

February 2, 2014

UNWRAPPING A SPIRITUAL GIFT IN FEBRUARY

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Matthew 25:14-30 Luke 19: 11-27

“I’ll go where you want me to go, dear Lord,
real service is what I desire.
I’ll sing a solo anytime, dear Lord,
but don’t ask me to sing in Praise Power or the Chancel Choir.

I’ll do what you want me to do, dear Lord,
I like to see things come to pass.
But don’t ask me to teach awesome boys and girls, O Lord,
I’d rather just enjoy my Sunday morning alone. And watch time pass.

I’ll do what you want me to do, dear Lord
I yearn for your kingdom to thrive
I’ll give you my nickels and dimes, dear Lord,
but please don’t ask me to tithe.

~ Author Unknown

Have you ever given someone a gift and they used it recklessly, carelessly, or destructively? Can you remember when you gave a gift to someone who tossed it aside and didn’t bother to even open it? Can you think of a time when you gave a gift to someone and they didn’t thank you for it? How did that make you feel?

Then there are other times that you gave gifts to someone and they were excited about opening it. Their eyes lit up when they took it out of the box, they said, “Thank you” and used it as you hoped they would. How did it make you feel?

This is the way it is with God who has already given us a gift or gifts. Think of what might bring pleasure to God’s heart as He sees your use and appreciation for what he has given you. On the other hand, what would cause Him to feel hurt or disappointed? What if God saw that we just tossed our gifts aside unopened and unappreciated?

Matthew 25:14-25 and Luke 19:11 tell the parable about the talents. The two parables are similar. The master gives his servants various amounts of money

according to their ability to handle it while he went on a journey.

Today the value of a talent's value is between \$1,000 to \$30,000.

He gave one servant five talents, \$5000.

To the second servant he gave 2 talents, or around \$2000.

To the third he gave 1 talent, \$1000.

He didn't specifically tell them what to do, but the first two "*went at once and put his money to work and gained five more and the other two more.*" The third servant "*went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.*"

What can we get out of these parables concerning unwrapping our own gifts that have been entrusted to us?

1. DESIRE: Wanting to be used by God is the first step in unwrapping our gifts. Matthew Henry said, "we bar our own doors." We set our own limits because we don't really desire to be used of God. **I Corinthians 14:1**, "*Eagerly desire spiritual gifts.*" Our priorities come ahead of God's, and we leave God's gifts unwrapped and in the box. We don't value or appreciate them very much. We don't always think about what would please God, and we never get past the wrapping paper.

If we identify our gifts, then what are we willing to do with them? In the parables the servant was afraid to run the risk of investing his money because he knew the nobleman was a hard and exacting person. Some reasons why we don't unwrap our gift besides not really WANTING to, is FEAR. We fear what people will say, we fear looking awkward, we fear failure, or fear getting hurt again. Rather than experiencing that, we leave our gifts wrapped up.

2. USE: Unwrapping, your gifts through use. We desire to be used by God, but we must go beyond that to actually putting our gift or gifts to use. We have to become a risk taker. As you first begin to unwrap your gift, you probably won't feel entirely comfortable. You may feel scared to teach that first Sunday school class, put together that first financial statement, work with strong charismatic young adults, to cultivate the gift of hospitality, to volunteer for a play or special music ministry, to accept change, or to do anything that you haven't done before. You stretch yourself beyond your current limits. You extend your current borders.

You remember in the Prayer of Jabez - **1 Chronicles 4:10** Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, *“Oh that you would Bless me and ENLARGE MY TERRITORY, and that your hand might be with me, and that you would keep me from hurt and harm!”* And God granted what he asked. He was wanting to stretch beyond his current capabilities and current limits.

When you are asked to do something, do you automatically say, “Oh, I couldn’t do that! Oh, it’s not a good time. I am not worthy!” When we say, “I can’t,” it usually means, “I won’t.”

3. A PROCESS: Unwrapping our spiritual gifts is usually a process that evolves over a period of time. It doesn’t happen quickly or easily. As the Lord finds you TRUSTWORTHY and FAITHFUL, he will add more. If he gives you a word of knowledge or a word of wisdom and you apply it to the situation, then he will be able to use you. You might be taking baby steps in the use of your gift after you unwrap it. This is where your faith comes in. In the **Romans 12:6** *“we have different gifts according to the grace given us. If a person’s gift is faith, let him use it IN PROPORTION TO HIS FAITH.”*

Those with the gift of faith are an inspiration to their fellow believers, exhibiting a simple confidence in God that shows in all they say and do. Extraordinarily faithful people show a humble godliness and reliance on God’s promises, often so much so that they are known to be quietly fearless and zealous. They are so convinced that all obstacles to the gospel and to God’s purposes will be overcome and so confident that God will secure the advancement of His cause, that they will often do infinitely more in the promotion of His kingdom than the most talented and erudite preachers and teachers.

It takes our faith to begin to operate in our gifts once they are unwrapped.

Just do it. Faith helps us to move out of fear of failure, fear of looking awkward, fear of being criticized. A little step of faith gets you started.

As we walk in faith with our eyes and ears open to the leading of the Holy Spirit, ideas will begin to come. The idea comes and you step out in faith to do it--to speak or to serve.

In both parables the servants who were actively doing something with the talents were commended. The master said, “Well done--because you have been faithful

and trustworthy, I will increase what you already have.”

Keep in mind these three principles this week:

1. We must **DESIRE** to be used by God in our giftedness. Otherwise, we won't even attempt to unwrap them.
2. We start to unwrap our gifts through **USE**.
3. It is an **ONGOING PROCESS**. As we step out in faith, more will be added.

AMEN. AMEN. AMEN.

Portions adapted from: <http://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/unwrapping-your-gifts-marilyn-murphree-sermon-on-gifts-general-61011.asp?Page=1>