

*“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, to another one; to every man according to his several ability; then he that had received five talents went and traded with the same, and made them five other 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.” Matthew 25:14-18*

## **USING YOUR TALENTS**

**by Craig Marlatt**

I’ve often wondered why so many Christians who seem so able and gifted for ministry, never seem to get off of the ground when it comes to winning souls; and yet others whom one would rarely consider for positions of responsibility seem to have such fruitful lives. It could be an example of what Paul wrote in Corinthians that *“God hath chosen the foolish things . . . the weak things . . .”* etc. (although I am convinced that somehow all men fit somewhere in these categories). Yet somehow I feel that it may indeed have something to do with how we see the work of Christ on Calvary, and his resurrection from the dead.

It might be helpful to consider a few brief points concerning this dilemma in light of the scripture reference quoted above:

1. Many Christians are not satisfied with their lot in life.

Like the three servants of their Lord in this parable it often seems as though others have gotten more to work with than we’ve been given. He gives some five, some two, and some only one. Regardless of what ability or talent you have been given by the Lord, you have all that you need to do that which He expects of you. God knows what our limitations and abilities are and He alone decides what we need to do what he has called us to do. ( I Cor. 12:11)

I once had a man say to me, “Brother if I could only play the guitar like you do I could have a ministry too.” I think that this is one of the worst things that Christians can do: to compare ourselves among ourselves. Paul was very clear about this in Second Corinthians 10:12, and it’s very obvious throughout the whole of scripture that envy and jealousy are not acceptable to God. Still I have seen many who don’t consider themselves useful to God because they feel ill equipped for the job.

Often people complain because they don’t have enough time or money or education to serve the Lord. How sad it is to hear such things when you know that these are only excuses. There’s not enough money, or time, or learning that can make a man worthy to minister for the Lord Jesus Christ. Only His blood can do that and He gives it free of charge to all of his children.

2. Many are not willing to step out in faith for fear that they might fail.

How often it is that we find this problem among God’s children. Of the three men in the parable only two were willing to take a risk to invest their Lord’s money. They all had something to invest but one lived in fear so instead he hid his Lord’s money. It is very important that we build our lives on the love of God and not the fear of God

only. The fear of God is certainly the beginning of wisdom, but the love of God is, I believe, the fullness of wisdom. Like Peter when he saw the Lord walking on the water we must be willing to get out and get our feet wet. We must trust in him enough to know that He will not let us sink and drown. It's true that we might be laughed at or rejected, or even lose some popularity with our friends, but Jesus did that for us. Shouldn't we be willing to do the same for him? In the end it doesn't really matter what the world thinks of us, only what God thinks.

3. Many do not think that they are good enough to serve God.

I use this last, but it is probably the most predominant problem of all three. Far too many Christians rely upon their own righteousness and abilities as a source of ministerial power, rather than trusting in the finished work of Jesus Christ. Those who fit into this mould are a most miserable lot. When they are feeling low they blame it on their own unrighteousness and wouldn't dare think of themselves as able ministers, yet when they are feeling good they want to tell everybody about God, but always do so in the light of their own personal victories. This often leads to judging others rather than ministering for Jesus Christ. This kind of ministry often brings condemnation rather than edification.

As Bishop Frank Costantino puts it. *"If you take the blame when things go bad, it's only because you plan to take the credit when they go good!"* For instance, often when a person gets victory over a bad habit they begin to condemn others for that very same thing. In doing this they are ministering their own worthiness and not the worthiness of Christ. If we are worthy it is only because He makes us so by his blood. *"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament . . ."* ( II Cor. 3:5,6a).

I believe that God is able and willing to use any person who learn to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. If this world is going to be won for Christ it will be won by the Church and the testimony of God's people. *"Ye are the light of the world"*, Jesus said. Let God's love shine through you and be that light for the world to see. It will not only change those around you, but it will make your life more complete too. Things always go better when everyone's doing their part.