

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

*2 Timothy 2:15*



**W**HAT DOES OUR WORK LOOK LIKE ONCE WE ARE FINISHED?

Too many believers have got it into their heads that the gifts—the skills, the abilities, the proficiencies—given them by God are theirs to keep. So some gifts end up in the bank, sitting in a dark place, unused. Some are displayed on the what-not shelf, pretty to look at but rarely even dusted.

More often, however, the gifts are used—but badly.

The Lord does not give away talents; they are only on loan. We are, at best, stewards, while He retains deed and title. Those who have been bought by the blood of Christ—let us say it honestly: those who are now His slaves—have no possessions of their own.

For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

*Romans 11:36*



Charles Swindoll has made the point that when a white glove makes contact with mud, the mud never gets “glovey”; every time the glove gets muddy. And seldom do the ways of this world become holy by contact with the ways of holy God. More often the ways of God, as practiced by believers, become muddied by the ways of the world.

The Lord has entrusted special gifts and abilities to each of us. He does this not lightly or haphazardly, but with purpose. He expects us to use these in His service, for His glory.

But then, under the influence and tutelage of a fallen world, we use God’s gifts not by His standards (they do, after all, belong to Him) but by the standards of those in opposition to Him and His ways. We use them randomly, haphazardly, instead of earnestly. We use them lazily, sloppily, instead of by the driving force of the Spirit.

Long ago, in another time and place, I was commissioned to write and direct the drama for a church’s Easter musical. As it turned out, I was also given, at the last minute, a solo in the production. At the final dress rehearsal the director was so disorganized, so distracted by his tinkering with the new sound system, that the entire evening was an unholy mess, and the run-through of the drama portion was not even completed. At the end of the evening the director dismissed the fiasco with, “Oh well, God will bless.”

This music director was not just responsible for his own gifts, but responsible for directing the gifts of others. In both, sadly, he was truant.

We can make no better resolution for the coming new year:

*Resolved, I will serve my Lord faithfully, earnestly, to the very best of my ability. I will not treat my work as something insignificant, but will serve Him with excellence and joy. More than that, I will not be lazy with God's holy word, but will treat it with the respect it deserves, being diligent to understand it, to obey it, to declare it to a fallen world.*

Amen.



“For [the kingdom of heaven] is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey. Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents... But he who received the one talent went away, and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, ‘Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents.’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’

And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man... And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours.’ But his master answered and said to him, ‘You wicked, lazy slave... You ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest. Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.’”

*from Matthew 25:14-28*