



## Sacrifice

In February, 1996, 42,000 pastors from across the country gathered in Atlanta, Georgia. It was the largest-ever gathering of clergy, for inspiration, fellowship, encouragement, and worship. It was one of the most—perhaps the most—moving experiences I have ever had in corporate worship of the Lord. As I traveled home I found myself asking, “God, why can’t the gathering of your people always be like this? What will it take for the church to exhibit such a spirit of openness and expectancy and faith and obedience all the time?” And in the middle of the night on a bus heading home, God gave me a vision. I was standing on the platform of an unfamiliar sanctuary (I later realized it was the sanctuary of the congregation I was soon to pastor) and the Spirit of God led me from the platform to the altar. But rather than kneeling at the altar as I would normally do, God laid me across the top of the altar, face down, arms outstretched. And as I began to weep, the Lord said, “When the church becomes like this, then it will become what I want it to be, then you can experience the fullness of my presence as you did this week.” I was awake and silent the rest of the trip home and pondered that vision for weeks following.

I’ve seen the church embattled, in turmoil, divided, revived, educated, organized, adorned, empowered, active, excited, reaching out in service. But I am not sure I have ever seen it

sacrificed. You see, the day of sacrifice has not passed. Now, don’t get me wrong. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ on Calvary’s tree paid the price for sin once for all. But that does not mean there is still not sacrifice to be made: our sacrifice of self to the cause of Christ and the sacrifice of self-will to divine will.

I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12:1–2 NIV)

It is possible to become so familiar with this passage that after studying it and contemplating it, we never get around to living it. We applaud human logic, expertise, talent, abilities, and skills. And they are wonderful gifts to the Lord. We focus upon what we can give to God and what we can do for God. But before any of those things can be used to their maximum effectiveness, there must be something more. Beyond salvation and sanctification there is still more.

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### SHAPE on the Go

#### August

- 5 Michigan Cohort 4  
Leader Training
- 15–16 Indiana Cohort Retreat
- 18–20 Michigan Cohort 4  
Orientation Retreat
- 21–23 Illinois Cohort 1  
Orientation Retreat

#### September

- 11–13 Louisiana Cohort 3  
Orientation Retreat
- 27 Georgia SHAPE  
Presentation

#### October

- North Central Region  
Leaders’ Retreat
- 22 W PA SHAPE  
Leaders’ Retreat

Please contact Paul at [PDreger@chog.org](mailto:PDreger@chog.org) for fall training dates and winter scheduling as soon as possible.

### Submissions

E-mail SHAPE-related articles and relevant photos to Paul at [PDreger@chog.org](mailto:PDreger@chog.org) to be considered for SHAPE newsletter. Submission implies consent for publication.



(continued from cover)

### Sacrifice.

...Letting go of pride and the need to prove myself; of comparison and competition; of power and prestige and position, finding emotional healing from the hurts of life.

...Being totally captivated by God; divine love and grace; complete trust

and obedience; covered by the wisdom and power of God.

I am still waiting to see what would happen if, if only...

Lord, start with me. Heal me. Cleanse me of all that is not you. I want to be completely yours.



Unless otherwise noted, *SHAPE* articles are written by Paul Dreger. He has served the Church of God for thirty-nine years as pastor, area administrator in Tennessee, and currently national director of *SHAPE* (Sustaining Health and Pastoral Excellence).

## Here and There: SHAPE Happenings Across North America

Leader training for new cohorts in Michigan and Illinois continued with meetings on July 1 in Lansing and on July 14 in Decatur. Both regions have planned orientation retreats in August.

As reported in the November 2013 issue of *SHAPE Newsletter*, Pastor Whitfield Blenman, of Kissimmee, Florida, and Pastor Jefferson Bannister, of New York City, have been working with pastors from their home island of Barbados to launch a SHAPE-related ministry with them. That

ministry dream became reality when twenty-eight pastors and leaders from Barbados gathered at the Solid Rock Church of God in Kissimmee, July 23–30, for instruction and inspiration. Leaders of this week-long conference were Church of God Ministries General Director Jim Lyon, Chuck Myricks, Ken Love, Jeannette Flynn, Clinton Chisholm, Greg Hall, and Jeff Frymire. On the last day, Paul led two sessions focusing on finishing well in ministry and an introduction to SHAPE. Further discussion will take

place to determine the next steps in support of and ministry to the leaders of the Church of God in Barbados.

Please be in prayer for new initiatives that will begin this fall. Paul will meet with leaders of the Church of God in Georgia in September to introduce the ministry of SHAPE. The training of SHAPE cluster leaders will begin in November in Jamaica, with the launch of the first Jamaica cohort in January 2015.



*SHAPE Illinois Cohort 1 Leaders have continued their training in anticipation of the August 21–23 Orientation Retreat at Camp Warren, near Decatur. Pictured above are, in row 1, Carl Wagner, Johnny Creasong, Tim Bamba Lusitana, Vance Neal, and, in row 2, State Pastor Eric Livingston, David Bowen, Fred Wright, Dan Masters. Not pictured: Terry Arington.*

I've known my wife Debbie since we were babies in the nursery at Sherman St. Church of God in Fort Wayne, Indiana, where my father pastored at the time. Through a course events, of time together and more time apart, we were married twenty-one years later. Those early days of marriage were days of testing and trial and temptations to control and manipulate. Through it all, we were practicing all we had ever heard about marriage from family and friends and books, trying to understand how two could truly become one.

Looking back, it is truly amazing how far we have come. Those early years of test and trial gave way to many, many years of experiencing and celebrating the power of God to transform two into one in amazing ways. Are we still learning? Of course! But we no longer have to work frantically at the first steps. We are enjoying the blessing of love and commitment that is now who we are in Christ, not what we struggle to do to make things work.

That scenario is not too dissimilar from our journey together as kingdom servants. One of our greatest challenges in the church is to learn how to "Be the Body of Christ journeying together into the fullness of Christ." We are called as the people of God to be united in the fulfillment of the mission of Christ in the world. We are called to make disciples as we journey through life. Put another way, we are being made into disciples by the power of the Holy Spirit as we journey together in life. Discipleship is not so

much a program as it is a lifestyle of interdependent relationships centered upon Jesus. Unquestionably, programs and methods of discipling have been beneficial to all of us. But there must come a time when program gives way to passion: our story invaded by his story that permeates every part of life so that we are not dependent upon a program but on the power of God's Holy Spirit to tell that story of transformation that has come not only to our own life, but that is available to all who will believe, trust, and obey. At some point we, like Debbie and I in our marriage relationship, must stop talking about trusting one another and loving one another and supporting and encouraging one another in ways that have thus far escaped far too many of us—and given an unbelieving world plenty of ammunition to doubt and question our Savior and Lord—and do it in the name and power of Jesus.

SHAPE: program or lifestyle? We can't deny the first. SHAPE is a program of ministry with many elements that give it identity and direction. The first steps of the SHAPE journey were

invaluable in helping us understand direction and intent and catch a glimpse of a desired outcome. But unless the program evolves into a heart-embraced lifestyle, it has failed in its purpose. There are far too many pastors who have been involved in the journey, who have come to the end of the curriculum and have not been inspired to look beyond the program and embrace a lifestyle that refuses to ever journey again in isolation and independency, who do not commit to a life of continuing intentional growth in the company of like-minded, like-hearted kingdom servants.

Where will the ministry of SHAPE be ten years from now? God alone knows. But of this I am sure: if program dependency does not give way to a genuine heart-felt commitment to life and ministry in community, we will have failed to achieve the transformation we believe this ministry is capable of generating.

Have you caught the vision? Have you embraced the lifestyle? Have you responded to the call to life and ministry in community? Are you sharing it with others?

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Next issue: Ideas for sustaining life and ministry in community beyond your initial SHAPE commitment.