

Using Our Talents to the Full Mt 25:14-30

Note for the Users of these Notes

The materials offered in these notes are very abundant. Choose from them whatever items suit you for your purpose.

Intent of this Exercise

- ✓ To discover one's talents.
- ✓ To thank God for them
- ✓ To use them to the full.
- ✓ For self-realization
- ✓ To improve one's self-image".

Uses of this Exercise

- ✓ Prayer meetings.
- ✓ Personal prayer and reflection.
- ✓ Recollections.
- ✓ For self-discovery

Target Audience:

- ✓ All audience, especially younger ones

Requirements:

- ✓ Copies of New Testament, if possible.
- ✓ Writing and drawing materials; Paper, felt pens, color pencils., etc.

Introductory Prayer.

Singing hymns or bhajans.

Opening prayer.

Starter : Gospel Parable. (Mt. 25:14-30)

Present it in a forceful way: For instance:

Act it. - Mime it -. Have it read in dialogue form. -Narrate the parable in your own way.

Personal Reflection Form

Give all the participants cyclostyled copies of the "Reflection Form" below.

REFLECTT01JFORM

Reflect on the points below. Take down some notes on your reflections.

1. In the parable, what do the following things stand for?
 - The master of the story?
 - The servants?
 - Talents?
 - The praises and rewards given to the first two servants?

- The scolding and punishment given to the third servant?
- 2. What lessons can we draw from this parable?
- 3. Application of the parable:
 - What meaning has this parable for you "personally" in your life? How? Why?
 - With which of the three servants do you identify most? Why?
 - Do you feel approved or condemned by the parable? How? Why?

Sharing

Note for the 'moderator':

- ✓ Request the participants to share their reflections.
- ✓ If the group is large (say, more 15) ask for some volunteers – 8 or 10 - to share their reflections.
- ✓ Write on the board the main ideas shared.

Input Ideas suggested for the input.

a) God has gifted us all with plenty of talents, abilities and qualities. We are born rich!

- Most of us are not aware of our treasures; we have to make an effort to discover them.
- Life is like a "treasure hunt". Let us search and we shall find.
- Rather than feeling jealous of the wealth of others, let us make efforts to find our own.
- All our talents are gifts of God.
- We have to accept whatever God gives us with contented hearts.
- Keep always in mind that our talents are not our property, they are lent to us, actually they belong to God, they are given to us in trust, we have to use of them only as God wants us to use them
- The more talents we have, the greater our responsibility will be, and the more we shall be asked by God.

b) Relative and proportional value of our Talents.

- God expects returns from us, in proportion to our abilities.
- God does not expect the same returns from all.
- One thing, however, is clear, God wants 100% returns.
- Those of us who got one talent only, will be asked one more, those who got two, will be asked two more, those who got five, will have to return five more.
- Holiness is a relative term. God will declare "saint" anyone who produces his 100%. Thus, he who produces one talent out of one, will be equal before God to the one who produces 50 out of 50
- We need not feel inferior before God because we have fewer talents. Before God all men are equal; to say the truth – all of us are like beggars before God!
- Unfortunately, we humans, judge others according to their gross output, the size, the quantity and bulk of what they produce.
- God doesn't do that. His ways are not our ways.
- We make hard and fast rules for all, we expect all men to produce the same amount, the same quantity. This is most unfair.

- A lame person, for instance, cannot be expected to run an equal race with a person of sound legs..
- Our world brands as "failures" those who do not measure up to its standards.
- God measures each one of us according to our personal capacity and talents – so to say according to each one's personal standards
- Each person is his own measure.
- God accepts all of us for what we are.
- Anyone who yields his 100% is not a failure before God.
- It is we who make people feel they are failures.
- Parents, teachers, superiors, educators are to be blamed for that "terrible feeling" of being a failure, so many of our children suffer from.

c) Joy, contentment and satisfaction in life depend not on how many talents we have but on how we use them..

- Many of us envy the talents of others and forget to use our own.
- Being contented with what we have and honestly working with it, is the key joy and fulfillment.
- Deep and lasting happiness is born from perfect "self-acceptance" of our strengths and weaknesses.
- He who tries to be more than what he is, will never taste happiness in life.
- True satisfaction comes from being "ourselves", never by trying to be somebody else.
- Competing with others is the root of jealousy, violence and wars.
- We are born to live with others, not to compete with them.
- Competing with others implies self-rejection and a lurking dislike of being ourselves

d) God's talents are nor given to us only for our personal profit. but for the benefit of all

- God expects us to put our talents at the service of others.
- They are not given us only for our "selfish" enjoyment:
- We have to go out to others in service.
- It is only when we accept our wealth and put it at the service of others that life becomes worth living.
- As long as we are walled up within our little "ego", we shall never obtain happiness and self-fulfillment
- It's strange but true. We have to make others happy to be happy; we have to share our riches with others to be rich, to give away our talents to others to retain them.
- Paradoxically, we have to go out of our-selves to remain ourselves,

APPENDIX ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

Choose those that suit you best for your sessions.

No. 1 Symbolic Drawing Treasure Hunt “My Godown”

Personal Work - Drawing your Talents.

Instructions for the participants:

- ✓ Draw: A Godown". (*With felt pens, color pencils, etc.*)
- ✓ This godown has to be a symbol of you. - Big... small.. etc....
- ✓ Inside that "go down" draw whatever talents and treasures you can discover in you. Draw each talent symbolically in the form of a container (*The type of container could be a sack, a bale, a drum, a cask, a box, a trunk, or any other receptacle; its size big, small, long, and short, etc and Its color and all other characteristics symbolically have express something of the talent in question*).
- ✓ Draw your containers anywhere inside your godown.
- ✓ Attach a tag to each container indicating its contents, e.g., "Brains", "Musical Talents", "Honesty", "Concern for Others", "Sports abilities," "Prayer", etc, etc.
- ✓ Try to find as many talents as you can.

Group Work. Sharing the drawings with the Group and Thanksgiving

- Ask the participants to form groups of their choice - of 6 to 8 each.- preferably group with those who know each other best.
- Group members will share their symbolic drawings and explain to their companions the treasures God has given them.
- They may ask for clarifications. No discussions will be entertained.
- If any group member thinks that some of those who made their sharing have some other talents not mentioned by them, they will ask them to place in their "godowns" new containers with the newly discovered talents.
- After sharing their symbolic drawings with the group and after receiving positive feedback from their companions (*in the form explained above*), they will spend some time thanking God for their talents.
- Finally, each one, by turn, will pray and thank God for the one at his right hand and the one at his left.
- Anyone will be welcomed also to pray aloud for any other in particular

No. 2 Personal Examination of Conscience.

The points to be examined are

- (1) *How did you use your talents?*
- (2) *If you have not used them to the full, why? Find the reasons and causes why.*
- (3) *What remedies can you find to improve your performance?*
- (4) *What will you do about it? Write down your promises.*

A Method of Examination could be:

1st: Rate yourself:

- ✓ Look at the drawing of your god owns and examine it carefully:
- ✓ From your go down by order of importance, choose the two or three most significant containers (talents) of yours.
- ✓ What use did you make of them? Follow this method:
- ✓ Examine one at 'a time. e.g. brains.
 1. Now reflect: How much use of this talent have I made in my life?
 2. Rate yourself on a scale from 0 to 100, e.g., 20%, 40%. 60%.o
 3. Write your rating on the tag of the container, e.g., Brains 30%, 50%, 60%.
- ✓ Carry on in the same way with all the other talents.

2nd: Causes:

- ✓ Go over the same containers again
- ✓ Ask yourself: are my ratings poor or not satisfactory? Why? Be very honest with yourself.
- ✓ Write on the back of the page on which you drew your godown the reasons, if any, for your poor or unsatis-factory ratings.

3rd: Remedies:

- ✓ Examine the causes for your poor or unsatisfactory ratings, if any, and ask yourself. What can do improve your ratings? Find as many remedies or solutions as you can to correct the situation.
- ✓ Write the remedies or solutions at the back of the page on which you drew your go down.

4th: Promises:

- ✓ Carefully go over the remedies or solutions you found and choose one or two which you intend putting into practice right now.
- ✓ Write at the bottom of the same page the promise or promises which you have made and which you will carry out from this very moment.
- ✓ In silence ask God for help to carry out the promise or promises.

Helpful suggestion Sharing in Twos.

- From among the participants choose your best friend, the one who knows you best.
- In pairs, share with each other the things you wrote in the previous step, viz., your ratings, the causes for your poor or unsatisfactory use of your talents, the remedies found, and "promises 'made.
- Discuss your problems and difficulties, your fears and expectations.
- Encourage each other to use the talents you have.
- Pray for each other.

No. 3 A Litany of Thanksgiving.

Instructions to the Moderator:

- ✓ Give time to the participants to pray to God in silence.
- ✓ They may do this in the chapel or in the hall.
- ✓ Make sure that the atmosphere is conducive to prayer.
- ✓ Towards the end of the prayer, request the participants to write a litany of thanksgiving for the talents received.
- ✓ Let them mention as many talents as possible.
- ✓ It could be done for example, in the following fashion:

For the good memory you have given me.	I thank you, Lord.
For my ability to sing.	I thank you, Lord.
For my good health	I thank you, Lord,
<i>For this, for that and the other....</i>	I thank you, Lord.

Finally, by turns, one by one, they will read aloud their litanies and all those present after each sentence, will reply in chorus: We thank you Lord

No. 4 Activities

Note for the moderator:

- ✓ Activities are very effective to bring home to the participants the main learnings of the event.
- ✓ The ideal time for activities is the afternoon hours.
- ✓ The activities should be prepared in small groups of 6 to 8 each.
- ✓ Give the groups reasonable time to prepare their activities.

a) Preparation of the activities:

Each small group will prepare an activity to exemplify some of the ideas of the day's sessions

Suggested activities could be:

Role-play	Dance	Murals	Mime
Tableau	Puppets	Radio-play	Slogans Competition.
Action song	Posters	Bible passages	Etc.

Themes for the activities, for instance could be:

(1) Role-playing the parable of the Three Servants in modern setting. (Examples)

- A very clever boy fails his class for neglecting his studies.
- A very gifted sportsman through laziness to practice loses in all the events.
- A girl with an excellent talents for teaching but being greedy for money wastes her talents by becoming a model.

- A boy very good at writing becomes a poor guitarist.
- A businessman loses all his money and ruins his family by wasting his time in the join.

(2) Surprises on judgment day. (Fantasy plays)

- At judgment day, God gives the boy who failed his class the first prize for application and achievement - he achieved his 100% - while he chastises the boy who got a first class first for not applying himself enough - *he achieved only 70% of his optimum capacity of nearly 100*
- The "lazy" person - *i.e. a person whom everybody thought to be lazy but who tried his best*, - is rewarded for "diligence".
- The "quarrelsome" man – *who controlled his temper*, is commended his "meekness", etc...

(3) Role-play or mime "School and Family Situations".

- Parents/teachers comparing their children with others. They compare their achievements, not their application.
- Parents/teachers administering admonitions and punishments. - Are they fair?-
- Prize distribution day: Prizes to whom and for what? A large number deserving students are never rewarded a prize!
- Praises and encouragements given to people: To whom and for what? What kinds of behavior are being praised and encouraged in our homes and schools?

(4) Stories and parables,

Ask the participants to invent stories and parables, for instance,

- A camel that feels bad because he cannot become a horse.
- A mango tree despises itself for not being a rosebush.
- A clever boy feels depressed because he would like to be pop singer.

(5) Symbolic 'representation of the absurdity of expecting people to do what they have no talent for.

- A thin and weak child is made to wrestle with a professional wrestler. (*The weak child could symbolize a student who, although very good in many respects, has no talent, for science. Yet, whose parents force him to take engineering. Engineering would tie wrestler.*)
- A starved and destitute boy is expected to do weight-lifting (*The symbolism could be that a boy without a talent for sports is asked to join some sports competitions*)

(6) Action songs:

Act or mime songs with the message of the day's reflection, example:

- "Thank you, Father, for making me, me".

b) Presentation of the activities.

All groups will present their activities to the house.

After each presentation a short evaluation, analysis and discussion will follow.

No. 5 **Closing Prayer Session**

Instructions to the Moderator.

- ✓ Quite down.. Breathing or awareness exercises may help.
- ✓ Singing Hymns or Bhajana .
- ✓ Bible Reading and reflection.
 - 1 Cor. 12:4-11. "There are many gifts..." (talents)
 - Mt. 13:44-46. The Hidden Treasure. The Fine Pearl.
 - Lk. 13:6-9. The Unfruitful Tree.
- ✓ Comment on the readings and pray on them.
- ✓ All are invited to participate.
- ✓ Ask the participants to remember the many talents God has given them, and spontaneously thank God for them.
- ✓ Ask pardon for not having used them to the full.
- ✓ Beg God for courage and diligence to use their talents in future.
- ✓ If they wish, they may ask their companions to pray for them.
- ✓ Final hymn such as
 - There are Numerous Strings.
 - God Gives His People Strength.
 - What Thanks Can I Render Thee.
 - What Thanks Can I Render Thee.