

Call to Worship

You are kind and forgiving, O Lord, abounding in love to all who call to you. Hear my prayer, O Lord; listen to my cry for mercy. In the day of my trouble I will call to you, for you will answer me. (Ps 86:5-7)

Worship in song

Sing hymns and/or worship songs of your choice.

Reading from the Psalms

- Psalm 46

Prayer of confession

Lord, this is a holy place, for your presence is here and there can be no pretence.
Eloquent words turn to ashes in our mouths. In truth, all we can say is: it's hard, it hurts
and we can't see the way ahead. We have nothing else to say.
We are beyond words, but not beyond your love.
We are beyond our ability to change, but not beyond your ability to change us.
We are beyond finding peace, but not beyond finding your forgiveness
and so we have hope.
Lord, we simply say, we love you and trust you with our life. Amen.

Assurance of forgiveness

God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. (Jn 3:16-17)

Prayer of thanksgiving

Dear Heavenly Father,

you are, in every way, worthy of our worship. As we, your children, gather before you, we don't worship you because you have ordained it or because we must or should. Rather, we declare:

- our delight in your character,
- our delight in your holiness,
- and our delight in your love.

You have drawn us to you with chords of love and have insisted on the very best for us, a life free from the power of sin, a life in all its fullness, a life with a purpose, a life in your presence, and a life which has hope.

Lord God, we honour you this day and declare our love for you.

Holy Communion

During the Bronze Age in the Middle East, the strongest bond that could exist between two people occurred when they agreed to enter into a blood covenant with each other. The ceremony associated with this covenant involved both people cutting their wrists and letting their blood mingle together. The end of the ceremony typically concluded with a covenant meal.

When Jesus ate his last supper with his disciples, he deliberately turned the meal into a covenant meal, a meal that represented the strongest bond possible between two people. However, in this case, it was a covenant between God and humankind. Jesus took a cup of wine and asked them all to drink it. He said, "This is the blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Mt 26:28).

God chooses to commit himself to us in covenant. This covenant commitment is so strong that God was prepared to sacrifice himself as Jesus to die to take the blame for our sins so we could be made worthy of life with God. On the cross, Jesus exchanged our sinfulness for his holiness so we could be made right with God.

Say a prayer of thanks for the bread and the wine which represents the body and blood of Jesus sacrificed in order to rescue us back to God. Then share the bread and wine together.

The Bible Reading

- 2 Kings 6: 8-17

The Message: **KNOW YOUR UNIQUE MINISTRY**

Theodore Roosevelt said: *"It's not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena ... who, at best, knows in the end the triumph of great achievement, and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly. To that his place will never be with those cold timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat."* (Theodore Roosevelt)

Roosevelt reflects the conviction of James who wrote in the Bible: *"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says"* (Jas 1:22). James insists that there is no such thing as authentic faith that does not express itself in doing. We have work to do, but what is it?

Get God's perspective

In working out God's purpose for us in our faith community, we need to acknowledge that the work is God's, not ours. It is God's vision and God's glory we seek, not our vision or our glory. As such, it is important to see things from God's perspective.

In the Old Testament, we read in 2 Kings chapter 6 that the capital city of Israel was surrounded by a huge army of Arameans. The prophet Elisha is one of those being besieged by the Aramean army. One morning, Elisha's servant gets up and sees the

Aramean army for the first time. He was terrified and runs to Elisha saying "what shall we do?"

This servant could only see the problem. He could only see the problem because he could only see things from a human perspective.

However, Elisha was different. Elisha saw the solution. He saw the solution because he could see things from God's perspective.

Elisha draws his terrified servant to him, places his hands on him and prays "*O Lord, open his eyes so he may see.*" (2 Kings 6:17). The servant must have thought him crazy. He already had twenty-twenty vision thanks very much. However, after Elisha prays, the servant looks out and sees that the surrounding hills are full of God's army equipped with fiery horses and chariots.

So, there is a need for us to pray and seek God so that we see things from His perspective. It was unthinkable to Paul to have been "*raised with Christ*" (Col 3:1) and not to have a heavenly perspective. Do you have this heavenly perspective? Is your treasure on earth or in heaven? What perspective do you see life from? Contrast these two viewpoints:

- 1) "*God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus*" (Eph 2:6).
- 2) "*Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things*" (Phil 3:19).

Let me ask you, is your an Ephesians 2:6 view or more like a Philippians 3:19 view?

Get God's perspective, he sees more and the view is better!

Be focussed

Paul said, "*But one thing I do*" (not these many things I dabble in): "*Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead. I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*" (Phil 3:13-14)

Be focussed and finish well. The Apostle Paul was able to write to Timothy at the end of his life, quite possibly, only days before his execution: "*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day – and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing*" (2 Tim 4:7-8).

Know your ministry S.H.A.P.E.

Let's look at those things which SHAPE our ministry:

S = Spiritual gifts

These are the prime tools for ministry given to us by the Holy Spirit for the common good.

H = Heart (or passion)

The heart is used in the Bible to mean the mind, or the centre of our motivation and desires. Our heart determines what we say, feel and do. It refers to the deepest desires and longings which motivate us to serve in particular areas. Amongst whom does your

heart motivate you to work? Is it single parents, youth, shut-ins, families, the elderly - who?

A = Abilities

These are the things we are able to do. If it is true that most of us have between 500 - 700 skills, none of us can say we have no abilities. Our abilities help us find the setting within which we can use our spiritual gifts. You may have the ability to do word processing in the church office and in this setting, exercise your spiritual gift of exhortation and encouragement when speaking to the people who call into the office.

P = Personality

Some personalities mean that some people are suited to some functions rather than others. God made our personalities. They are part of us. Whilst our personality has been marred by the evil in and around us and shaped by hereditary and environmental factors, it is the personality we have to minister with. Any ministry we do must therefore enable us to express authentically who we are before God.

E = Experience

Much of our learning comes from our experience of life, its struggles, griefs and challenges. This can give us particular insight and skill in a particular area of ministry. One of my lecturers at college had been a widower for many years. This experience added particular power to his chosen area of ministry, grief counselling and pastoral care.

It would be interesting for you to write down what you believed to be your shape. Fill in (with a few words and phrases) what you think your shape is. Then team up with someone who knows you quite well (not your spouse) and check with them if they agree.

What is the vision God has given you? What will happen because you walked with God and saw the possibilities – and pursued them?

Conclusion

God wants doers, doers who do because they have been with God. Be a doer.

- Get God's perspective. It would be tragic to work at something God didn't want.
- Be focussed so that you complete the task and finish well.
- Know your ministry SHAPE.
- Do it!

God bless you.

Prayers for others

Pray with passion for those things God has placed on your heart, remembering the persecuted church, world events, the sick and our leaders.

Benediction

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. (Gal 1:3-5)

This service was provided to HopeNet SA by Dr Nick Hawkes

See for yourself

John 1:35-49

You will need:

- 1) A rose (or similar sweet smelling cut flower)
- 2) A bag of sweets

Ask the children if they have recently been on holiday. Ask where they went. Then tell them about a particularly memorable or unusual holiday experience you had. (I tell the story of snorkelling at Portsea and watching beautiful seahorses cunningly disguised as seaweed, the males of which were carrying neat rows of blue eggs on their upper tail.) Perhaps you can ask one or two of the children to tell of their experiences.

Go on to say that however well we tell others what we did on holiday, the rest of us can't really know what it was like unless we have done it for ourselves.

Show the children a rose, ask one child to smell it and so that they can describe the smell of a rose to the other children. (This is not very easy so be careful who you pick). Then say to the children that if they just heard about the smell of a rose, they wouldn't really know what it was like unless they smelt it for themselves. (Give them a smell.)

Then take a bag of sweets and eat one. With your mouth full, try and describe the taste of the sweet. (It should be fairly comical.) After a while, give up and offer the sweets to the children so that they can taste for themselves and really know.

Say the children that unless we do things ourselves, we don't really know what it is like. The same is true about being a friend of Jesus. Unless we ourselves are friends with Jesus, we won't know what it is like.

Ask the children what it is that we do to be a friend of Jesus. Focus particularly on talking with him in prayer. Finish by saying that unless we talk with Jesus and become friends with him, we won't know what being a friend of Jesus is like.