

**E** - Experiences

*“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”*

*Romans 8:28*

**OVERVIEW**

In this session you will:

1. Learn more about your life Experiences can shape your ability to serve.
2. Identify and Clarify several of the Experiences God has allowed you to have.
3. Begin to think about how you can use your Experiences to serve others more effectively.

You have been shaped by your experiences in life, many of which were beyond your control. God allows nature to happen and He also allows people to exercise free will in their choices—their actions and reactions—which result in our life experiences. Our experiences profoundly shape and affect our lives. In determining your SHAPE for serving God, you should examine at least six kinds of experiences from your past.

- ❖ **Family** experiences: What do you remember from your youth and childhood?
- ❖ **Educational** experiences: What were your favorite subjects in school?
- ❖ **Work** experiences: What jobs have you been most effective in and enjoyed most?
- ❖ **Spiritual** experiences: What have been your most meaningful times with God?
- ❖ **Ministry** experiences: How have you served God and others in the past?
- ❖ **Painful** experiences: From what problems, hurts, and trials have you learned?

It is this last category, *painful* experiences, that perhaps God most often uses to prepare you for ministry. God never wastes a hurt! In fact, your *greatest* ministry will most likely come out of your greatest hurt. Who could better minister to the parents of a Down Syndrome child than another couple who have a child afflicted in the same way? Who could better help an alcoholic recover than someone who fought that demon and found freedom? Who could better comfort a wife whose husband has left her for an affair than a woman who went through that agony herself?

God allows you to go through painful experiences to equip you for ministry to others. The Bible says, *“who comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”* **2 Corinthians 1:4**

If you really desire to be used by God, you must understand a powerful truth: The very experiences that you have resented or regretted most in life—the ones you’ve wanted to hide and forget—are the experiences God wants to use to help others. They *are*, or are at least a part, of your ministry!

### **Identify and Clarify your Experiences**

As you look at your Family, Educational, Work, Spiritual, Ministry, and Painful experiences identify three that you think have especially helped you to identify with others in similar situations.

1.) \_\_\_\_\_

2.) \_\_\_\_\_

3.) \_\_\_\_\_

**After you write your top experiences on your S.H.A.P.E. profile, ask others about possible ministry opportunities there may be where you can use these experiences.**