

## The Practice of Being You

Many people thought they knew what the Messiah should be like, but Jesus' life and ministry looked different than their expectations. In the same way, each of us has a unique set of gifts and passions that we often lose under the expectations and the assumptions of the world. This practice is about discovering, embracing, and living life out of the unique person God has called you to be.

The Practice of Being You is an invitation to explore the passions and gifts that God has placed on your heart and in your life. God made each of us unique and has called us to serve the world out of our unique callings. This practice is especially valuable if you struggle to know how to serve God or best be a part of the church. This practice is divided into three sections: passions, gifts, calling. Passions are the issues and concerns that stir up your heart. If you are following God, God will put specific passions in your heart! The second section is on gifts. Gifts are the abilities and strengths that God has given you to live out your passions. When you combine your passions and your gifts you can discover your calling from God!

### 1. Passions

**Set aside at least one hour when you can focus on these questions without being disturbed. Write your answers in a journal or somewhere you can hold on to them and read/pray over them. Try to make this time at the beginning of Lent so you can pray over your passions throughout the season.**

1. What one subject can you enjoy talking about for many hours?
2. Do any of your hobbies involve working a lot with other people?
3. What specific concerns preoccupy your mind, breaking into whatever else you're thinking about?
4. What do you most enjoy doing for others?
5. Let's pretend you've reached the end of your life, and you're in heaven looking back on it. What's the one thing you want to be most happy about having done or having been?
6. Who 'out there' in the world have you come to care about the most? Who do you most want to help, enable, or reach? (You define the categories whatever way you want. Go with your first instincts.)
7. Now, **write down at least five** of your life experiences that most gave *you* a sense of fulfillment and/or growth. (Don't think about them until later -- just write them down for now.) If more experiences come to mind, just keep listing them until you exhaust yourself. You'll sort them out later.

Now that you've gone through all of these questions (**NO SKIPPING!! DO THEM ALL!!**), it's time to think on these things. Look for patterns, underlying themes, and common traits to the answers you gave. Ask yourself: who else benefitted from it, and what was your role in creating that benefit? Did you discover abilities you didn't know you had, and what were they? Did any of the answers give you thrills? Tears? Narrow it down, focus on the strongest themes, and work toward a conclusion you can state in **one direct sentence**.

Enter this evaluation phase by praying. Then move from prayer to meditation over the matter, then move from meditation into silence and waiting upon the Lord, keeping your spiritual ears open for the Spirit's message for you.

- You'll may find that you can't come up with a single sentence, or that something seems amiss, or that there's no leading from the Spirit. If so, stop, and then pray on it at least once every day and whenever else you feel led to think about it. Move from prayer to meditation to silence. There are few guarantees on spiritual matters, but one of them is that God is working with you and in you. You may not get a conclusion at this time in your life, but trust that the Spirit will eventually sort it out with you at the right time. Set aside a daily time throughout Lent to lift this to God.
- If you come to a conclusion, then you have discovered a passion that is rooted deep within you and has already had a strong impact on your life. That passion needs direction. The best way to find that direction is to discover the spiritual gift(s) that go with that passion. See below for one spiritual gifts test to help you along this path and plan to talk with a trusted spiritual guide or friend about what you are discovering.

(adapted from <http://www.spirithome.com/passion.html>)

## **2. Spiritual Gifts**

There are many methods for determining your spiritual gifts. The most simple of these processes is what is called a "spiritual gifts test." You will find a booklet online at [courtlandumcva.org/getrootedresources.html](http://courtlandumcva.org/getrootedresources.html) or get a copy from the church office! This is not a "complete" list of gifts (there is no such thing), and because of this it is good to take 20-30 minutes to reflect and write down what you think your gifts are before you take the test. Think about strengths you use in *every* aspect of your life (home, work, family, hobbies, etc)

**My gifts are (Areas that are strengths for me):**

## **3. Calling**

Your calling is what happens when your gifts and your passions intersect. Calling is how you are going to use the unique gifts God has given you to help address the causes and concerns that God has laid on your heart. After you have completed identifying both your passions and your gifts, identify how you can use your gifts to help address your passions. Take time to identify what context (church, school, business, etc) you can live out your calling. Talk with friends, family, and your pastor for ideas! Finally, identify at least one action you will do before the end of Lent that pairs your gifts and passions. Complete these statements (you may need more space):

**My calling is to \_\_\_\_\_ (how you will address your passion) by \_\_\_\_\_ (how you will use your gifts) by working with \_\_\_\_\_ (name of church or organization).**

**My first step in living out my calling will be to \_\_\_\_\_ (what you are going to do) at/with \_\_\_\_\_ (who you are going to work with or where you will work) on \_\_\_\_\_ (Date!).**