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STEWARDSHIP



STEWARDSHIP SPECIAL THE 4 T'S · 02 TALENT

# Talents in God's cause

Developing and dedicating what the Lord has entrusted to us

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*"As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."*

1 PETER 4:10

## OUTLINE OF THE MESSAGE

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| 01 God is the owner; we are the stewards  | 05 Dedicating our abilities to God's cause |
| 02 The parable of the talents             | 06 Burying our talents has consequences    |
| 03 We all receive gifts in order to serve | — Appeal and prayer                        |
| 04 Talents grow when they are developed   |                                            |

Dear brothers and sisters, God has entrusted to our care the treasure, the temple, time and talent. Today we will reflect on the gifts and abilities we have received, our responsibility to develop them, and the decision to dedicate them to His cause.

## THE QUESTION OF THIS MESSAGE

**Are we placing at God's service what He has entrusted to us?**

## 01 God is the owner; we are the stewards

A steward is someone who manages goods that belong to another. In Christian stewardship we acknowledge that God is the Lord of our life. We may develop a skill over many years, but neither life itself, nor the ability to learn, nor our opportunities came about apart from Him. Personal effort has value; it too must be placed under the direction of the One who made it possible.

*"For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?"*

**1 CORINTHIANS 4:7**

*"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."*

**JAMES 1:17**

When we understand where our gifts come from, gratitude takes the place of vanity. A good voice, intelligence, the ability to teach, discernment in management and skill with our hands are no longer reasons for self-exaltation. They become responsibilities received from God.

*"For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."*

**1 CORINTHIANS 6:20**

We also belong to the Lord by redemption. Christ gave His life for us. When we dedicate our abilities to Him, we respond to His love. The stewardship of talents begins with the surrender of the whole person, because a consecrated talent comes from a heart that longs to belong to Jesus.

*"God has left us in charge of His goods in His absence."*

**ELLEN G. WHITE** · Counsels on Stewardship, p. 116

*"Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."*

**1 CORINTHIANS 4:2**

Faithfulness means managing according to the owner's will. So it is not enough to ask whether we have talent, or whether people recognize our competence. We need to ask whom we are serving with our talents.

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**The talent belongs to God; it is up to us to develop it and use it so that His will is done and people are blessed.**

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## 02 The parable of the talents and our responsibility

*"For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

**MATTHEW 25:14-30**

In Jesus' story, a man leaves for another country and entrusts his goods to his servants. In the parable, the talents are sums of money placed in the servants' care. We apply the lesson to the abilities and resources God gives us for His service.

### What each servant did with what he received

**Received 5** — traded and returned 10. "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

**Received 2** — traded and returned 4. The same approval.

**Received 1** — buried it and returned 1. "Thou wicked and slothful servant."

The servants received different amounts, but each received something and each had a responsibility. There is no excuse for pride in the one who received more, nor for giving up in the one who received less. The Lord knows each servant and expects faithfulness in what He has entrusted.

This parable can be applied to the way we manage the financial resources God gives us, but also to the way we use the gifts and talents He grants us.

## TO THINK ABOUT

**Am I developing the gifts and talents God has given me and using them in His cause, so that through them others may come to the feet of Jesus?**

*"Each has his place in the eternal plan of heaven."*

ELLEN G. WHITE · Christ's Object Lessons, p. 326

The servants with five and with two talents worked and brought other talents to their lord. Both were received with the same approval. The difference in amount did not keep their faithfulness from being recognized. God does not ask us to be copies of someone else; He calls us to respond with love and diligence to the opportunities we receive.

If we work to develop the gifts and talents God gives us, He gives us more; but if we bury them, even what we have may be taken away.

### 03 We all receive gifts in order to serve

*"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit."*

1 CORINTHIANS 12:4

A gift received is meant to benefit others. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul describes the church as a body whose members have different functions. We need one another. There is work for those who teach, welcome, organize, visit, counsel, care and cooperate. No member should be treated as dispensable because their service is not very visible.

*"And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship."*

EXODUS 31:3

God equipped Bezaleel for the work on the tabernacle. Craftsmanship also had a place in His work. Today we can dedicate to the mission what we know of education, health, communication, technology, building and management. Natural and acquired abilities are to be consecrated; spiritual gifts are distributed by the Spirit according to His will.

*"Every true disciple is born into the kingdom of God as a missionary."*

ELLEN G. WHITE · Christian Service, p. 9

Missionary responsibility reaches the whole church. We do not need to wait for an office in order to begin. We can teach a child, follow up with an interested person, visit someone who is sick or help a family.

## THE PRACTICAL QUESTION

**What need close to me can I meet with what God has already entrusted to me?**

## 04 Talents grow when they are developed

*"Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands."*

2 TIMOTHY 1:6

Paul urges Timothy to take care of the gift he received. Receiving a gift does not remove the need to exercise it. Whoever wants to teach needs to study the Bible; whoever sings needs to train the voice; whoever manages needs to learn to organize; whoever visits needs to develop listening, sensitivity and knowledge of the Word. Preparation is an expression of responsibility toward God and toward those we serve.

*"It is the work of each one to develop and strengthen the gifts that God has lent him."*

ELLEN G. WHITE · Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, p. 506

Notice the word "lent." Developing our gifts does not turn them into property independent of God. The more we learn, the better equipped we are to serve Him. Consecration must go hand in hand with improvement, so that competence is used with humility, honesty and love.

*"Talents used are talents multiplied."*

ELLEN G. WHITE · Christ's Object Lessons, p. 353

Would you like to receive more talents? Develop the talents God has given you, and you will receive more. In the context of that statement, Ellen White links growth to divine providence, to faith and to persevering effort. God works with us as we use the abilities we have received. As we study in order to explain the Bible to someone else, our own understanding deepens. As we take on a responsibility with prayer and preparation, we learn to serve better. Faithfulness in using our gifts makes room for greater abilities and opportunities for service.

*"Unselfishness underlies all true development."*

ELLEN G. WHITE · Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, p. 32

Christian growth requires a willingness to serve even when there is no applause. Love moves the teacher to prepare the lesson better, the musician to rehearse and the visitor to keep following up. We must develop our talents to benefit people. Public recognition can never replace God's approval.

## 05 Dedicating our abilities to God's cause

*"Speech is a talent."*

ELLEN G. WHITE · Counsels on Stewardship, p. 115

Our words can bring hope, explain the truth and comfort a heart. We must also consecrate the way we speak: harsh words can wound the very people we hope to reach. Stewardship includes both the skill and the character of the one who uses it.

*"Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord."*

ROMANS 12:11

*"The Redeemer will not accept divided service."*

ELLEN G. WHITE · Christian Service, p. 236 (Gospel Workers, p. 113)

Dedicating our talents to God's cause involves worship, mission, home and our daily work:

**At work** — we honor the Lord through integrity.

**In the family** — we honor the Lord through care.

**In the church** — we honor the Lord through cooperation.

## 06 Burying our talents has consequences

The servant who received one talent hid it. His failure was not that he received little: he refused to use what had been entrusted to him. When his lord returned, he gave back the money he had kept, but he had not fulfilled the purpose for which it was given. Keeping a gift without putting it at its owner's service can also reveal unfaithfulness.

*"Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath."*

MATTHEW 25:28-29

The warning is serious: negligence puts us at risk of losing even what we have received. Skills can weaken for lack of use, opportunities pass by, and spiritual willingness can decline when we keep refusing to serve. In the parable, the consequence goes beyond losing the ability: there is an accounting before the Lord.

### Where talents are usually buried

**In fear** — "I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth."

**In comparison** — because someone else received more.

**In comfort** — because commitment feels heavy.

**In self-interest** — when every ability serves only me.

We need to examine our hearts. Are we turning down a task because we truly need preparation, or because we do not want the commitment? Are we willing to learn and to begin with something within our reach?

This warning does not give us the right to judge those who face illness, limitations or other responsibilities. The Lord knows our circumstances. Faithfulness is responding to what He entrusts to us within our real possibilities.

## An appeal to consecrate and develop our talents

Dear brothers and sisters, today the Lord invites us to examine what we have done with His gifts. Perhaps a skill has been forgotten, a missionary opportunity has been put off, or an ability is being used with no room for God's cause. We can acknowledge this before Him and begin again.

### A concrete decision, in three steps

1. **Identify** — a talent you have received.
2. **Choose** — a need it can meet.
3. **Commit** — to a specific act of service.

#### APPEAL

As we faithfully develop and use our talents, God grants us growth, greater abilities and new responsibilities, according to His will. When we bury them, we risk losing even what we already have. Let us place our gifts in the hands of Jesus and dedicate them to His cause.

**“Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.” Matthew 25:21**



#### PRAYER

*Lord, we ask for Your help every day to develop our gifts and talents and to use them in Your cause. May they lead people to Jesus and be used for Your glory. In the name of Jesus, amen.*

## Key texts for the presentation

1 Corinthians 4:2, 7

all we have was received; faithfulness is required.

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|---------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| <b>James 1:17</b>         | every good gift is from above.         |
| <b>1 Corinthians 6:20</b> | we are bought with a price.            |
| <b>Matthew 25:14-30</b>   | the parable of the talents.            |
| <b>1 Peter 4:10</b>       | good stewards of the manifold grace.   |
| <b>1 Corinthians 12:4</b> | diversities of gifts, the same Spirit. |
| <b>Exodus 31:3</b>        | Bezaleel, equipped for the work.       |
| <b>2 Timothy 1:6</b>      | stir up the gift of God.               |
| <b>Romans 12:11</b>       | serving the Lord.                      |
| <b>Matthew 25:21</b>      | faithful over a few things.            |

## Sources

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Bible: King James Version (KJV), the same version as the English slides.

Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Stewardship*, pp. 115–116.

Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 326 and 353.

Ellen G. White, *Christian Service*, p. 9 (original source: *The Desire of Ages*, p. 195) and p. 236 (original source: *Gospel Workers*, p. 113).

Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, pp. 506 and 32.

The Ellen G. White quotations are from her original English writings, with the page of those editions. The exposition and applications are the speaker's commentary.