

The **SHAPE** of you

Session 4: Personalities, clashes and collaborations

8.00 Guess who

As people arrive, ask everyone to write secretly on a card the top 5 abilities they've identified from last week. Put these cards into an envelope. When everyone is settled, draw out one card at a time and ask the group if they can guess who has that (probably unique) combination of top abilities. (Anything could happen, but the hope is that we'll get some of them right, and for a group that's only just started to get to know each other, that would be remarkable!)

8.20 Two x Two Ways To Live

The world has many kinds of different people, and we each have lots of freedom to choose how to live. The chances are that some choices feel easier for us, we'll do them more naturally and often if we can. Two kinds of choices we often make:

Outgoing vs Reflective – explain

People-focused vs Things-focused – explain

Where are we with this? – discuss and mark our own estimated “centre” positions on charts.

The pattern of what we keep preferring and choosing can be called personality. We can helpfully look at our personalities to inform us. They don't have to define us. Recap week 1: we are who God says we are, and Jesus changes us. When he uses us for his kingdom purposes, it can be in any way, but can we see any patterns in how people get used most often?

8.30 When Jesus met Saul

READ Acts 8:1-3 and Philippians 3:3-6 (Saul the persecutor/Paul's Pharisee background)

What kind of choices did Paul make before he met Jesus? (Seems outgoing, things-focused!)

READ Acts 9:3-19, Galatians 1:13-18 and Philippians 3:7-9 (Saul meets Jesus, repents, re-evaluates, relearns and formulates the Gospel from Christ)

What changed when Paul met Jesus? How did God re-shape him over the next few years? (He spent three years away, seemingly reflective more than outgoing. Did his personality change?)

READ Acts 20:17-26 and 1 Corinthians 1:13-18 (Paul summarises his mission and people skills!)

What kind of choices did Paul make when God used him for mission, outreach and teaching? (God seemed to use Paul in his outgoing, things-focused mode. What changed is that his life was now centred on Jesus. This is what makes all the difference!)

8.45 Collaborations and clashes

READ Acts 9:26-27, Acts 11:22-26 (Barnabas takes Paul in, then later calls for him on mission)

Where would we place Barnabas on the chart? (Seems outgoing, people-focused)

What could they get done together that they couldn't get done individually?

READ Acts 15:36-41 (Paul and Barnabas disagree and split)

What happened here? Is it a surprise to us that this happened, and got recorded in the Bible? How was God's kingdom purpose fulfilled by Paul and Barnabas staying true to themselves?

9.00 God doesn't just use outgoing people!

READ Luke 10:38-42 (Mary, Martha and Jesus)

Where could we place Martha and Mary based on this story? (Definitely task-focused Martha and people-focused Mary, maybe both more reflective than outgoing?)

Why did they clash? What was Jesus' answer when Martha complained?

(It's not that one personality is better than another here. It's that ALL OF US need to prioritise our lives around Jesus and come to him. How does he deal with us when we do?)

READ John 11:17-37 (Jesus meets Martha and Mary after Lazarus died)

How does Martha approach Jesus, and how does he respond? How did that help Martha? (We learn a lot about how the kingdom of God works from their process-focused discussion.)

What's different about Mary? How did she eventually approach Jesus, and what effects did that have? (The emotional, people-focused exchange moved Jesus, which moved the people mourning with Mary to pay attention and ultimately believe in him.)

When we centre our lives on Jesus, he meets us where we are. Our natural reactions to him bring glory to God and bring other people to believe. This applies to ALL personality types!

9.20 How does this affect us, and what should we do?

Discuss: what kinds of roles in God's kingdom (or the church, more specifically) seem easier for people with different personalities? Do we notice or value some of these more than others?

How are we looking to get used by God? What can we do together that we can't do alone?

Can we identify difficulties that need to be overcome to get involved and work well together?

Are there personality clashes which affect us where we live or work? What can we do here?

(RESOURCE: "How to treat others" is a reference source for reflecting through the week with ideas for how to build relationships and resolve conflicts with different personalities.)

9.40 Let's approach God

Time to pray for ourselves, each other, and people we want to build better relationships with.

Ask God to reveal to us our strengths and weaknesses that he can use for his glory and kingdom purposes. Pray for people we struggle to get along with, and ask that we can know how to meet them where they are, love and value them for who they are.

READ John 17:20-23 (from Jesus' prayer for us)

When Jesus prays specifically for us, his prayer is that we will be brought to complete unity in Christ so the world we know Jesus.

We'll continue this theme next week when we look at spiritual gifts and how they work in practice.