Equipping The Saints

"...For the equipping of the saints for the work of service..." ~ Ephesians 4:12

Volume 2 October 9, 2016 Issue 15

What Are Your Talents?

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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. To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey" (Matt. 25:14-15, NASB).

After reading Jesus' parable of the talents, the point is often made that Christians must be diligent to develop and utilize their abilities. In fact, the words "talents" and "abilities" have come to be synonymous in modern usage. This was not always the case. When Jesus said that a master **"gave… talents,"** He was not saying that the master gave abilities, but rather that he **"entrusted his possessions to them."** To Jesus and His original hearers, a talent was not an ability, but a unit of currency.

You see, we've come to use "talents" and "abilities" interchangeably due to our interpretation of Jesus' parable. Then, when we read Jesus' parable, we immediately think He's speaking of "abilities" when we read "talents." This way of reading the parable is a vicious cycle that seriously inhibits the true meaning of the parable.

There are some elements of this parable that are obvious. God is represented by the master who distributes His possessions (i.e., talents) to his servants. The servants

of the master represent Christians—slaves of God. It is not difficult to see the parallels unfold in this parable. Just as the master went away on a journey and returned (Matt. 25:14-15, 19), Jesus would soon be leaving His disciples and we await His return to this day (cf. John 14:3). Just as the master **"settled accounts"** with his servants (Matt. 25:19), we will be judged based on the things we have done (cf. 2 Cor. 5:10). Just as the servants were punished or rewarded based on their accomplishments (Matt. 25:21, 23, 30), we will receive eternal reward or punishment based on our obedience (cf. Matt. 25:31-46).

We should make this parable very personal. It describes what YOUR Master expects of YOU! However, the question still remains unanswered: what do the talents represent in the parable? Do they simply represent our abilities, or do they represent something more?

Take a look at the wording of the parable again: **"it is just like a man… who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them"** (Matt. 25:14). We can infer from the text that these slaves were expected to use these talents, but what were they?

Although estimates very widely, all agree that in the first century a talent was worth an extraordinary amount of money! Even the one talent man was entrusted with an overabundance of his master's possessions. Whatever these "talents" are, don't think for a moment that you don't have very much. If you've only been given a fraction of what the one talent man received, you've still received far more than you deserve.

But again, what do these "talents" represent? What have WE been entrusted with? Let me answer this question

in the simplest way I know how: ***the talents in this parable represent anything God has given to you!*** Perhaps this seems overly simplistic, but I believe this opens up profound application!

Your talents include the ABILITIES God has given you. Can you teach? Can you strike up conversations and make meaningful connections with people? Are you good at music? Are you good at sports? **"The proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body"** (Eph. 4:16). Whatever abilities God has given you, find ways to use them to His glory and honor!

Your talents include the RESOURCES God has given you. Do you have money? Do you have a car? Do you have a home? Do you have food in your kitchen? Do you own a business? Do you have job? **"Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above"** (Jam. 1:17). Whatever resources God has given you, find ways to use them to His glory and honor!

Your talents include the OPPORTUNITIES God has given you. Do you live in an area where there are opportunities for spiritual growth (e.g., gospel meetings or singings)? Are you apart of a congregation that has opportunities for spiritual growth (e.g., Bible classes or home studies)? Do you ever have opportunities to talk to people (e.g., in waiting rooms, check-out lines, work, or school)? **"So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good"** (Gal. 6:10). Whatever opportunities God has given you, find ways to use them to His glory and honor!

Your talents include the TIME God has given you. Have you been given another day of life? **"Therefore be careful how you walk… making the most of your**

time" (Eph. 5:15-16). Whatever time God has given you, find ways to use it to His glory and honor!

We need to learn to think more broadly about what our talents are. Your talents are not strictly your abilities. They are whatever God (the master) has given to you (the slave). When we begin to think this way about our talents, two things should become clear:

1) We are not nearly as talentless as we might think!

2) We have a lot of work to do to make sure we are properly using ALL that God has entrusted to us!

Let me challenge you to broaden your definition of "talent" and identify the things that God has given you. Live life now so that one day God will say to you, **"Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master"** (Matt. 25:21, 23).

Notes:

AM Lesson:

Local Church Membership: An Introduction

PM Lesson:

What God Has Done For You… (Ephesians 1-3)

"Go therefore and make disciples..."
(Matthew 28:19-20)