

GIVE GOD YOUR TALENTS

Old-timers thought Bobby Bonds was a great baseball player. Then his son, Barry, came of age and started his thunder run to baseball immortality.

In the summer of 2002, he stole his 500th base, and became the only player in the history of the game to hit 500 home runs and steal 500 bases, demonstrating a unique combination of both power and speed.

No other player has done that. So is it the hardest thing to do in sports? The sports writers at USA Today (March 3, 2003) put their heads together to list what, in their opinion, were the 10 hardest things to do in sports.

10. Skiing the alpine downhill race at 80 mph.
9. Saving a penalty kick in soccer.
8. Bicycling the Tour de France covering 2,114 miles.
7. Running a marathon.
6. Landing a quadruple toe loop on figure skates — with grace.
5. Returning a 130-140 mph tennis serve.
4. Hitting a golf ball straight and long.
3. Pole vaulting.
2. Driving a race car while enduring 5 G's in the corners in 120 degree heat, knowing a mistake can kill you.

And number 1 is hitting a major-league baseball pitch thrown at 90 plus mph by judging it in 1/1,000th of a second. If you can pull it off successfully three out of 10 times you'll land a multimillion dollar contract.

Sports feats are difficult. No doubt. They take endurance, skill, training and talent, but ultimately they aren't important. At the end of the day they don't matter. After all, athletic competitions, even the world championships, are just games. Life itself is considerably harder and demands a lot more talent.

We all have our own personal challenges that take talent to navigate:

- Raising children.
- Forgiving or Apologizing.
- Loving your enemy.
- Quitting cigarettes, getting sober, abandoning an addiction.
- Facing death – either yours or a loved ones.
- Regaining the lost trust of loved ones.
- Keeping faith in God amidst trials and tribulations.

I believe that our congregation is full of people who are talented. They do greater feats than what happens in a sports arena every day. They are immensely talented with the way they handle life, serve the Lord, and grow our church and community.

Since I came here I have laid out a challenge to every member here to commit at least one hour a week to some type of service that uses their talent. I have asked you each to consider giving God one hour out of 168 hours a week.

Why? Because I believe you are full of talent and God can bless this church if you do.

1 Corinthians 12:7 (NLT) - *A spiritual gift is given to each of us as a means of helping the entire church.*

We all can come up with excuses to not get involved. We can easily list out excuses to not use your talents or gifts:

1. I am too busy!

- a. George Barna said, "Time is the currency of our culture."
- b. We think it is OK if we just throw some money out so you do not have to get involved. But it's not the same. To communicate love involves commitment of time and service, and when you serve the Lord, it will take some energy, thought and time.

2. The problems are overwhelming – how will I help?

- a. Gary MacIntosh said, "Ministering to children can be challenging especially in this day and age. The top seven problems in public schools sixty years ago: talking, chewing gum, making noise, running in the halls, getting out of line, wearing improper clothes and not putting paper in the wastebasket. Fast forward fifty years. The top seven problems in the public schools today that are facing are students: drug abuse, alcohol abuse, pregnancy, suicide, rape, and robbery, assault."

3. I don't have things together

- a. *If It Ain't Broke, Break It* – "You are working harder but you're wondering if you're accomplishing that much more. You're always feeling behind, running a little bit late. You're more irritable, critical or short tempered with those around you. You see less of your friends and family. You get more headaches, backaches and stomach aches. You have a tough time relaxing. You feel guilty if you're not working. You're married to your job. You tire easily. You feel fatigued. You need to continually be busy. You sometimes feel depressed or sad without any apparent cause."
- b. Ecclesiastes 11:4 (GNT) - *If you wait until the wind and the weather are just right, you will never sow anything and never harvest anything.*

When it comes to serving others, I can come up with some excuses, some statements, that would remind me of why I don't serve. I have to ask myself, "What gets in the way of me using my God-given talents and abilities and strengths to serve others in ministry to serve others around this place, around this town, or around the world?"

Why should I give God my talents?

1. Jesus Did

- a. Jesus never asked others to do something the He wasn't willing to do Himself.
- b. John 13:3-5 - *Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; **SO** he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.*
 - i. After washing the Disciples feet Jesus said, "I have set you an example. You will be blessed if you do it."
- c. Matthew 20:28 & Mark 10:45 - *Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

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Jesus did

2. You were Created to

- a. "Some assembly required" causes me much anxiety. Sometimes a product will read "Easy to assemble". It's never easy to assemble! For those of you who've put bikes and scooters and other things together over the years, you know what I am talking about. In fact, the instruction manual usually comes in 5 languages and becomes confusing. You get so frustrated that when you try to read what to do, you don't even realize that you are reading French! My wife loves to shop at Ikea, where the furniture is cost friendly. The reason is that you have to put everything together yourself. I am always afraid that I will mess up and the desk we bought will turn out to be a coffee table when I am done.
- b. Yet God with some foresight, insight and purpose shaped us, assembled us. He wrote the directions. There are no parts missing. He put us together perfectly. Think about it. What job did Jesus do when He was here on earth? He was a carpenter. He knows how to put things together!
- c. Ephesians 2:10 - *For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*
- d. Have you ever seen a flat pencil? When I first saw one, I didn't know what they were. I wondered why Home Depot was selling sticks. Someone had to point out to me that it was a pencil! You see some roofer apparently at some point went up on a roof to measure and mark wood. But when he pulled out his pencil one of two things would happen:
 - i. He would accidentally drop it. He would watch it roll down off the roof.
 - ii. The pencil would break and he didn't have a sharpener around.

- e. I don't know how long it took him before he said, "Let me put a little forethought into this. Let me be a little insightful. Let me put something together here that is on purpose. How about a flat pencil! Flat pencils don't roll, and flat pencils can be cut with a knife to get a point. You don't need a pencil sharpener. Let me make something designed on purpose."
- f. We are like that. God has designed us with intentionality, with forethought, and with purpose.
- g. Galatians 1:15 (NCV) - *But God had special plans for me and set me apart for his work even before I was born. He called me through his grace.*
- h. Pandora's Box – tell the Greek myth of Pandora. Relate this to how many people treat their spiritual gifts and talents in the same way. We think that it would be selfish or evil if we open the box and let our talents out, so we keep them boxed up.

The things we keep from others – THE GIFTS LISTS IN THE BIBLE:

- Romans 12:6–8
- 1 Corinthians 12:4–31
- Ephesians 4:7–16
- 1 Peter 4:10-11

- i. Pandora should never have opened her box, because the whole world was impacted with evil. God calls us to open up and release our talents, so that our world can be impacted with His love.

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3. God Commands you to

- a. Throughout His word, God repeatedly tells us to serve:

- i. 1 Peter 4:10 - *Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.*
- ii. Ephesians 6:7-8 - *Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.*
- iii. Philippians 2:4 (The Message) - *Don't be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand.*

- b. Not only does God call each of us to use our gifts, but we are responsible to develop and grow in them. Paul told Timothy: "fan into flame the gift of God" and "Do not neglect your gift." He already had the gift of teaching, yet Paul urged him to diligently present himself to God as a workman who could correctly handle the Word of Truth. He was accountable to a sovereign God for his development and use of it.
- c. God holds you accountable for the same thing. He has given you certain talents and gifts that He expects, commands, and lovingly rebukes you to use.
- d. In the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30, Jesus tells us that those who bury their talents will be punished. He even calls the one who didn't use his talents, "a wicked and evil servant." That is the last thing I want to be called by Jesus!

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Jesus did

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God commands you to

4. God has Blessed you - with:

- a. **All Good Things** – Psalm 84:11 - *For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless.*
- b. **Life** - Isaiah 42:5 - *This is what God the Lord says— he who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and all that comes out of it, who gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it.*
- c. **THE GREATEST GIFT: CHRIST HIMSELF – John 3:16**
- d. **Wisdom** – 2 Chronicles 1:12 (NLT) - *I will certainly give you the wisdom and knowledge you requested. And I will also give you riches, wealth, and honor such as no other king has ever had before you or will ever have again!*
- e. **Righteousness** - Romans 5:17 - *For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.*

- f. **Strength and Power** - Psalm 68:35 - *You are awesome, O God, in your sanctuary; the God of Israel gives power and strength to his people. Praise be to God!*
- g. **Peace** - Psalm 29:11 - *The Lord gives strength to his people; the Lord blesses his people with peace.*
- h. **Rest** - Matthew 11:28 - *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.*
- i. **Holy Spirit** - John 14:16 (The Message) - *I will talk to the Father, and he'll provide you another Friend so that you will always have someone with you.*
- j. **Grace** - James 4:6 - *But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." (Proverbs 3:34)*
- k. **Faith** - Ephesians 2:8 - *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God!*
- l. **Eternal Life** - Romans 6:23 - *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
- m. **A New Heart** - Ezekiel 11:19 (The Message) - *I'll give you a new heart. I'll put a new spirit in you. I'll cut out your stone heart and replace it with a red-blooded, firm-muscle heart.*

We should make the sacrifice and give our talents to God because He has given us so much!

You might not think you matter:

In March of 1981, President Ronald Reagan was shot by John Hinckley, Jr., and was hospitalized for several weeks. Although Reagan was the nation's chief executive. His hospitalization had little impact on the nation's activity. Government continued on.

On the other hand, suppose the garbage collectors in this country went on strike, as they did in Philadelphia. That city was not only in a literal mess, the pile of decaying trash quickly became a health hazard. A three week nationwide strike would paralyze the country.

Who is more important-the President or a garbage collector?

In the body of Christ, seemingly insignificant ones are urgently needed.

1 Corinthians 15:58 (NLT) - *So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and steady, always enthusiastic about the Lord's work, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless.*

Why should I give God my talents?

- Jesus did
- You were created to
- God commands you to
- God has blessed you

I am asking you to step out on faith – this is not as difficult as hitting a 100 mph curve ball! God has created you for this!

DECISION TIME

Precious Lord, Take My Hand - #575