

Talents (part 1)

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“For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves, and entrusted his possessions to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability” (Matthew 25:14-15).

Like the gifted men here, we are entrusted by God with various talents and ministries, each individually unique and valuable. The very fact that a word like “entrusted” is used tells us that our abilities are tools given to us by God with an expectation of return. He has invested talents in each of us, and wants to see His investment produce fruit. Similarly, Paul writes, *“And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them accordingly”* (Romans 12:6).

Having this kind of attitude helps us remember that whatever gifts we have, they are actually part of God’s wealth; that is, they are His possessions. I will not keep these items for eternity, but I must return them to my Master with a record of selflessness. Somewhere in the Kingdom of God this talent of mine is needed – if I am only willing to squander it, waste it, or bury it, my talent will be revoked. Have you ever noticed, in a practical sense, that when you are using somebody else’s money or property, you use it more carefully than your own? I think if we view our blessings as God’s property, we will also show a greater sensitivity to our true mission in life, which is serving Him (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14) and sharing with others (Ephesians 4:28, 1 Timothy 6:18f).

“To one he gave five, to another two, and to another one...” Everybody has talents in this parable – nobody is considered useless at the beginning of the journey. The master determines to give everybody a fair chance at making some kind of produce, or income, from his possessions. This should be comforting to us, especially since we live in an age when the natural tendency of people is to judge and exclude others. Rather than being picky about his workers, the master has divided his wealth amongst all of his servants. There is, of course, wisdom in the idea of diversification, even in a spiritual sense. *“And He gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, and some pastors and teachers... From whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love”* (Ephesians 4:11-16). *“And let not many of you be teachers...”* (James 3:1).

Remember that there is nothing shameful about having only one talent, and neither is there anything to boast of if one is blessed with five (2 Corinthians 10:17). God gives to each of us as many gifts as are appropriate, whatever we can handle. *“According to his own ability...”* God never expects or demands too much of us and neither are we ever given a gift that is beyond our ability to handle, control, and utilize effectively.

“Immediately, the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents...” (Matthew 25:16-17).

“Immediately...” It is interesting to see that the first two servants do not wait to begin using their talents. There is an earnestness that is admirable in the way that they “immediately” go out and start working. Unfortunately, many of us tend to be

lackadaisical about our God-given duties, placing them on the back burner along with failed hobbies, social functions we neglect, and people we do not care for. We give first priority to our own activities, and then give our leftovers to God. But how would the master have responded in this story if the servants had allowed their master's possessions to sit at the bottom of a "to-do" pile, collecting dust? Worse yet, how would the master have responded if they had used the talents for their own purposes, supposing that they would have enough time to cover their tracks and make up the money along the way? The fact that they immediately began working shows that they understood the value of every moment (Ephesians 5:16). These first two servants knew that a moment wasted was one that could never be reclaimed. Similarly:

- Every moment that we do not preach the Gospel, people all around us pass away having never heard the Good News (Ezekiel 3:16ff).
- Every moment that we put money ahead of our children is a moment we can never get back. They will never get younger. There will never be a rewind button to see the things you missed because of an obsession with work.
- Every moment that we allow our Bibles to collect dust, we lose our proficiency. Bible study is not like riding a bike; use it or lose it!