



SHAPE

sustaining health & pastoral excellence

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SHAPE 2015

Entrance into a new year is typically accompanied by hopes, dreams, aspirations, resolutions—a desire to do better, to do more, to be something that has eluded us in the past. It is a time to reflect and to refocus. It is a time to once again fill the calendar with activities. During these early days of this new year, the ministry of SHAPE is experiencing both a celebration of what has been experienced in the past and an anticipation of continuing service to the pastors and congregations of the Church of God and beyond. Exciting developments for 2015 include:

- changes in the reading list of the core curriculum, as well as additional resources included in the 2015 *SHAPE Manual*;
- continuing growth in existing regions;
- expansion into new regions of North America and the Caribbean;
- the launch of SHARE—Sustaining Health And Relational Excellence—for SHAPE pastors and their congregational leaders; and

- the introduction of SHAPE beyond the borders of the Church of God for the first time!

Coupled with the developing ministries of Church of God Ministries and the Domestic Ministries Team, our desire is to provide support and encouragement to you in ever-expanding ways. In cooperative efforts with regional pastors and regional SHAPE coordinators, our prayer is that through us the Lord can make a kingdom impact that brings genuine transformation to pastors, their families, congregations, and communities.

Your participation and leadership is critical. Thank you for your commitment to this ministry and to the Church of God. You are loved and appreciated!



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).

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SHAPE Training Cluster

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5–6 Jamaica Cohort 1
Orientation Retreat

Please contact Paul soon for scheduling in 2015 in your region. Requests are already beginning to fill the spring calendar.

Submissions

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

Find SHAPE online at jesusisthesubject.org/shape



CHURCH OF GOD
MINISTRIES

Integrity for Rent

Integrity for Rent.” That is what the sign said. It intrigued me. What did the author intend? Is integrity something to be embraced and discarded based upon conditions and circumstances? Can I “use” integrity as a tool in my toolbox to satisfy my needs and get the job done when it is convenient or necessary and resort to less than admirable tactics when the need arises? Is integrity something I do or is it something I am?

Then the sign disturbed me.

Is the sign a reflection of the moral and ethical condition of our culture, of the current human situation? Have we become so morally destitute culturally that anything goes is the accepted norm of human interaction, even in the life of the church?

What satisfies *me* (*us* in the case of some congregational cliques that I know) is the motivating force of my life. My self-serving end justifies the means, regardless of how it impacts others. It seems that *I* has become the emblem of our culture and that *we* has been lost in the shift.

What is integrity? “Let your words be true; be true to your words.”

It is easy to develop trite phrases to satisfy our need to define something that is so critically essential to the survival of an individual reputation, a community, a nation, a culture. Definition is one thing; execution is another task entirely, more difficult. Nonetheless, what must be included in any concept of integrity we develop? Consider this as a minimum requirement for developing a life of integrity.

Integrity: facing life with love, honesty, and grace. Too simple? Consider each of these three experiences.

Love. No, not the world’s concept, but God’s—*agape*. What does that look like? To be earnestly concerned about

the well-being of others and to work to make your contribution to every person a gift that helps them experience the best that life—God—has to offer, without thought of return. This love is a gift of life to others that finds its source, content, and purpose in the reality of God. Every interpersonal relationship we have either blesses or curses, encourages or discourages; either leads another person closer to God or farther from God. Words, actions, even body language, make an impact on others that consciously or unconsciously reflects either the spirit of Christ Jesus or the carnal spirit of the flesh. Love calls us to contribute positively to every relationship we have.

Obviously we can’t control how a person reacts to us, but we can, as Paul says in Romans 12:18, “as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone” (NIV). An impossible task? It certainly is without the influence and empowering of God’s Spirit at work within us. But with God’s help we can live life focused outwardly, because we know that our relationship with God has brought—or is bringing—the healing and well-being we need so that we don’t need to use people to soothe or relieve our pain or hurt and satisfy our needs.

Honesty—with God, self, and others—is one of the greatest needs of our age. We have relativized life and, consequently, minimized the value of integrity. We rationalize, minimize, deny, in any situation that we perceive to threaten our position, our

popularity, our sense of well-being or of value and identity. Honesty is about more than telling the truth, as important as that is. It is also about facing life realistically: exercising a healthy, gospel-centered God-awareness, self-awareness, and world-awareness.

Grace. What does it look like? It looks like forgiveness, patience, gentleness, kindness, goodness, love—grace. It flows out of a heart that has been forgiven, that has been set free from the pain and hurts of life to the degree

that what is offered is the opportunity for freedom for others as well. Grace is not so much a matter of doing as it is a matter of being. Grace is a lifestyle that emerges when true freedom and healing has been experienced, when peace, joy, and love have become the realities of life through the healing touch of God. It is sad to watch people try to exercise grace when they haven’t really experienced it. Most often, whatever they lack in their own experience of grace becomes a barrier to their ability to truly extend grace to another.

Love. Honesty. Grace. Just think of the multitude of implications those three things hold for us!

One of the most humbling and blessed compliments I have ever received came from a senior pastor I briefly served with who said to the leadership team of the congregation after a difficult, lengthy meeting, “Paul has more integrity than any associate pastor I have ever worked with.”

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Every interpersonal relationship we have either blesses or curses, encourages or discourages; either leads another person closer to God or farther from God.

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And he had worked with many associates! It humbled me; it has been a continuing challenge to not compromise that integrity, no matter what happens in life.

Are any of us perfect? Of course not. But we can all strive to live with love, honesty, and grace in every

situation, in every relationship. For when I lose my integrity, I lose my ability to influence my world for the sake of the kingdom, at least temporarily, and perhaps permanently, if not for grace. My integrity is more important than my performance, my philosophy, my personality, my plans, or the perceptions of others. For integrity is first

about who I am, not what I do. It is knowing that I am seeking wholeheartedly the pleasure of God not only in the life I live outwardly but also in the life I live inwardly before God alone.

Integrity for rent? No! It is a lifelong investment we can't afford to neglect.

Here and There: SHAPE Happenings

The first SHAPE National Steering Committee conference call of 2015 took place on January 22. Regional directors and coordinators shared plans and ideas for the continuing development of SHAPE. The curriculum updates were shared and initial plans for the launch of SHARE were discussed. Please pray for regional leaders as they guide the ministry of SHAPE this year.

Minnesota, for continuing training and the development of SHAPE in the North Central Region. Traveling many miles from this vast five-state region, these pastors are committed to life and ministry in community, not only for themselves but for other pastors in their region. Please pray for them as they continue in training and as they launch SHAPE in each of their respective states.

in Emlenton on January 20 for a LAMP training experience. As part of the continuing development of healthy pastors in vital community, this day provided opportunity for these pastors to better understand the LAMP process and develop a plan to make this living, dynamic document a central part of their ongoing SHAPE experience. Dr. Rebecca New-Edson is the SHAPE regional director and Pastor John Milliron serves as SHAPE regional coordinator.

The North Central Leadership Team met December 1–2 in St. Paul,

SHAPE pastors from Western Pennsylvania gathered at Whitehall Camp



Reflections 2010: Tennessee SHAPE Rally