



Fit for purpose – week 4

What shapes your life? w/c 12 December 2021

"I see Christ as the incarnation of the piper who is calling us. He dances that shape and pattern which is at the heart of our reality." (Sydney Carter)

Shape can carry many meanings: "How are things shaping up?", "What shape are you in?", "it's a square-shaped hole." So, what do we mean by 'shape'? To guide our thoughts here, we can focus in on two main aspects:

Condition – be that of a book or of your health

Form – be that a geometric figure or the silhouette of an oak tree.

Read Proverbs 3:1–10

In these verses, the writer outlines some differences between 'normal' perceptions and what really brings wellbeing. How do we take such thoughts into our own day-to-day lives?

Verse 5 is of course not an injunction against understanding per se but just against an internalised and very human version of it. Compare it with verse 13 – "*Blessed are those who find wisdom, those who gain understanding,*" The key is where it comes from – the Psalmist provides a further guide for our understanding here: "*Give me understanding, so that I may keep your law...*" (Psalm 119:34). How do we find such divine understanding – and indeed the wisdom that is not simply our own (v7)?

As we reflect on verses 9 & 10 how do we avoid seeing this as a simple transaction – an early summation of what would come to be known as the prosperity gospel?

Read 1 Corinthians 10:1–13

The Corinthian church was, it would seem from Paul's letters, apt to think well of itself. These verses are a powerful warning against over-confidence, especially with regard to temptation. What is the risk today for the church in seeing ourselves as a small and holy remnant (implicitly superior to others) that alone has the keys to God?

Reflecting on those two aspects of shape (Condition and Form), how do you understand the shape of your life? How can you measure that? The shape of our life is not just *what* we do, but also *why* we do it. How do TS Eliot's words from *Murder in the Cathedral* give you further insight to this idea?

"The last act is the greatest treason. To do the right deed for the wrong reason."

Therefore, thinking back to our study last week – how do we ensure that we are driven by the right things? What influences you?

The shape of our life is closely connected to how we approach worship. The word itself is derived from the Old English... Weorþscipe – or *worth-ship*. The -ship suffix itself derives from words for shape. We can therefore summarise worship – in its widest sense – as being the way we shape our lives to show what is of worth to us. How do we mould our lives to reflect what truly matters?

"Virtue must shape itself in deed." (Alfred Lord Tennyson)