

Growing By Developing Your Talents

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Our modern word “talent” currently means a special natural ability or aptitude. However, the word originally referred to a unit of weight or money. This is how it is used in the Parable of the Talents in Matt. 25:14-30. But the point of the parable obviously has to do with the abilities or gifts that God has granted each one of us and expects us to use in his service. It’s because of this association with the parable that the definition of talent changed in the mid-14th century to its current definition.

In this well-known parable, Jesus isn’t teaching a lesson on how to be successful in business; he’s making a very vivid point that if we’re not developing the talents God gave us and using them for the betterment of the kingdom, then we will be cast out of the kingdom. The scriptures repeatedly call on us to grow as Christians. Consider the following thoughts about your talents and how to use them to grow as a Christian and help others grow.

It matters not how much we’ve been given, but it matters much what we do with what we’ve been given. When the master was distributing his goods to his servants, he gave them varying amounts of talents “according to his own ability” (vs. 15). Three servants with three different abilities were given three different amounts of money to manage. In the master’s mind, the servant with the ability to manage 5 talents wasn’t necessarily a better person than the others, and the one that was given one talent wasn’t necessarily a worse person than the others. It wasn’t the ability of each servant that determined whether their master would be pleased with them – it was what they did with their ability.

It’s natural for us to compare ourselves with others. That can lead to either a spirit of arrogance by thinking that we are better than others, or it can lead to a sense of jealousy and worthlessness because we’re not as talented as someone else. Neither are proper. God isn’t concerned with how much talent you have; he’s concerned with what you do with what talent you do have. Are you going to be like the 5-talent man or the 2-talent man and put your abilities to work for the Master, or are you going to be like the 1-talent man and hide it, do nothing with it, and be considered as an “unprofitable servant” (Matt. 25:30)?

In order to be a profitable Christian who is growing “to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:13), you need to find out what your talents are and use them in the service of your Master. “For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them...” (Rom. 12:4-6).

Do you have a talent for teaching? Use it to teach the Bible classes on Sundays and Wednesdays. Use it to have individual or group classes or studies in your home with non-Christians.

Do you have a talent for singing? Then by all means, sing loudly in the services as you praise God and teach and admonish others in song.

Do you have a talent for encouraging others? Send cards to those who are sick or discouraged. Visit the sick. Visit those who are weak in the faith and encourage them to grow stronger. Speak a kind word to a brother or sister in Christ as often as possible, letting them know how much you appreciate them and their contribution to the work.

Do you have the blessing of time because you're retired? Use your extra time to find something to do for someone or for the church. Volunteer to clean the building. Ask the teachers if you can help prepare their class material. Help to keep the classrooms tidy and organized (they can get messy quickly!).

Do you have an income? Do you have a home? I think the answer for most everyone would be "yes". Use your money to help the local church. Use your home to be hospitable and share your blessings with Christians and non-Christians alike. Get to know your brothers and sisters. Show them that they're important. It doesn't matter how big or small your house is. It doesn't matter if all you can offer is peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. Remember, it's not about how much talent you have, it's what you do with it.

Don't think you don't have any abilities. God blessed everyone with the ability to do something in his kingdom. It's your responsibility to find it and use it. And don't be satisfied with what you're currently doing. Extend yourself. Reach out and try new things. Learn and develop and grow. You might just find out that you have an undiscovered talent that can cause you and your fellow Christians to grow even more!

What will Christ say to you when he returns? Will he say, "Well done, good and faithful servant"? Or will he call you a "wicked and lazy servant"?