Where Do You Fit?
Identifying Your Calling and Place in the Body

Grace BFC – "This We Believe" class – May 15, 2011
Mark Bickel

Where Do You Fit? An Integral Part of the Body (50-60 minute main talk)

1) **Your Unique Place in the Body - Discovering Who God Has Made You to Be**

As we think about where we each uniquely fit in Christ's body, I was reminded of 2 quotes from one of my favorite authors – Dr.Theodor Geisel!

"***Today you are you, that is truer than true. There is no one alive who is youer than you."***
-Dr. Suess {Ashley Cowen on facebook, from the book "Happy Birthday to You")

"Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not."
-Dr. Suess {from the book "The Lorax")

So how can you be the best you you can be, and care a whole aweful lot about Christ's body?

Know Your Identity
- **Created by God, In His Image, For a Purpose**
- **Sinful**
- **Redeemed by God, and New Creation in Christ, Indwelt by the Spirit**
- **Not of This World, With an Eternal Hope and Future**

Discover your S.H.A.P.E.

- Spiritual Gifts
- Heart
- Abilities
- Personality
- Experiences
(Erik Rees, "S.H.A.P.E. – finding and Fulfilling your Unique Purpose for Life")

We need to be all God has created us to be, no more and no less!

- ***Video: "The Body"*** (by SermonVideos, downloaded from SermonSpice.com)

**** Small Group: break into groups of 3-4 (no more), give 2-3 min for each person to share:**

- What are your gifts (or what do you think they might be)
- Where might God be calling you to serve now (general or specific, in gift or weakness)
- Others in the group give any additional observations / input

2) **Embrace What God Has Called You to Do – Discovering God's Calling**

Calling – God SHAPEs us, but then CALLS us too much more!

**** Gifts in Context: Focusing on God's Mission rather than My Gift**

While I do believe Spiritual Gift inventories, Personality Tests, etc. have a purpose in helping us understand who we are, I think they also have a danger in limiting our view of who God is and what He might call us to do. Lets take a moment and look back at the Spiritual Gift passages from last week, and then add an important question to our SHAPE list.

~ Review summary of Spiritual Gift Passages from last week on Purpose of Gifts, large context
{use notes from week 2 to walk through passages on purpose of gifts}

- I like the question Kenneth Berding seeks to answer in his book "What are the Spiritual Gifts: Rethinking the conventional View"

- Are Spiritual Gifts simply "talents" or "ministries"

- Asked another way, which comes first, gifts or ministry
- Obviously, they both go together and are integrally linked
- But do I first ask "what are my gifts" and then look for a ministry that can use them, or do I ask what ministry God is calling me / the church to and then look for gifts to do it?

Think about people in the Bible:
- Abraham
- Moses
- David
- Prophets
- Mary / Joseph
- Paul

- As I look at each of these, God calls them to do something, and then gifts them to do it (note: he certainly uses skills, passions, experience they had before the call … but many also complain about weaknesses that may undermine the mission, yet God says to go forward and trust Him)

- While gifts and call do go together, at least in the larger call on people's life, God seems to give a call more than he says go do what you are gifted in

- **George W. Bush** at acceptance speech for second term:
"Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers, pray for powers equal to your tasks"

Understand Your CALLING

- Individually

We need to be where God has us doing what He has for TODAY – not living in the past or the future – but seeing God's call for us and those we are a part of

Our SHAPE can help discern our call, but it should never limit or entirely shape our call – God often calls us to serve in weakness, and surprises us with new gifts and abilities

What is calling? God has made key parts clear already!

- To know and love God and love neighbor
- To make disciples of every nation
- To build one another up
- To be a part of His Church

- As a Body

We need understand God's purpose for the church and call for this particular church, as His call on my life will be bound up with His call on the Church …

OPTIONAL: Devotional Material on "The Church" {for time may need very high level summary}

Devotional: What is the Church? (10 minute)

- Nicene Creed

I believe in **one God, the Father Almighty**, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in o**ne Lord Jesus Christ**, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.

Who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And **I believe in the Holy Ghost**, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets.

And **I believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church**. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

*(we have looked at **God the Father**, **Christ the Son** & **the Holy Spirit** … Today look at **Church**)*

- One

Ephesians 4:4-5
4 There is one body and one Spirit— just as you were called to one hope when you were called— 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

- Holy

Ephesians 5:25-27
25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

- Catholic (Universal)

Ephesians 2:12-16
12 remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.

14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, 15 by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, 16 and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.

Revelation – people from every tribe, language before the throne!

- Apostolic

Ephesians 2:19-22
19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. 21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

- Church

Acts 2: 44-47
[42]They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. [43]Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. [44]All the believers were together and had everything in common. [45]Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. [46]Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, [47]praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Revelation 19
[5]Then a voice came from the throne, saying:
"Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both small and great!"

[6]Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns.
[7]Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory!
For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.
[8]Fine linen, bright and clean,
was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)

[9]Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!' " And he added, "These are the true words of God."

Other Description

- Preach the Word
- Right use of Sacraments
- Church Discipline

- Universal
- Particular

- Visible
- Invisible

- Organization
- Organism

- but there is another way of looking at the church…

Video: "We Are The Church" (by Slideshow Media Group, downloaded from SermonSpice.com)

- The point of this video, and much of the writings of the modern emerging church is that the church is **not so much an institution as a collection of real people with real lives, and real problems, who have found the real God**

- Jesus did **not found the church for religious people**, for people who had their lives together, who thought they were righteous … he found it with and for sinners, for messed up people, for people who didn't know God … **for ordinary people like you and me and those we meet on the street every day!**

- While founded not as a religions club or place for holy rollers, the **church is also not simply a place for ordinary people to come and commiserate** about this miserable life we have to live

- The church is made up of ordinary people **who have found an extraordinary God** – sinners who have been saved from God's wrath, and who are being redeemed. It is a group of people who have found hope, a hope anchored beyond this life!

- Yet this hope is **not some "pie in the sky by and by", or 'paint on a happy face'** kind of life … it is a **hope that reaches back from eternity** and has the power to change our life now, and through us to radically transform the lives of those around us!

Scripture uses several key pictures of our relationship with on another:

The Body of Christ

- One of the key descriptions of the church in the NT is "the body of Christ"

- Last week we looked at several passages on the Spiritual Gifts that tap into that image, 2 excerpts:

I Corinthians 12:12-20, 27
12 The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. 13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

14 Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. 15 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. 16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. 19 If they were all one part, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many parts, but one body. …

27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

Romans 12:4-6
4 Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, 5 so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. 6 We have different gifts, according to the grace given us.

- Then Ephesians picks up on this image:

Ephesians 4:15-16
… speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. [16] From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

- In addition to describing us as the Body and Bride of Christ, we are also called a Spiritual House:

I Peter 2: 4-6
[4] As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him— [5] you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. [6] For in Scripture it says:
"See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone,
and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame."

APPLY:

- Do you see yourself as part of the people around you, actively using your gifts to build up, encourage, love and serve them?
- Do you see each person here, including you, as a necessary, vital part of that body and value yours and their function?

The People of God

- I Peter then goes on to tap into a key theme from the OT:

I Peter 2: 9-10
But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

- While we tend to talk of salvation and relationship with God in individual terms, God talks in corporate terms:

- **Genesis** – God calls out a family, Abraham, promises to make him a people … grows family
- **Exodus** – Grows them to millions, takes them out of Egypt, to Promised Land

Deuteronomy 7:6-11

…you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession. [7] The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. [8] But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. [9] Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands. [10] But those who hate him he will repay to their face by destruction; he will not be slow to repay to their face those who hate him. [11] Therefore, take care to follow the commands, decrees and laws I give you today.

- Leviticus / Number / Deuteronomy - lives among people, instructs them how to live
- Joshua – Gives them the Promised Land, makes them a people – addresses them as people
- Judges, Kings, Prophets – God gives leaders, speaks to, guides, blesses His people … and judges them … yet saves a remnant and brings them back…

- OT – God is building a people, talks about the people of God, Makes promises to them as a people …
- even when dealing with individuals it is most often for the good of the people
ex. Moses – does get to see God as an individual … but majority of God interaction is as leader of the people, for the people, on behalf of the people …

- NT – God now grafts us into that same people and into that same covenant

- As God took his people into captivity he made a promise to them that applies to us today:

Jeremiah 32:36-41

This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: [37] I will surely gather them from all the lands where I banish them in my furious anger and great wrath; I will bring them back to this place and let them live in safety. [38] They will be my people, and I will be their God. [39] I will give them singleness of heart and action, so that they will always fear me for their own good and the good of their children after them. [40] I will make an everlasting covenant with them: I will never stop doing good to them, and I will inspire them to fear me, so that they will never turn away from me. [41] I will rejoice in doing them good and will assuredly plant them in this land with all my heart and soul.

APPLY:

- How do you view your relationship with God - is it just between you and God – or do you see yourself intimately connected to His people?
- Do you read the Bible, the promises, with your name, and the names of others in the church, all filled in? And not just filled in one by one, but as a body?
- The call to morn with those who morn and rejoice with those who rejoice is not just a one to one thing, we are a people and so what one does effects us all, and God will often respond to us as a collective people

The Family of God

- But God goes further, not just saying we are His People, and He is Our God … He actually says that He adopts us as His children, and He is our Father!

Romans 8:14-17
14 because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, *"Abba*, Father." 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

- Jesus takes it even further in Mark 3 saying that each of us who does God's will, rather than his natural parents and siblings are His true family!

Mark 3:31-35
31 Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him.
32 A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, "Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you."
33 "Who are my mother and my brothers?" he asked.
34 Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! 35 Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."

- And further yet - that in order to come to Christ, to be His bride, must leave our fathers and mothers and be united to Him, and thus to each other … This new family needs to become our family!

Luke 14:26-27
26 "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple. 27 And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

APPLY:

- Do you view your relationship with God in family terms – Father to son/daughter (note: for some that is hard because your physical father/mother did not model a good relationship – none the less that is what God calls you and we need to think this way)
- Be encouraged that God has not called you enemy, or servant, but rather friend and family!
- Do you see the people next to you as your true family? Do you love and care for them as family? Do you desire to encourage and serve them as family?

(note: more on the implications of being brothers and sisters in Christ in some of our recent sermons)

The Church: Real People Loving and Serving a Real God

3) **<u>Find Your Fit in His body</u> (Where do you fit?)**

Finally, in addition to Identity, SHAPE, and Calling, I would add Fit

God calls us not to just go off and use our gifts, and fulfill our calling on our own, but to do it as part of the body … to fit our gifts and calling in with others

Example: - Grace BFC – interview with staff

- Pastor Taylor, Tim, Beth, Harry and I compliment each other
  – me create opportunities to serve, Tim recruit
  - me disciple people, Pastor visit and comfort, Tim counsel
  - elders have vision, me figure out promote and implement

4) **<u>How do YOU Discover, Develop and Serve in your role in Christ's Church?</u>**

- Like many things in the Christian life I believe it is something we grow in, and that has both the aspect of discovering and doing

- Like the classic question in **outreach – how do I get a heart for the lost** – the answer is **you reach out to the lost** – but shouldn't I love them first – yes, but God tend to grow our love for people as we reach out to them, and as the love grows we desire to reach out more, and so they build each other … but it starts with a simple step of obedience in stepping out to meet people and share Christ's love – whether we 'feel' love or not, 'feel' ready or not.

- We **discover God's gifting the same way** – we can look at what we see God doing in us, and at the needs around us, to try to **discern God's call** for us. But in the end we all just need to **step out in obedience and begin trying things**. As we do God will shape our calling and provide for the gifts we need for that calling.

- In all we are seeking God to supernaturally enable and anoint us – sometimes in our areas of strength and sometimes in our areas of weakness.

Identity, SHAPE, Calling and Fit

- Each of these is fluid, not static – as we obey and step out in new areas God will grow and add to our gifts, talents, experience, and give us a deeper heart and passion for His kingdom. Thus our SHAPE will change. Sometimes in increments, some time dramatically.

- Thus, the **best place to discover your gifts, and your entire SHAPE, is not in sitting at home thinking about it, but out in the church and community living out God's call** – taking even a small step can yield great results

- And if you are going to **take tests**, talk to people, etc they will be much more beneficial in the context of living them out in life

- **One warning_** any kind of gift analysis will be dangerous if used to limit rather than free us up – While God often uses our talents and passions, he also uses our weaknesses, and sometimes calls us to ministries that don't immediately seem to fit who we think we are – sometimes to show himself in weakness, sometimes to show us we have gifts we did not even know, sometimes to move us in new directions – never limit yourself, and God, to talents or gifts you have seen.

- Part of our SHAPE is the context God has placed us in – He has put you here, in Wallingford, at Grace – He wants to use you here, now not just someplace else later … so He will give you a role, and the gifts to go with it, that are needed to build up this part of His body – thus part of your call is not just asking 'who am I' but asking 'where has God placed me"

I saw this great quote on facebook from out of our college students

Our talents are the gift that God gives to us… What we make of our talents is our gift back to God. (Kyle Longacre, facebook status)

Each person here has a unique function in this part of the Body of Christ … That function is meant to build us the body to unity and maturity, to attract those that do not know Christ, and to give glory to God.

What role does God have for you to play?
Are you willing to trust Him to provide the gifts necessary to complete that?

- The passages on using our gifts and talents are built on this as the foundation – we are not using them for our glory, or even for our own relationship with God – we are using them as part of the Body, for the People of God, to build up and encourage our true family!

- He is **knitting us together into one body**, need to see not just how to go do 'our individual part' but how we fit together!

Journey of Discovery

Example: Paul's Journey

- Look back at Galatians 1:11-24 (summarize)
- Persecute Christians
- God appeared
- Zeal turned to gospel, to gentiles
- Then go study for 3 years
- Then went on first journeys – still not known to churched
- Now as they heard of him and Christ's work they praised God

Example: My Journey

- Youth / Drexel – try hand at lots of things – drama, booktable, disciple new believers, small group, President fellowship, outreach (small and large) … and discipled
- Church – head up missions committee, go overseas, later head up college and career
- Job / Ministry – Billy Graham service, then Computer full time … try start student group in church, then espresso bar at Tyler, then teaching and leadership on 2 campuses, eventually full time
- DM – Found place I fit – camp energizing, create new with winter breakaway and summer session … Then God move for need and develop additional gifts
- Biblical / Grace – but not teaching, so God moved me where call better fulfilled

- Example: Me

- **Frustrated with personality type** tests … often mid line
- **Frustrated with looking at others**
    - want to be visionary leader … understand vision, not make
    - want to be administrator … like details but not organized, easy bored
    - see different people I respect in church, but can not be any of them
- **Team Roles Analysis** – "Abstract Designer" and "Concrete Designer"!
    - Fit in middle, between visionary and manager
    - Fit in unique place – not supposed to 'become' someone else!

- **DiscipleMakers – learning to work as a team player**
    - Summer Session
        – develop with Fodale, but me run
        - so focused on details, missing people
        - Peter get staff buy in, sell out instantly!
    - President's Circle
        – I own projects, so even more important get feedback, buy-in early … also be willing to change, even significant
    - Biblical – group projects, also classes on leading change…

- Grace BFC – interview with staff

- Pastor Taylor, Tim, Beth, Harry and I compliment each other
    – me create opportunities to serve, Tim recruit
    - me disciple people, Pastor visit and comfort, Tim counsel
    - elders have vision, me figure out promote and implement

How about YOU?

<u> Summary: Who Are YOU? Where Do YOU Fit?</u>**

- Identity
- Created by God, In His Image, For a Purpose
- Sinful
- Redeemed by God, and New Creation in Christ, Indwelt by the Spirit
- Not of This World, With an Eternal Hope and Future

- S.H.A.P.E. (Erik Rees, "S.H.A.P.E. – finding and Fulfilling your Unique Purpose for Life")
- Spiritual Gifts
- Heart
- Abilities
- Personality
- Experiences

- Calling
- Individually
- As a Body

- Fit

<u> APPLY:</u>** This week

- Work through **<u>Who Am I? packet</u>** and prayerfully consider **<u>Where Do I Fit?</u>**
- Fill out and turn in **Grace Ministry Opportunities**
- Decide what **<u>Next Steps</u>** will you take (both things to read/study and places to get involved!)

<u> Small Group:</u> break into groups of 3-4 (no more), give 2-3 min for each person to share:**

- Where might God be <u>CALLING</u> you to serve now (general or specific, in gift or weakness)
- Others in the group observations / input on where you might <u>FIT</u>
- What <u>Next Steps</u> will you take?

For Further Study:

a. Sermon: "**Faithfulness in God's Family**" by Mark Bickel (gracebfc.org)
b. Vision: **Grace BFC Vision Statement** (gracebfc.org)
c. Book: "**When the Church Was a Family**" by Joseph H. Hellerman
d. Book: **"What are Spiritual Gifts? Rethinking the Conventional Approach"** by Kenneth Berding
e. Book: **"S.H.A.P.E. – Finding and Fulfilling Your Unique Purpose for Life"** by Erik Rees
f. Book: **"What You Do Best in the Body of Christ"** by Bruce Bugbee
g. Workbook: **"Discover Your Spiritual Gifts the Network Way"** by Bruce Bugbee
{note: other Spiritual Gift & Personality tests also available}
h. Bible Study: **"Identity: Becoming What God Wants Us To Be"** NavPress