

# The Christian's Use Of His Talents

Every man has talents. The question is, How will he use them? He can use his talents in business, at home, and in recreation. The Christian man should also use his talents in the church. Failure to do so would be like misappropriating funds. If someone entrusts you with money and you use it on your own behalf rather than his, you are stealing from him. For a Christian man to use his talents for himself but not for the church makes him a thief; it is stealing from God! Using those talents in God's kingdom will lead to church growth and produce personal blessings. In order for this to happen, the Christian man should realize several truths concerning the use of his talents.

## TALENTS ARE GOD-GIVEN

First, the Christian man must realize that God has given him his talents. In the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14–30), the "talents" were sums of money.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, "talents," as we use the word today, are involved in the story, because the master distributed the "talents" to "each according to his own ability" (Matthew 25:15)—or, as we might say, each was given money according to his talents. The parable, therefore, illustrates that "no-talent" people do not exist in the kingdom of God. Just as each one received a sum of money in the parable, everyone has some ability.

<sup>1</sup>"A talent was worth more than a thousand dollars." Kenneth Barker, gen. ed., Notes, *The NIV Study Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1985).

Sometimes a member of the kingdom of God believes that he is absolutely worthless. "What can I do?" he wonders. "I cannot sing, preach, or lead prayer. I am useless."

*The body has no useless members!* The person who cannot preach may be very good at some jobs the preacher cannot do as well; he may be able to repair the plumbing in the church building, drive the church's bus, minister to the sick, or personally bring others to Christ. One who cannot lead singing may be a wonderful teacher of children. One who cannot lead prayer may be skilled at bookkeeping and looking after the congregation's business affairs. The first truth the Christian man ought to realize, therefore, is that God has given each person one or more talents.

He also should realize that *every* talent or ability he has—whether or not he thinks of it as having to do with religion—comes from God. Christians are to attribute all talents to God and praise God for them. Are you good at building? At thinking? At dealing with people? At singing? At studying? Whatever talent you have, you owe that gift to God!

## GOD DOES NOT VALUE ONE TALENT ABOVE ANOTHER

Second, the Christian man must understand that his talents are as important as—but no more important than—those of anyone else in the church. This is the message of 1 Corinthians 12: (1) All gifts come from the same source (vv. 4–

11). (2) Since all members of the church are part of the same body, no one can claim to be disconnected from the rest of the group (vv. 14–16). Apparently, the Corinthians were divided about which gifts were best. Perhaps some who thought their gifts were inferior were jealous of others whose gifts were thought to be superior. Perhaps they thought they were useless and might as well not be in the body. (3) All the gifts in the church are necessary (vv. 17–20). (4) No one should think that anyone else's gift is unnecessary (vv. 21–26). This seems to have been the greatest problem in the Corinthian church. Some Christians with certain gifts—especially the gift of tongues—thought that their gifts were the most important to the church.

We, too, may be inclined to think that some abilities—say, leadership skills, the talent for evangelism, or the ability to give financially—are more important than others. They are not! The person whose talent is service—whether he cleans the building, visits the sick, or comforts the sorrowful—is just as valuable to the body as those whose talents enable them to lead in worship.

### **GOD EXPECTS US TO USE OUR TALENTS IN HIS SERVICE**

Third, the Christian man should realize that God expects him to use his talents in His service. This is basic to a biblical understanding of gifts. The passages which speak of gifts specify that God gave them for the building up of the church to the glory of God. According to 1 Corinthians 12:7, gifts were given “for the common good.” Ephesians 4:11, 12 says that gifts were given “for the equipping of the saints to the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.” Peter told Christians to employ their gifts “in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God . . . so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. . . .” (1 Peter 4:10, 11).

We can easily see how to use some talents to build up the church to the glory of God—such as the ability to speak well or the ability to sing well. However, we can use our other abilities too. For example, in many places, the church has saved a lot of money because Christian men had the talent to do work for the church and were willing to donate their time for that pur-

pose. Christian men who were carpenters, electricians, plumbers, and painters have built and repaired church buildings at no cost to the church. They have used their skills to benefit the church.

### **GOD EXPECTS SOME TO USE THEIR TALENTS IN FULL-TIME SERVICE TO HIM**

Fourth, we must accept the fact that God intends for some Christian men to use their talents in full-time service. We often emphasize that a man does not have to be a preacher to please God, that a Christian does not have to go across the ocean as a missionary to save souls, or that Christians do not have to be full-time workers for the Lord to use their talents effectively in the church. That, of course, is true—but God also intends for some Christian men to give their lives to the preaching and teaching of the Word. The New Testament indicates that the first-century church had full-time, fully supported evangelists, elders, and missionaries.<sup>2</sup>

That evangelists were an important part of the church is indicated by the fact that among the gifts given to the church is listed that of “evangelist” (Ephesians 4:11). God intended for some to serve as “evangelists”—those who bring good news to the world. Furthermore, Paul taught that those who teach and preach the Word should get their living from their work (1 Corinthians 9:3–14). In other words, they should be paid.

Paul said that elders who rule well should be counted worthy of double honor, and especially those who labor in the public proclamation of the Word (1 Timothy 5:17). The idea of “double honor” means that they should be respected and supported financially.

As far as missionaries are concerned, there is no doubt a place for vocational missionaries. Paul himself could be classified as a “vocational missionary” at times, since he sometimes supported himself by making tents. At other times Paul gratefully accepted support for his work as a “missionary.” Being able to give himself

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<sup>2</sup>This is not to say that others who serve cannot also be fully supported. Here we are merely trying to illustrate that the church may appropriately provide full support for some Christian men as they use their talents in the church.

fully to the proclamation of the gospel allowed him to accomplish more.

What does that mean to you personally? The Lord may want you to serve Him as a preacher of the gospel or as a missionary to people who have never had the opportunity to hear the gospel. When Jesus said, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15; KJV), He may have had *you* in mind. Perhaps you ought to say, as the title of a book by Ivan Stewart suggests, *Go Ye Means Go Me*.

## **GOD DOES NOT WANT US TO MISUSE OUR TALENTS**

Fifth, the Christian should consider that he may be using the talents which God has given him for reasons other than what God intended. Imagine, for instance, a man to whom God has given outstanding leadership skills so that he can help build up the church. He has used that capability in his business (he is the head of a corporation) and in his civic life (he is the president of the Rotary Club)—but in the church he always takes a back seat and exercises no leadership at all. Imagine another, to whom God has given the ability to meet people easily, to win their confidence, and to persuade them. He has used this ability to become a great salesman, to the monetary benefit of himself and his company. He could have used his gift to be a great personal worker, but that never crossed his mind. Imagine another man whom God blessed with eloquence. He has used that talent to become a great lawyer, rather than using it to proclaim God's Word persuasively.

How can we know if God intends for us to use the talents He has given us in a lifetime of service as a preacher or missionary? God does not call men today with a "still, small voice." He first calls us through His Word, and then He calls us providentially (1) by providing us with talents, (2) by giving us opportunities, and (3) by developing our desire. For instance, a man may discover that he has the talents necessary to be a preacher, an evangelist. Then opportunities present themselves so that he can exercise those talents. He is given the opportunity to "give a talk" on a Wednesday night, or to speak to a youth group. One or two such opportunities lead to others. Finally, after he has done well in fulfilling those opportunities and after he has

received encouragement from others, he finds a desire to preach taking root and beginning to grow. When that happens—when gifts and opportunities meet with desire—he can sincerely believe that God is (providentially) calling him to be a preacher. If he answers that call in the affirmative, his life will be changed forever.

## **GOD HOLDS US ACCOUNTABLE FOR THE USE OF OUR TALENTS**

Sixth, the Christian man must realize that God will call him to account for his use of his talents. In the parable of the talents, when the master returned, he required an accounting of the three servants (Matthew 25:19). We are stewards of the abilities that God has given us (1 Peter 4:10, 11). We are to use them—not just for our good or profit, but for the sake of the kingdom of God. Stewards are required to be faithful in their service. In the last day, God will judge us on the basis of how we have used the abilities He has given us.

Thus we will be judged not only on the basis of whether we have been morally good or evil, but also on what we have done with what we have. If we have failed to use the talents God has given us to His glory, how can we expect to have His approval on Judgment Day?

## **CONCLUSION**

The U.S. Army used to recruit men with posters which had a picture of Uncle Sam pointing his finger at the viewer. On the poster were the words "Uncle Sam Needs You!"

Change the picture in your mind. Imagine *God* pointing His finger at you. Put in the picture these words: "God Needs You!" God wants men who will use their talents in His service: to serve as elders and deacons in the church, to proclaim the Word of God at home and abroad, to teach the church, to serve by helping the poor and the unfortunate, to be a light to the world, and to build up the church in a hundred ways. *God needs you!* ♦

"What you are is God's gift to you,  
and what you do with what you are  
is your gift to God."

George Foster