

IRON BREAKFAST

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TALENTS AND TIME

Discussion led by Keith Garrell

How to make best use of our talents and time in service of God, Church and Community

In talking about this today, I will not present the solution to the question of how to make best use of your time, this needs to be individual, based upon your own relationship with God, the talents you have to offer and the time that you can make available to serve either the church or the community. What I will raise is a series of questions or challenges to inform debate and help us consider how we can focus our service going forward. In considering service, we should first remember what the Bible says about talents or gifts:

*Everything we have is a gift from God. All good things are gifts from God
(1 Timothy 6:17)*

This includes Food wisdom and even life itself:

- The gifts we have received are not ours alone. God gave them to us for the purpose of serving Him and serving other people.
- These gifts could be specific work related vocational skills e.g. a plumber or accountant, it could be an abundance of money, or it could be personal skills which give us patience to be for example a teacher, a preacher or care worker
- However, in giving time this still needs to have a focus.

Let's not forget that these were given to us to serve God, so how do we define what this service may be?

Well we can:

- give our money and our time to charity,
- be a friend to someone who is sick or lonely,
- do volunteer work, either through the church or within the community
- be a peacemaker, teacher or minister
- give unselfishly of our time to our spouse, children or parents

- choose a service-oriented occupation, or we just do our everyday jobs with integrity and respect for others.

The key to all of this though is how do we in this modern age find the time to do many of these, which in reality, eat in to our own valuable spare time?

Balance/focus of priorities work (e.g. Denise children and work in future not a career)

Understanding from partners, this can be challenging when the partner is already a Christian, but what about when they are not a Christian and may not recognise the need for this service?

Well personal reward should never be a reason for giving or providing service, either to God our Church or the Community, however, we do get some encouragement from the bible as Luke 6:38 states, "Give, and it will be given to you".

The bible also give's us clear guidance through the teachings of Jesus as to how we will be judged based upon our actions and in particular how we respond to the needs of others. Matthew 25:31-46 shows us in particular when Jesus uses the following story to amplify this:

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.' "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.' "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' "He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life." (TNIV)

So what we need to do is look inward and ask ourselves:

- What is it that stops you from giving to God or the community? Is it your time - is this too precious to you; Do you feel you are you too busy to do what you know God wants you to do?
- Is it in your heart to do – do you find service a chore?
- Are you unwilling to let go of the small unimportant things in your life that seem to fill our daily activity?
- Is it your commitment? Do you feel unwilling to make a true commitment to service to your church/God/Community?

I am not looking for the answers to these questions now, but once we have thought this through we should remember that anything that is worth something, costs something and the most

important of these demand time, not necessarily money. As a father and husband I know that my wife and children are the three most important things in my earthly life.

Put simply:

- My children are still at the age where my time is an important thing to them, whether this be to play games or just listen to what has happened at school or in a club;
- My wife needs my time not only to help with children and upkeep of our home, but also I need to give time and work hard (as does Denise) to continue to make our relationship work and keep it strong.

Now I am by no means perfect, and while I am committed to this, it is in my heart and I am willing to let the small things go, I frequently get it wrong or make mistakes and question my talents. So we should never be self confident and have a belief in what we perceive to be our own skills. However the important thing is I try and be confident that God will give me the skills to do the things that He wants me to do. Whether this is related to a specific talent or making a sacrifice – for example giving my time to the children or my wife, instead of watching Newcastle United beat Barcelona in the Champions League Final!!!

In providing this time, it does not matter whether we have been given great talents, abilities and wealth, or whether we have very little to give. The essence of the Christian life is in obeying and worshiping God and helping others and for this very reason, God has given each of us important and very varied talents. Like the servants in Jesus' Parable of the Talents, our gifts can vary in size, however that does not matter. The parable really teaches us that we are accountable to God and responsible for the way in which we use our talents. Therefore what is really important to God is whether we make good use, or at least try to make good use of what we have been given, for the benefit of the Church and community in service of Him and this my friends by its very nature will demand that you give freely of your time.

That said how do we know what He wants us to do with our time and talents??

On Sunday we heard how we all know “about God” and “about Jesus”. Many of us may feel we have a strong relationship with God and those that do, will know that like a father with his children or husband with their wife, this takes TIME! In this case, time to worship, time to read the word and, time to pray. It is only through these things that we will hear His message and understand what He wants us to do.

Giving our time to use our talents in service of Him, is another way to get ourselves closer to God and start us on the path to strengthen that relationship? After all Christ was willing to die for us so that we might be saved. He is our example. What are we willing to sacrifice for him, I am not suggesting that we all give our lives – far from it, but as Paul said in Roman's we should give our bodies as a living sacrifice, I ask you is a little of your time too much to ask?

Now I do not have the answers to many of the questions raised above, as like you I need God the Teacher to lead me. I have used prayer in my life to ask God what he wants me to do and I guess some if not all of you may have too at some time in your lives. I think what might be useful now would be to look talk about what tools or techniques guys have used to connect with God and find out what His will is and how they have achieved the balance of providing.