Lesson 1
Your Design: You Are God's Masterpiece

Introduction

We are delighted you've chosen to pursue your design and destiny through ACF's SHAPE study. God is at work in your life, and there is something He very much wants you to discover.

The premise behind this study is simple: By better understanding how God made you, (your skills and talents and preferences) you can better understand what it is He has called you to do. In other words, by discovering your DESIGN you are more likely to discover your DESTINY in Christ.

In this lesson we want to focus on Your Design: You Are God's Masterpiece - the real you – the person God made you to be for His purposes.

Truth

Did you know that you are an object of God's handiwork? A unique, one-of-a-kind, carefully crafted masterpiece of the God of the universe?

Dr. Seuss said it well, “Today you are you; that is truer than true. There is no one alive who is youer than you.”

There are many Scriptures that teach this concept, but let’s touch on just a few key passages:

We'll start in the Old Testament where David tells us...

1. You are fearfully and wonderfully made.
For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb.

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.  

Psalm 139:13-14

David recognized that he was a special creation of God Almighty, intricately fashioned within the darkest recesses of his mother. All of his features: his hands, his feet, his eyes; as well as his abilities, disposition, talents, quirks – were designed by His Creator. Then he uses an interesting choice of words: I am fearfully and wonderfully made. This literally means I am made with “awe” and “distinction”. It speaks to both the miracle of my creation as well as to its uniqueness. David goes on to praise God for this truth saying, your works are wonderful, they are marvelous, extraordinary, and I thank you for them. David knows that this truth is profound and that it demands a response of worship. And then he completes the sentence with a profound declaration: I know that full well. In other words, David confesses, “I fully embrace this reality”. Could that be said of you?

Unfortunately our society has lost sight of this reality. In 2011 Americans had 14 million plastic surgery procedures, a 5% increase on the year before. And every week we hear about teenagers who are bombarded with messages like: “You’re ugly.” “Good for nothing.” “Useless.” “You’ll never amount to anything.”

Sadly, most of us in the body of Christ have not embraced the reality of God’s handiwork.

But it is true that we are His handiwork, and this truth is not limited to the Old Testament. Paul echoes the same truth in his epistle to the church at Ephesus.

2. You are a masterpiece of God.

For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus...  

Eph. 2:10 (NLT)

The word in the original which is translated “masterpiece” is a Greek work from which we get our English word “poem”. It speaks of God’s artistic craftsmanship. We are His living poetry, an expression of His beauty and design. At the moment of our salvation He takes everything about us and makes it new for His purposes. Can you even begin to comprehend that?
In his book *Cure for the Common Life*, Max Lucado captures this truth when he writes:

“Da Vinci painted one Mona Lisa, Beethoven created one Fifth Symphony, and God made one version of you. You’re it! You’re the only you there is. And if we don’t get you, we don’t get you. You’re the only shot we have of you. You can do something that no one else can do in a fashion no one else can do it. You are more than a coincidence of chromosomes and heredity, more than just an assemblage of somebody else’s lineage. You are uniquely made...”

Now the interesting fact about both of these passages is that while both of them acknowledge our unique design, they immediately connect that design to our destiny. Take a look.

3. God designed you for your destiny.

My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

Psalm 139:15-16

David repeats how God’s watchful eye was involved in his early formation, and then he acknowledges how that same watchful eye of God is mindful of days that have not yet occurred. Think about that. No one could see when you were being formed in that embryonic stage but God. And no one can see the future but God. And because of that vantage point, God does the work of making us the way we are so that we best serve Him in the situations that are yet to come. Isn’t that cool? In this way David connects the dots between our design and our destiny.

Paul does the same thing.

For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

Eph. 2:10 (NLT)

Christ makes you anew so that you can fulfill His mission of doing good works. He never calls you to do something that He doesn’t first equip you to do. You are the way you are so that you can accomplish His unique will for your life. Therefore, by better understanding your design, you can better understand your destiny. What God made me to BE determines what He
intends for me to DO. I will understand how to fulfill my ministry when I begin to understand the kind of person I am.

So how do we do that – better understand our design?

In this online SHAPE study, we want you to discover how He made you in five different areas by using the S.H.A.P.E. Model: That includes...

Spiritual Gifts
Heart
Abilities
Personality
Experiences

Here’s a working definition of each of those elements of your design.

Spiritual Gifts – The set of supernatural abilities that God gave you so that you would share His love and build up the body of Christ.

Ask yourself: “What am I spiritually gifted to do well?”

Heart – The special passions that God gave you so that you would glorify Him on earth.

Ask yourself: “What am I passionate about?”

Abilities – The set of natural talents that God gave you or that He enabled you to acquire so that you would apply yourself to your destiny.

Ask yourself: “What natural talents and skills do I have?”

Personality – The special temperaments that God gave you so that you would approach your mission the way He intended.

Ask yourself: “How has God wired me to navigate life?”

Experiences – Those parts of your past, both positive and painful, that God uses to prepare you for your kingdom impact.

Ask yourself: “Where have I been” and “What have I learned?”

So that’s what you can expect out of this online SHAPE study. We want to help you discover your design so that you can discover your destiny.
Self Discovery

All of us are in different places in discovering our design and our destiny. Before you begin the class, take a moment to mark where you are in this SHAPE discovery process. The tool below will help you mark the spot.

Current SHAPE Assessment Tool

Read each statement and indicate your current status by placing the appropriate number next to the statement: 3=yes, 2=somewhat, 1=no. When you have finished, add the numbers for your total score.

My unique God-given purpose in life is clear. ___
My spiritual gifts are being expressed. ___
My passions are being utilized for God. ___
My natural abilities are being used to serve others. ___
My personality is helping me serve others. ___
My purpose capitalizes on many of my experiences. ___
My life is completely surrendered to God. ___
My attitude and actions reflect a servant heart. ___
My accountability to others is consistent. ___
My schedule shows how I’m investing in others. ___
My plan to fulfill my purpose from God is set. ___

TOTAL _____
Group Discovery

1. Once you complete the Current SHAPE Assessment Tool, share the results with others in your group. What insights did you gain from these results?

2. How do you respond to the idea that you are "fearfully and wonderfully made" by God (Psalm 139: 14)? We often wonder what God was thinking when He made the parts of us we don't like. We compare ourselves to others and wonder if God might have made a mistake in giving us that "flaw". What is one thing that's hard for you to accept about the way God designed you?

3. Give each person an index card and ask him or her to write their name on it. Then have everyone pass the card to the person on their right. That person needs to write on the card a word or phrase that describes a positive quality or ability of the person named on the card. Keep passing the cards until everyone has written on each card and then return them to the owners. Ask each member to share their reaction to what others see in them.

Conclusions

1. With regard to finding my design (who I am) and my destiny (what I was made to do) this is my assessment of where I am in the discovery process.

2. My goals for this study are as follows: