

LESSONS

FROM



THE TWO
TALENT
MAN

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Do you know who invented the microscope? Are you aware that Nils Bohlin invented the seatbelt? How about the metal detector? Do you know who came up with this idea? There are many characters in history whose work is declared to the world, but whose names hide behind the curtain. There are many forgotten names in Scripture too; one of them is the two-talent man (Matthew 25:15, 22-23).

Many sermons have been preached on the one-talent man and his downfall. The five-talent man is revered for his work ethic and fruitful return, but not many sermons have been preached on the man in the middle. Classes have been conducted on the importance of preparedness and diligence, using the five-talent man as an illustration. A sermon on being lazy with your talents is preached with the one-talent man as the illustration, yet we forget the two-talent man preaches his own sermon.

The church consists of three classes of people. First, there are five-talent Christians who represent those who do many works for God. Their abilities are plenteous, their fruit is constant, and their excellency shines through all the land. Their work ethic is unlike most and they reap the rewards for their labor. The average Christian may not be able to compare to this five-talent man. Second, there are the one-talent Christians. While they have an ability, they choose to bury it in the sand of laziness and criticism. Some may be able to relate to him, but no Christian should want to be like him. Third, there are two-talent Christians—someone to which most Christians can relate.

Jesus' Parable of the Talents is during what is commonly called the "Olivet Discourse." After having preached on the Destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Coming, He illustrated the Second Coming with parables. The second one is the one of interest in verses 14-30. There is a master and three servants. Each one is given certain talents so that they might increase the master's profit (cf. Matthew 25:27). Jesus specifically mentioned each

man, how much each man received, and the result of each man's effort. There is a purpose for Jesus' mention of the two-talent man. Because most God's servants can relate to the servant in the middle, let us examine a few lessons from him:

He Did Not Do What the Majority of People Do.

We have no record of the conversations that took place when the master distributed the talents, but implications can be made about hearts. The two-talent man did what most servants would have failed to do:

He did not complain. Eckhart Tolle said, "To complain is always nonacceptance of what is." The two-talent man does not leave complaining, saying, "only two talents?" His investment actions show that he took what he was given and worked well. God's servants should be thankful to serve. Christians cannot work as hard if they are worried about their work. After Paul told the Philippians to "work out your own salvation" and "God which worketh in you," he told them to do all things "without murmurings and disputings" (Philippians 2:12-14). It is a sin to grumble and question God over the work He has given us. The two-talent man did neither. William Arthur Ward said, "We can throw stones, complain about them, stumble on them, climb over them, or build with them."

He did not show pride. Pride not only overtakes a man when he talks about the things he can do, but also by growing angry over not having the opportunities to show others what he can do. While it is harmful to hinder ability when there is opportunity, it is sinful to boast about ability when there is no opportunity. The two-talent man does not look at the master with a disappointed countenance expecting to be given more than what he was given. He does not attempt to talk the master into giving him more by saying "don't you know how good I am?" No one is too great for small tasks in the local church like:

- Cleaning the building.
- Preparing the communion.
- Sending a card.
- Making a phone call.
- Mowing the grass.

Those who think themselves too good always fall (cf. Proverbs 16:18; 1 Corinthians 10:12). To despise small things is a great sin (Zechariah 4:10). Hellen Keller said, “I long to accomplish a great and noble task; but it is my chief duty to accomplish small tasks as if they were great and noble.”

The two-talent man also does not look at the one-talent man with pride thinking himself better. Instead, he takes his talents and gets to work. Thinking of oneself too highly to receive something smaller than another or believing oneself to be better than another is divisive and sinful (Romans 12:3).

He did not become complacent. Complacency is the mother of laziness. Mike Apicello said, “Complacency is our worst enemy.” Amos uttered a prophetic “Woe to them *that are* at ease in Zion” (Amos 6:1). The two-talent man did what many do not—grow! He could have said:

- “Well, at least I have more talents than the one-talent man.”
- “I know I could be doing more, but if I don’t, I’ll still be equal with the one-talent man.”
- “I’m average...that’s good enough for me.”

Instead, he multiplied his talents and became a four-talented man.¹ It can be dangerous to be spiritually lethargic. Believing that one is healthy without desiring to grow will make one sick (cf. 1 Peter 2:2). Two-talented Christians must never feel as if they should stop where they are. Importantly, God may expect of us something of which we can handle, despite our own recognition of being able to do so. He may do this so that we can improve,² which may allow us to work at becoming a five-talent Christian. He challenges us for spiritual growth (1 Timothy 4:7; Hebrews 12:11) and wants us to seek ways to improve our abilities. How should we work at improving what we can do?

- *Pray to God.* No man will improve unless he talks with the master who gave him those abilities.
- *Seek the counsel of others* (Proverbs 15:22). Ask others who have similar talents and who are

¹Victor Eskew.

²Albert Barnes.

better than you in these areas what worked for them and how they improved this specific skill set. Always surround yourself with more accomplished people than yourself.

- *Set goals.* If you plan to increase your evangelism set a monthly or yearly goal. Also, these goals must be realistic. Do not say “I’m going to convert every person,” but determine to convert ten people on your city block first.
- *Do not start on a mountain; start on a molehill.* Take one step at a time. Smaller steps get one to the top of the stairs, whereas jumping five steps at a time will make one liable to fall down. God commands people to grow, but He never said it had to be done by tomorrow!

Louise Health Leber said, “There’s always room for improvement. It’s the biggest room in the house.”

It is not only wise to strengthen our abilities, but also to seek out new things too. Comfort zone Christians never grow! Don’t be like the man who was asked if he played another instrument other than the piano and he said “Well, yes, I have another piano.”³ The two-talented man sought to add on to what he already had. What will you do to grow (2 Peter 3:18)?

He did not become envious. Envy is rottenness of the bones (Proverbs 14:30). Job said it slays the simple ones (Job 5:2). The answer to Solomon’s question “who *is* able to stand before envy?” (Proverbs 27:4) is, no one. Socrates called envy the soul’s saw. The two-talent man did not let a soulish sin effect his task. He did not seem to look at his partner with contemptable eyes and wish some evil befell him. He did not make assumptions like “I’m sure he was given five talents because he is the favorite,” or “he will probably steal those talents.” Unlike, Peter he did not ask about his coworker (John 21:19-22). There was no time for envy or busybodying; he had a job to do. He was focused on his specific task. It is unwise and ungodly to be envious of others’ talents (Galatians 5:26). Some may say:

³Michael Hodgin, *1001 Humorous Illustrations For Public Speaking*, Zondervan 1994, p. 337.

- “I wish I could lead singing like he does...I hope he messes up today.”
- “Why can’t I preach like him...if he would only lose his ability.”
- “If only I could evangelize like her...she’s probably doing it for personal glory.”

Christian stewardship may demand that we be content with God’s choosing another person to fulfill the task we originally desired. David did not complain when his desire for building the temple was negated, because God had given another this task (2 Samuel 7). Envy levels spiritual ability instead of making all work equal in the kingdom. The two-talent man did not compare himself with the five-talent man and he especially did not compare himself with the one-talent man. Comparing oneself to others can be detrimental (2 Corinthians 10:12).

It is best to let God distribute the talents and for us to work with what we have been given.

He Teaches us that God Gives us the Right Number of Talents.

The master is said to have given the servants talents according to their “several ability.” Each man was given his talents according to how much he could handle. The two-talent man can teach us that:

The master knows His servants. Implication demands that the master knew what each servant could handle and not handle; therefore, he distributed them accordingly. The two-talent man was given two talents because of his ability to do so. The master saw what he could do and entrusted him with gifts accordingly. God is not oblivious to our strengths and weaknesses (Psalm 139:1-6). He knows what things would help us spiritually and what things would harm us eternally. He factors in:

- Physical ability.
- Psychological ability.
- Spiritual maturity.
- Social ability.
- Areas in which we are more likely to sin.

God’s omniscience allows us to fit perfectly in the body (Ephesians 4:16). He chooses the best for each job (Exodus 31:1-6), “dividing to every man

severally **as he will**” (1 Corinthians 12:11), emp. mine, NO). He gives us the right **amount** of talents and the right **type** of talents. Giving more than we could handle would cause us to break, but not giving us enough would keep us from fulfilling our spiritual potential. Giving us something we could not do would be unfair but giving us something we can handle is perfect.

The master did not give more or less than the ability required. Since the master knew his servants, the master distributed the perfect number of talents accordingly. The two-talent man received the perfect amount. One would have been too little and five too much. This distribution was not favoritism, but a recognition of ability. The five-talent man may have been able to handle more because he had less responsibilities than the two-talent man in other areas. Perhaps the five-talent man was more mature than the two-talent man or maybe more than two talents would have burdened the two-talent man. Some Christians can handle more than other Christians, but it does not mean they are more special. How do we know what our abilities are? Dan Winkler suggested asking two questions: (1) What do you like to do and (2) what are you good at? It would be unjust for God to give a man something that he could not do—the two-talent man was right where he needed to be.

The master did not expect more and less than what was given. The two-talent man was not expected to produce five-talent man results. Neither was he expected to produce one-talent man results. The master expected him to produce two-talent man results. God only expects us to do what we can (Mark 14:8). Christians should not look at their two-talents as something trivial. The two-talent man didn't. He focused on his ability and put forth his best effort. It is wise to focus on strengths rather than weaknesses. How can we do this?

- Talk to God about what you can do and how you would like to improve.
- Write down all the works you have done for God. Remember, it is ok to be satisfied with what you have done (Genesis 1:31; 2:2; Proverbs 13:19).⁴
- Express your desire to the elders about wanting to do more.

⁴<https://lehmancoc.org/bible-teaches-rest/>

God doesn't give us more than we can handle, but He does expect us to give our best in what we have been given (Luke 12:48; cf. Ecclesiastes 9:10; Colossians 3:23). He wants us to serve "as of the ability which God giveth" (1 Peter 4:11). Two-talented Christians with one-talented results do not meet expectations; however, when the results of servants are synonymous with their ability, God is pleased.

We must remember that God practices diversity not because of partiality but because of unity. No two puzzle pieces are the same as are no two Christians. The two-talent man was given two talents because of what the master saw in him. Being thankful for the abilities God gives us is wise.

He Received the Same Reward as his Co-worker.

Earthen rewards are leveled by specific accomplishments. Not everyone is given the same reward:

- Both NFL teams do not take home the Superbowl trophy, only one.
- Only the team with four wins in the world series takes home the trophy.
- There are three levels in Olympic winnings: Gold, silver, and bronze. Only one person takes each stage.

Heavenly rewards differ. After their master's arrival and the servants' presenting of the multiplied talents, the servants are given the "same commendation and reward."⁵ The two-talented man is not given the second-place trophy or the silver metal—he received first place too! The two-talent man teaches us that:

God's scale is much different than man's scale. The master did not treat the five-talent man better than the two-talent man. They both received his grace. Mankind rewards others based on performance, but God rewards men based on faithfulness with what He has given them. God's system doesn't include runner ups. There is no first place, second place, or last place. All Christians who go to Heaven are on the winning ticket (cf.

⁵S.G. Matthews.

Matthew 20:1-16)—they receive the same crown (2 Timothy 4:8; Revelation 2:10).⁶

Heaven is aware of quiet servants. The five-talent man is praised by men and the one-talent man is rejected by God, but how often is the two-talent man forgotten? Many two-talented Christians work ever so hard with no recognition. Rest assured; they are not forgotten by God (Hebrews 6:10). Some may not be recorded in man's book of records, but they are noted in God's book of deeds (Revelation 20:12).

God values heart, not always results, faithfulness, not mere work production. Heaven is open to all of God's servants—even the two-talented ones!

Are you a two-talented Christian? If so, you have much work to do. Don't despise your gift (cf. Zechariah 4:10) counting something big as small. The two-talent man teaches most Christians to use their average talents for big successes. What will you do with your two talents?

⁶Beautifully Albert Barnes wrote: "No matter how numerous the competitors, or how worthy any one of them may be, or how pre-eminent above his brethren, yet all may obtain the prize; all may be crowned with a diadem of life, of equal brilliancy. No one is excluded because another is successful; no one fails of the reward because another obtains it."