As God lovingly crafts the masterpiece of our lives, he uses every _____ to complete the finished product.

Consider the events of your life that have helped S.H.A.P.E. the person you are today:

- Childhood joys and sorrows
- The pain and thrill of adolescence
- The struggle and accomplishment of adulthood

THE GALLERY OF YOUR LIFE

The possibilities are almost limitless for your life achievements and experiences to become action steps for God.

God's delight and pride in you is not based on what is celebrated by the world.

Think of your experiences in these five general areas:

Positive Portrait

1. _____ — An award

2. _____ — A pattern of achievement

3. _____ — A godly marriage or a friendship that comforts or challenges you

4. _____ — Academic degrees or training certificates, or ongoing development in areas of special interest

5. _____ — A history of success in sharing your faith or leading Christians to deeper insight; your own acceptance of Christ and spiritual growth

Painful Portrait

God wants to use your painful experiences to minister to others as well . . . times when your pain threshold was tested and your endurance was stretched to the breaking point.

- Divorce
- Abuse
- Death
- Alcoholism
- Cancer
- Depression
- Job loss
- Bankruptcy
- Eating disorders
- Miscarriages
- Suicide
- Abortion
- Affairs

Think about the good that can come from your suffering. How can your crisis become a catalyst for Christ?

TAKE A TEST-DRIVE

Challenge everyone in your group to commit to taking a ninety-day _____ . It's during this trip you will start to define your S.H.A.P.E. and begin to refine your Kingdom Purpose.

Experiment with various ministry opportunities. Start slow and start small, but make sure you START! Don't wait for perfect conditions—God blesses a moving target.

Four great places to use your S.H.A.P.E. and start serving during your test-drive:

1. Use your S.H.A.P.E. to make deposits of love in your _____ .
2. Use your S.H.A.P.E. to serve others at _____ .
3. Use your S.H.A.P.E. to volunteer at your _____ .
4. Express your S.H.A.P.E. within your _____ group.

You now have the opportunity to continue what God has started as you run the next leg of your race with him. Live faithful to God and finish fulfilled by him.

Closing Thought: Why not explore serving together as a group? Discover how amazingly God will use your various gifts when your group becomes your team.

The Final Goal:

“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 25:21 NIV)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Share with your group where you will start your ninety-day test-drive—at home, work, church, or in your small group. Explain.

2. Share with your group a few positive portraits from your past and how they could provide a platform to serve others.

3. Discuss how your salvation experience could be a springboard for ministry. How might God want to use your testimony to reach others?

4. Share a few of your painful portraits along with your thoughts on how they could become a catalyst for Christ. Think about who, in particular, these events might help you reach, either in ministry or evangelism.

5. Share a few ideas about how your experiences can benefit others in your group.

6. How do you think you will know when you are exactly where God wants you?
7. **SERIES FINAL:** What have you learned as a result of this series that has helped settle any questions about God's purpose in your life? What do you plan to do as a result of these lessons?

Let your next group gathering be a celebration of S.H.A.P.E. Use that time to share additional insights God has given you as a result of this series and to share your S.H.A.P.E. Profiles.

LIVING ON PURPOSE

Evangelism

No matter how painful your past, God can use that pain as a catalyst for loving others.

1. Plan to take time for a longer visit to God's art gallery soon, and perhaps on a semi-annual basis as a means of life review.
 - Carefully study what God shows you.
 - Record in a notebook what he is revealing to you, what he taught you, and how you think he can use this lesson for the future.
 - Use this time for focused conversation with God, asking him to reveal his heart to you.
 - Ask him for breakthrough vision, and then plan to use what he shows you to reach others for Christ with your life.
2. Determine in your heart to have a personal retreat with God at least once a year to review your S.H.A.P.E., and then meet with your group or your spiritual partner to assess how effectively it is being used in reaching the lost for Christ.
3. Think back on Dwight Moody's example, of seeing others as "thousands of souls that will one day spend eternity in hell if they do not find the Savior." Recognize that the overriding purpose of your S.H.A.P.E. is to serve God by serving others.

PRAYER DIRECTION

Thank God for this series, and for showing you the many reasons he has for making each of you exactly who you are. Pray around the room for one another's needs, asking God to reveal to you through whatever circumstance you are experiencing right now a way he can use it for service, either now or in the future. Acknowledge it as part of your S.H.A.P.E.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

What are some of the portraits from the gallery of your life that you feel God can use?

Three Positive Portraits:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

• _____

• _____

Three Painful Portraits:

- _____

- _____

- _____

Be sure to complete your S.H.A.P.E. Profile by transferring these answers over to page 69.

Whatever you do before you complete this series, make sure that you've begun to put some of its steps into practice in your life. You are God's masterpiece, but just like those popular makeover shows, the new look is only temporary if you don't continue to apply its lessons daily. Where have you begun to use your S.H.A.P.E. on a regular basis? Remember: *God blesses a moving target!*

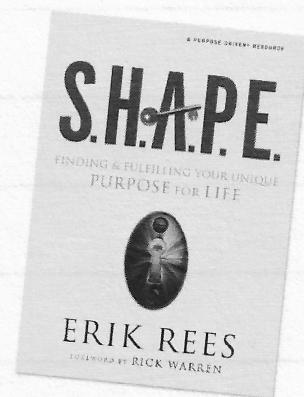
This week, and from now on, be sure you are using your S.H.A.P.E. in these four life arenas:

1. In your home, through regular deposits of love
2. In the workplace, by serving others
3. At church as a volunteer
4. In your small group as God determines the need

May God clarify, simplify, and illuminate the purpose for which he has uniquely S.H.A.P.E.d you as you walk with him every day of your life. Let the journey begin!

DIVING DEEPER

Expand your understanding regarding the value of your past experiences by reading chapter 6—"Experiences," in the book *S.H.A.P.E.: Finding and Fulfilling Your Unique Purpose for Life*.



MY S.H.A.P.E. PROFILE

THE ONE THING:

Dear God:

Through this S.H.A.P.E. discovery series, I want you to _____

SPIRITUAL GIFTS: WHAT I'M GIFTED TO DO

- The spiritual gifts I believe God has given me are:

- I feel I could use these gifts in the following ways to serve others:

HEART: WHAT I HAVE A PASSION FOR

- Whom I love to serve:

- The needs I love to meet in another person's life:

- The cause I feel God wants me to help conquer for him:

PERSONALITY: HOW GOD HAS WIRED ME

I tend to relate to others by being:

Outgoing _____ X _____ Reserved
 Self-expressive _____ X _____ Self-controlled
 Cooperative _____ X _____ Competitive

I tend to respond to opportunities that are:

High Risk _____ X _____ Low Risk
 People Driven _____ X _____ Project Driven
 Follow _____ X _____ Lead
 Team _____ X _____ Solo
 Routine _____ X _____ Variety

EXPERIENCES: WHERE I HAVE BEEN

- My positive experiences include:

- Areas in which I feel I could help another person include:

- My painful experiences include:

- These are areas God has helped me through that I feel I could help another person through:

Conclusion: Based on my S.H.A.P.E. Profile, I think I should explore the following ideas for ministry:

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