

“Hold on to that Plow!”

And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him (Colossians 3:17).

Genesis 1:26-28 ¹

Wayne is a good friend of mine from another city. After spending many years as a successful hospital administrator, Wayne decided to begin a business of his own. Things went well for a while, but then a large corporation with whom he competed offered to buy his business, and threatened to put him under if he refused.

Wayne and his banker visited a wealthy friend who had offered to help in a financially significant way so Wayne could resist the takeover. But before he gave Wayne the money, this wise Christian man asked him, “Wayne, what is your deepest passion in life?”

Wayne thought he knew the answer to the question right away, but he asked for the night to pray through his answer. The next day, Wayne told his benefactor, “My real passion in life is to build Christ into the lives of men. I had rather do that than eat.”

Wayne declined the offer, sold the business, was asked to become the “interim” director of a local rescue mission, and he led that organization with passion and distinction for the next fifteen years.² In each of these significant career changes, Wayne made less *money*—a lot less—but his *joy* increased, and that joy continues to this very day.

As you sit here this morning, my friend, **what is your passion? What would you rather do than eat or sleep? What fire has God placed within you that burns unquenchable in your heart?**

Today is our fourth “official” sermon for Black History Month, since next Sunday, Lord willing, I’ll be in Ghana. Our African American Spiritual for today is *Hold On! Keep Your Hand on the Plow! Hold On!* Made familiar by Mahalia Jackson, the lyrics seem to vary, but one version goes like this:

Keep your hand on that plow! Hold on!
Keep your hand right on that plow! Hold on!
If you want to get to heaven, let me tell you how—
Just keep your hand on the gospel plow . . .

If that plow stays in your hand,
It’ll land you straight in the Promised Land.
Keep your hand on that plow! Hold on!

Now when I think about plowing, the first thing that comes to my mind is my parents. Both of my parents grew up on farms, and they grew up in the day when plowing was done behind a mule. My Dad often told me that the way to plow a straight furrow is not to look behind you at *where you’ve been*, but to keep your eye on a point at the far end of the field and to plow toward that point. The idea is to fix your eye on *where you’re going*.

I also remember that my Dad was fond of an article written long ago in *The Progressive Farmer* with the title, “Love Your Farm.”ⁱⁱⁱ Here are two paragraphs from that article:

¹ A sermon by Dr. David C. Stancil, delivered at the Columbia Baptist Fellowship in Columbia, MD on February 11, 2018.

² <https://jeremiah302publications.wordpress.com/>

“Love your farm. Every farmer should not only love his work as the artist loves his work, but in this spirit, too, every farmer should love his farm itself as he would love a favorite horse or dog. . . .

“Love your ground—that piece of God’s creation which you hold in fee simple. . . . If you cannot be proud of it now, begin today to make it a thing you can be proud of. Much dignity has come to you in that you are owner and caretaker for a part of God’s footstool; show yourself worthy of that dignity.”

This is what I think of when I hear “keep your hand on the plow,” but I suspect that the real inspiration for the spiritual came from Jesus, who told us that “*Anyone who puts a hand to the plow and then looks back is not fit for the Kingdom of God*” (Luke 9:62). Jesus, too, told us to keep our eyes on where we’re going, not on where we’ve been.

Jesus was talking about serving God’s Kingdom, of course. He was talking about the level of our commitment to following Him. Now when we think about “serving God’s Kingdom,” our thoughts may gravitate toward the short list of options that was common as most of us were growing up. In those days, if you felt called to serve God, you could choose to be either be a pastor or a missionary. End of story.

I suggest to you that such a view misses nearly the whole picture of what God is doing in the world. Some of us are indeed called to be pastors and missionaries, but I was very glad this week that the young man who repaired the heat pump at my condo was doing neither of those things! There are MANY things in the world that need doing that are beyond the skills and calling of most pastors and missionaries.

My friend, Stooky Crockett, is a world-renowned plastic surgeon. Stooky has retired from surgery, but when he was practicing he would often make statements reminiscent of Eric Liddell’s famous comment in *Chariots of Fire*: “God made me fast, and when I run, I feel God’s pleasure.” Stooky often said, “God made me good, and when I do surgery, I feel God’s pleasure.”

I brag on Jill’s skill as a lactation consultant all the time—you’ll forgive me for this, I hope. A couple of years ago, a nationally-known leader in lactation research and teaching told Jill’s boss that “Jill is one of the ten best lactation consultants in the country.” That is the gift of God, too.

My dentist, Dr. Christopher Yoo, named his practice “Grace Dental,” and he has pictures and plaques all over his office that talk about God’s grace. Jim Rouse, the developer who founded our fair city, did so out of a distinctly Christian vision for human life, which he learned at the Church of the Savior in D.C. Ken’s Auto, where, thanks to Dan Trollinger, I take my cars for repair, is an explicitly Christian business. I submit to you that every one of these persons is “serving God’s Kingdom” in ways that are both essential and transforming. Here’s another auto mechanic who’s doing that, too:

VIDEO of Alfonso, Mechanic for the Lord . . . 3:30³

Like Alfonso, every one of us deeply desires for our life—and our work—to MATTER. God created humankind to govern, care for, and steward this planet, and it takes many, many differing skill sets to get that job done (Genesis 1:26-28, 2:15). Paul reminded us that “*Whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. . . . Whatever you do, do it from the heart, as something done for the Lord and*

³ <https://www.rightnowmedia.org/Content/illustration/124433>

not for people, knowing that you will receive the reward of an inheritance from the Lord. You serve the Lord Christ” (Colossians 3:17, 23-24).

Paul reminds us that what we do for the Lord doesn't have to be fancy or famous. The most ordinary of tasks can be done in a worshipful fashion. A monk named Brother Lawrence made famous something as simple as the washing of dishes as an act of worship.⁴

I could go down nearly every row and tell of ways in which you in this room are offering your work as worship to the Lord, each and every day. But let me ask you: would the people with whom you work, live, and play be *surprised* to know that you are a follower of Jesus? Would they be *shocked*? I hope not. I hope that those who know you at work would say, “Of course she's a follower of Jesus. I can see that every day.” Here's someone else who's become well-known for glorifying God at work:

VIDEO: Linda: Driving Buses for the Lord (3:30)⁵

Isn't that great? Now many of us in this room are still actively in the workforce, but not a few of us are retired, and some of us have been retired a long time. Do these ideas about “keeping your hand on the plow” and “work as worship” have anything to do with the later seasons of life?

Well, yeah. Do I need to remind you that Moses began a new and world-changing career when he was 80 years old? Immanuel Kant wrote one of his best works at 74. Verdi composed *Ave Maria* at 85. And Michelangelo completed the *Pietà*, often considered his best work, at 87.

Paul Brand is another renowned surgeon, famous for his work with leprosy patients. Here's what he has to say about work as worship in later life: “I well remember when I was at my **physical peak**. I was 27 years old and had just finished medical school. A group of friends and I loved mountain climbing, and we could climb for hours. For some people, life is over when they cross that peak.

“I well remember my **mental peak**, too. I was 57 years of age and was performing groundbreaking hand surgery. All of my medical training was coming together in one place. For some people, life is over when they cross this peak.

“I'm now over 80 years of age, and I recently realized that I'm approaching another peak—my **spiritual peak**. All I have sought to become as a person now has the opportunity to come together in wisdom, maturity, kindness, love, joy, and peace. And I realize when I cross this peak, life will not be over; indeed, it will have just begun.”⁶

Some of you will remember that one of the ways we talk about “work as worship” here at CBF is to talk about our “S.H.A.P.E.” S.H.A.P.E. is an acronym for God's unique organization of your Spiritual Gifts, your Heart, your Abilities, your Personality, and your life Experience to prepare you for the particular “work as worship” God has prepared for you. We don't have time to go over S.H.A.P.E. in detail this morning, but I'll post several resources with the online version of this sermon that will help you think more deeply about where it is that YOUR passion lies.⁷ Our *Work as Worship* retreat on February 23 will help you with that discovery, too.

⁴ Brother Lawrence: *The Practice of the Presence of God* <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/5657>

⁵ <https://www.rightnowmedia.org/Content/illustration/128460>

⁶ Steve Moore, “A Graceful Goodbye,” *Leadership* (Summer 2002), p. 42.

⁷ https://www.sugarsync.com/pf/D395962_08797820_6067919
https://www.sugarsync.com/pf/D395962_06181273_748066

Well, before I close, I want to say just a word about this week's *PowerPoint* background. I don't know whether this is a real building or not. It may just be a concept drawing. But I like the "W" for "work" and "worship," and I mean for the picture to remind us that even buildings can be designed for the glory of God. Churches and cathedrals have always been so, of course, and perhaps the best example in the world today is the *Sagrada Familia* in Barcelona.

The real point of today's message is, **"Whatever God has made you good at, be good at it for the glory of God!"**

Hold on to your plow, my friend. Hold on to your plow!

Amen, and Amen.

ⁱ Hold on! Hold on! Keep your hand on the plow, hold on!
Hold on! Hold on! Keep your hand on the plow, hold on!

Heard the voice of Jesus say,
"Come unto me, I am the way."
Keep your hand on the plow, hold on!
When my way gets dark as night,
I know the Lord will be my light.
Keep your hand on the plow, hold on!

Hold on! Hold on! Keep your hand on the plow, hold on!

You can talk about me much as you please.
The more you talk, gonna stay on my knees.
Keep your hand on the plow, hold on!
When I get to heaven, gonna sing and shout,
Be nobody there to put me out!
Keep your hand on the plow, hold on!
Hold on! Hold on! Keep your hand on the plow, hold on!
Hold on! Hold on! Keep your hand on the plow, hold on!

When I get to heaven, gonna sing and shout,
Be nobody there to put me out.
Keep your hand on the plow, hold on!
I know my robe's gonna fit me well,
I tried it on at the gates of Hell.
Keep your hand on the plow, hold on!

Hold on! Hold on! Keep your hand on the plow, hold on!
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=loee2W0YEXE>
<https://genius.com/Mahalia-jackson-keep-your-hand-on-the-plow-lyrics>

ⁱⁱ Love your farm. Every farmer should not only love his work as the artist loves his work, but in this spirit, too, every farmer should love his farm itself as he would love a favorite horse or dog.

He should know every rod of the ground, should know just what each acre is best adapted to, should feel a joy and pride in having every hill and valley look its best, and he should be as much ashamed to have a field scarred with gullies as he would to have a beautiful colt marked with lashes; as much ashamed to have a piece of ground worn out from ill treatment as to have a horse gaunt and bony from neglect; as much hurt from seeing his acres sick from wretched management as he would be to see his cows half-starving from the same cause.

Love your ground—that piece of God’s creation which you hold in fee simple. Fatten its poorer parts as carefully as you would an ailing collie. Heal the washed, torn places in the hillsides as you would the barb-scars on your pony. Feed with legumes and soiling crops and fertilizers the barren and gullied patch that needs special attention; nurse it back to life and beauty and fruitfulness.

Make a meadow of the bottom that is inclined to wash; watch it and care for it until the kindly root-masses heal every gaping wound, and in one unbroken surface the “tides of grass break into foam of flowers” upon the outer edges

Love your farm. If you cannot be proud of it now, begin today to make it a thing you can be proud of. Much dignity has come to you in that you are owner and caretaker for a part of God’s footstool; show yourself worthy of that dignity. Watch earnestly over every acre. Let no day go by that you do not add something of comeliness and potential fertility to its fields.

And finally, leave some spot beneath the shade of some giant tree where at last, “like a shock of corn cometh in his season,” you can lay down your weary body, leaving the world a little better for your having lived in it, and earning the approval of the Great Father (Who made the care of the fields and gardens the first task given man): “Well done, [_____,] thou good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of Thy Lord.”

Clarence Poe

Dr. Poe (1881-1964) was for 67 years a full-time employee of The Progressive Farmer Company; he was President (1903-1953) and Editor-in-Chief (1903-1958).

Name:

Date:

My Guiding Metaphors:

things I really like to do	things I'm really good at
things I moderately like to do	things I'm moderately good at
things I don't much like to do	things I'm okay at
things I really don't like to do	things I'm no good at

Questions for self-evaluation from John Upton (BGAV):

1. Has the path that you have taken made you more open to your family or less?
2. Is your heart now more open to real intimacy or less?
3. Is the circle of your love for neighbor/stranger bigger than it was or smaller?
4. Are you less anxious, less driven than you were, or are you more anxious and more driven?
5. Is your sense of joy deeper or duller?
6. Have you grown more generous or somehow more tightfisted?
7. Are you more aware of your world and alive to it or less?
8. Is there more of a receptive space in your heart for God, or have you grown more distant?
9. Is your spirit freer than it was or somehow more enslaved?
10. Is there more of Christ in you now than there was, or less?

What S.H.A.P.E are you?

A Personal Profile of
Members and Participants of Columbia Baptist Fellowship

S.H.A.P.E. – Spiritual Gifts – Hearth – Abilities – Prayers – Experiences
Original Concept from Saddleback Church, Lake Forest, California. Used by Permission.

God has created you and shaped your life in unique and wonderful ways so that you can experience the joy of helping the Kingdom of God “*to come on earth as it is in heaven*” (Matthew 6:10). We do different things to make a living, but we all have the same calling to use our talents, abilities, interests, personality and experience to follow Jesus, to strengthen His Body, the Church, and to enlarge God’s Kingdom on earth. When we use our abilities for God’s glory, we come to know God more fully as we obey Him and He accomplishes His work through our lives.

The CBF Ministry Team is asking every member and regular attendee to complete this Personal Profile.

Please fill out your information, then fill in the **BEST** way to contact you:

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____ Mobile Phone: _____

Email Address: _____

BEST WAY TO CONTACT YOU: _____

S.H.A.P.E. – **Spiritual Gifts** – Heart – Abilities – Prayer – Experience

What is a Spiritual Gift? What is YOUR Spiritual Gift?

On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was given to all believers (Acts 2:3-4), and the Spirit continues to be given to every person who believes in Jesus (Acts 2:38; Romans 8:9). **God gives at least one spiritual gift to every believer** (1 Corinthians 12:7, 11; Ephesians 4:4-7). Three good tests for the presence of a spiritual gift are:

1. You will enjoy using this ability
2. You will be effective in using this ability
3. Other people will confirm that God is using you in this way

No believer has every spiritual gift and no single gift is given to everyone (1 Corinthians 12: 27-31). Our different spiritual gifts complement each other to accomplish God's purposes through the church (Romans 12: 4-6, 1 Corinthians 3: 6-9, 12: 4-7).

While knowing your spiritual gift(s) is helpful, this is not as important as **making sure that your life is a blessing to others. Love is the most important factor in spiritual gifts** (1 Corinthians 12: 31-13:13, Matthew 22: 39-40) and the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives turns our-lives-as-a-whole into gifts!

On the next page are descriptions of many spiritual gifts. Please mark those gifts you believe are active in your life. If this is a new concept to you or if you need help with this idea, the following internet links provide on-line gift assessments:

www.spiritualgiftstest.com (click on Tests tab then choose your test)

<http://mintools.com/spiritual-gifts-test.htm> (on the left side under Spiritual Gifts, click on Spiritual Gifts Test Online)

www.elmertowns.com (click on Resources and then Spiritual Gifts Test)

Spiritual Gifts	Description
Artistic Creativity	Christians with this gift use their creative ability to help others deepen their relationship with God – can include art, poetry, prose, drama, etc.
Counseling	Christian Counseling can serve others through advice, comfort and encouragement so that they experience help and healing.
Craftsmanship	This gift enables Christians to use a trade or craft for the good of the body of Christ.
Discernment	Christians with this gift are especially good at distinguishing truth from error.
Encouragement	This Christian sees the positive and the potential in others and encourages them to use their gifts to the glory of God and the spread of the Gospel.
Evangelism	This gift enables Christians to communicate the gospel to non-Christians in a manner conducive to leading them to faith.
Giving	These Christians give materials things cheerfully and generously.
Healing	This gift enables Christians to serve as God’s instrument for restoring the health of others.
Helping	The ability to joyfully work with others to complete the task God has given them.
Hospitality	Christians with the gift of Hospitality enjoy having guests in their homes, and they enjoy making others welcome and comfortable in other settings as well.
Knowledge	This studious Christian shares, investigates, collects and/or analyzes information that is needed for the health and administration of the church.
Leadership	The ability to inspire and motivate other Christians to work toward a common cause or goal to achieve the work of the church.
Mercy	This Christian demonstrates empathy through practical deeds toward those who need help with issues concerning mind, body and/or spirit.
Missionary	Christian missionaries utilize their gifts to expand God’s kingdom beyond their own culture.
Music	Through singing, playing an instrument or directing, musical Christians worship and help others to worship and to know the Risen Savior.
Organization	This gift enables Christians to understand goals for specific areas of ministry and to draft effective plans toward reaching these goals.
Prayer Intercessor	This diligent Christian will pray continually over extended periods of time, pleading to God on behalf of another, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
Prophecy	Some Christians are able to perceive a message from God, recognize that it is by the Holy Spirit and to then communicate it to others.
Service	This gift enables Christians to recognize where their participation is needed and to act on it.
Shepherding	This gift enables Christians to assume the personal responsibility for the spiritual well-being of a group of believers.
Teaching	Teachers in the Christian faith are able to communicate Truth in a manner that enables others to learn and grow in their faith journey.
Wisdom	This gift enables Christians, with the intercession of the Holy Spirit, to understand a deeper meaning, apply that knowledge and insight and to share that with others.

S.H.A.P.E. – Spiritual Gifts – **Heart** – Abilities – Prayer – Experience

When we speak of someone’s passion, of what he or she is really motivated to do, we sometimes say that “she/he has a **heart** for that ministry”. Even as we have differing gifts, so we have differing interests and passions as well. Some of us “have a heart” for athletics, some for aesthetics, some for outreach, some for youth, etc. How would you complete the following sentence?

- I love to _____
- I love to _____
- I love to _____

What groups do you like to work with? (Check all that apply)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Infants-Kindergarten | <input type="radio"/> “Gen X” – born early 1960s to early |
| <input type="radio"/> Elementary School | <input type="radio"/> 1980s |
| <input type="radio"/> Middle School | <input type="radio"/> “Gen Y”/Millennial |
| <input type="radio"/> High School | <input type="radio"/> Generation – born |
| <input type="radio"/> College | <input type="radio"/> early 1980s to early 2000s |
| <input type="radio"/> Singles | <input type="radio"/> Seniors |
| <input type="radio"/> Couples | |

What group do you enjoy working with THE MOST? _____

What church ministries, issues or needs inspire you? _____

What concerns you the most? _____

Is there a ministry or mission that keeps coming to your mind again and again?

S.H.A.P.E. – Spiritual Gifts – **Heart** – Abilities – Prayer – Experience

A number of possible ministries are listed below. If you have a heart for any of these, please put an “X” in the box beside that ministry.

- Abuse/Family Violence
- At-Risk Children/Youth
- Benevolence/Mercy Ministries
- Bereavement
- Church History
- Community Issues
- Disaster Relief
- Drama
- English as a Second Language
- Environment
- Financial Management
- Food Pantry
- Greeters/Ushers
- Health/Fitness
- Homeless
- Hospice
- Hospitality
- Library/Media Center
- Men’s Ministry
- Missions: International
- Missions: Local
- Missions: Stateside
- Music
- Organization
- Outreach
- Prison Ministry
- Publicity
- Serving/Helping
- Social Events/Picnics
- Teaching
- Tutoring
- Visitation
- Women’s Ministry

S.H.A.P.E. – Spiritual Gifts – Heart – **Abilities** – Prayer – Experience

Jobs or skills in which I have experience: _____

If you have abilities for any of the following, please put an “X” in the box beside that item.

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Administration | <input type="checkbox"/> Graphic Design | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Speaking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arts/Crafts | <input type="checkbox"/> Hospice | <input type="checkbox"/> Puppets |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Athletics/Sports | <input type="checkbox"/> Insurance | <input type="checkbox"/> Repairs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Audio/Visual | <input type="checkbox"/> Library Science | <input type="checkbox"/> Scenery Production |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cake Decorating | <input type="checkbox"/> Microsoft Access | <input type="checkbox"/> Sewing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Catering | <input type="checkbox"/> Microsoft Office | <input type="checkbox"/> Sound System |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Computers/Technology | <input type="checkbox"/> Music: Composition | <input type="checkbox"/> Strategic Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cooking/Baking | <input type="checkbox"/> Music: Directing | <input type="checkbox"/> Teller |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Data Entry | <input type="checkbox"/> Music: Instrumental | <input type="checkbox"/> Van/Bus Driver |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Decorating | <input type="checkbox"/> Music: Vocal | <input type="checkbox"/> Vehicle Maintenance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Desktop Publishing | <input type="checkbox"/> Performing Arts/Drama | <input type="checkbox"/> Videography |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electronics | <input type="checkbox"/> Personnel Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer Leadership |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Finance | <input type="checkbox"/> Photography | <input type="checkbox"/> Web Design |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Floral Arranging | <input type="checkbox"/> Planning Trips/Events | <input type="checkbox"/> Word Processing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food Preparation | <input type="checkbox"/> PowerPoint | <input type="checkbox"/> Writing |

Languages, specify: _____

S.H.A.P.E. – Spiritual Gifts – Heart – Abilities – **Prayer** – Experience

What would be your prayer for CBF for the future? _____

How would you pray to be involved in CBF in the future? _____

S.H.A.P.E. – Spiritual Gifts – Heart – Abilities – Prayer – **Experience**

Please complete: Because of some of my own experiences, I believe I could relate to and encourage someone who is going through:

Please provide your specific qualification for the following, i.e. Nurse, Lawyer, date of certification, etc:

Certified Teacher

Law Enforcement Professional

Commercial Driver’s License

Legal Professional

Construction Professional

Medical Professional

Counseling Professional

Ministry Professional

Disaster Relief Certification

Passed Background Check for Working with Children

Formal Education, Seminars, Special Training: _____

THANKS FOR YOUR HELP !

If you are providing this information in paper form, please turn in to a member of the staff or of the MINISTRY Team.