

# Doing What God Has Called You to Do

*The Rev. S. Shane Nanney – August 1, 2021*

*Ephesians 4:1-16*

This will sound like a strange question to start off with, but let me ask you: Are you more like a salmon or a jellyfish? Okay maybe you don't know much about them. I'll describe each one and then you can decide.

Salmon begin their lives in the freshwater rivers of the frigid Northwest. Not long after they're born, they begin a long swim downstream. Their destination is the ocean. It is here that they spend the majority of their adult lives. Then something strange happens. Scientists don't even understand how, but at some point, the adult salmon begins to swim back home. Though they may have swum thousands of miles from that original river location, they head back home. That's right! They swim upstream, against the current of the river. You've probably seen nature programs on TV that show them leaping out of the water to overcome waterfalls and other barriers impeding their progress.

Does that describe you? Does your life have a destination? Are you going in a specific direction and are you willing to face all the obstacles to get there? If so, you're like the salmon.

Then there's the jellyfish. There are numerous species of these yucky-looking little creatures. Some of them are tiny. Others have tentacles that can be measured in feet. Jellyfish are born in the ocean and die there too. They have limited movement, but never really use that ability to go in any particular destination. They're moved along primarily by the wind and waves and tides. They drift about, stinging anything or anyone that moves by.

Are you more like a jellyfish than a salmon? You just kind of float from here to there. You're carried by circumstances or other people's plans, but you really have no particular destination of your own.

The difference between salmon and jellyfish is the same as the difference between people. Some have a direction. Most just drift.

Don't get me wrong. Drifting can be fun. You just go with the flow enjoying life as much as you can. The problem with that kind of life is that you don't accomplish anything of significance. You reach your final days, scratch your head and ask, "What was it all for anyway?" Jellyfish people never find nor fulfill the reason for which they were created.

Then there are those who have direction. They can look back with satisfaction because they discovered their life's purpose and went full force in that direction. That kind of living is one of the secrets of success. Successful people find and embark on their life's purpose.

It begins with the ability to dream. If you want to find your purpose and begin to experience real success you must first:

### **1. Dare to dream.**

You've got to begin to dream about the possibilities God has invested in your life. Determining your dream helps you find your purpose. Dreams are good because they give us direction.

Thomas Carlyle wrote "A man without a purpose is like a ship without a rudder, a nothing ..." The Bible puts it this way:

WHERE THERE IS NO VISION, THE PEOPLE ARE UNRESTRAINED, BUT HAPPY IS HE WHO KEEPS THE LAW. *Proverbs 29:18*

The thing that keeps most of us from dreaming is that we let our circumstances and limitations defeat us. Our dreams are so big, but we're so small. Don't let your perceived smallness stop you from dreaming big. That dream can propel you over all the obstacles if you commit to it.

Dare to dream and act on that dream. Do it in spite of problems, circumstances, and obstacles. History is filled with men and women who faced adversity and achieved success in spite of it. For example, Napoleon, despite humble parentage, became an emperor. Beethoven brought to life his inner vision for music when he composed symphonies, even after he lost his hearing. Charles Dickens dreamed of becoming a writer and became the most-read novelist in Victorian England, despite being born into poverty.

I must warn you another important obstacle is the jellyfish. It is very easy to allow the Jellyfish to paralyze us so that we don't move forward in our ministry and thus we don't listen to the calling of God. It is their job to stop us for a variety of reasons. Some want to stop us because they are jealous of what we are doing and by stopping us, they feel better themselves. Others want to stop us by having an agenda for what they think we ought to be doing. If we are not acting, or serving in what they want us to do, then they damn the torpedoes to sink us. Others are so disconnected from their purpose and ministry that they have accepted sinking others as their God-given ministry.

For the rest of us salmons, to find our purpose we must determine who God has wired us up to be.

## **2. Discover your unique S.H.A.P.E.**

This acronym was devised by Rick Warren, pastor of Saddleback Community Church in California. It's a tool for discovering who God has created us to be. Make no mistake; you were created with a specific purpose in mind.

### **The "S" in shape stands for Spiritual Gifts.**

Every person who has crossed the line of faith has at least one. My personal belief is that all people have spiritual gifts, but they are only activated by a relationship with Jesus Christ. A spiritual gift is a supernatural ability. The Bible tells us:

GOD HAS GIVEN EACH OF US THE ABILITY TO DO CERTAIN THINGS WELL.  
*Romans 12:6*

These gifts positively change other people, build up the church and bring the one using them a tremendous sense of fulfillment. You also have at least one spiritual gift. Finding it will lead you to finding your purpose.

### **"H" is for Heart.**

What are you passionate about? What stirs you up like nothing else. Your heart is inclined in a certain direction, and it tells you something about your unique shape. James White, in his book [You Can Experience a Purposeful Life](#), provides some questions you can ask to see where your heart lies.

What do I really care about?

When I have an afternoon all to myself, free of family and work responsibilities, how do I want to spend it?

When I look around and think something needs to be changed, what area does my mind tend to travel toward?

What do I dream about?

### **“A” is for Abilities.**

Aside from spiritual gifts we all have some natural abilities. They may be musical or athletic. Maybe you have a mechanical aptitude. Perhaps you're good with crafts or art. Maybe you're a number cruncher and love it. Assess your natural abilities because they factor into how you're wired up.

### **“P” is for Personality.**

What kind of person are you? What are your likes and dislikes? Are you a Type A personality -- high strung and revved up at all times? Or are you a Type B personality -- so laid back that if you were any more, you would be in a coma?

### **“E” is for Experiences.**

Where have you been? What have you done? Think about your painful and pleasant experiences in life. You've had educational, vocational and even spiritual experiences that make you unique.

If you can get a handle on those five areas -- your spiritual gifts, your heart or passion, your abilities, your personality, and your experiences -- you're on your way to determining your shape and your life's purpose.

When you determine your direction here's a hint to keep in mind.

### **3. Your attitude determines your altitude.**

Your attitude is the most limiting factor in pursuing your life's purpose. If you think you can, you probably will. If you think you can't, you probably won't.

Your attitude is the lens through which you view life. Your attitude determines how far you will go in reaching your dreams. You'll only be successful if you develop a positive attitude. This is critical.

If you want to live successfully, make the decision to go in the direction of your life's purpose. No one ever drifted into success. Dare to dream. Seek God and determine your unique shape. Adjust your attitude to achieve for maximum altitude. Set goals that will get you there.

Success is not about talent or genius or beauty. Success comes down to a choice: direction or drift. Don't be a jellyfish. God has a glorious purpose for your life. All you have to do is find it. Amen.