



Stewardship Season

Talents

The Mission and Discipleship Council would like to thank Rev Rosie Addis, minister of Edinburgh: Albany Deaf Church of Edinburgh, for her thoughts on the stewardship of talents.

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Exodus 31: 1-11

It must have seemed like an impossible ask. The Israelites had worked as brick makers in Egypt, and now here they were being asked to make intricate, delicately carved and ornate worship materials! The finest craftsmen would have been those who had learned from their father's knee; watching every needle pull or hammer blow; perhaps then progressing to passing tools, cutting fabric, preparing the wood for carving. It would have taken almost a lifetime's apprenticeship to become a master of any craft, and who really would ever be ready to make materials fit for the LORD?

But .. the LORD has already chosen the right people to craft the Tabernacle. Bezalel and Oholiab are chosen to oversee the work. Both already have a natural artistic talent, but God gives his 'divine spirit' (31:3), so that it is clear that these are the right men not only because of their natural talents, but because God has given them authority to use their skills for this specific situation. Verse 11 makes it clear that they are a team who are working under instruction from Moses, who himself is under instruction from the LORD. Later, in Chapter 36, verse 2, those who come to carry out the work overseen by Bezalel are described not only as skilful, but that also their hearts were 'stirred to come to do the work' (NRSV). Raw talent doesn't seem to be enough to be able to participate; there needs to be a divine calling as well.

When I was learning British Sign Language there came a point where I was moving from proficient to fluent, and began training to be an interpreter. But for a long time I couldn't understand why Deaf people often preferred to ask those who were less qualified than me to interpret for them. It took me many years to realise that the most important thing in the Deaf Community wasn't how fluent your signing skills were, or how great you were at interpreting. The highest value was on something they called 'attitude'. You can have all the natural talent in the world but that doesn't necessarily mean that you should be using that talent in that specific context. As I began to understand something of the trust needed between interpreter and interpreted, about the power that comes with having access to both languages, I realised that what I had thought was helpfulness had come across as arrogance. Over the years I have come to realise that being able to do something does not necessarily mean that God wants me to jump in and take over!

Often in life we struggle to work out how to use our talents. Perhaps we can learn something from the Israelites. Their culture was one of community, and so the task given to them by God was never



going to be carried out by just one person. The Israelites used their talents for the good of the community, in obedience to Moses' instructions and in a common goal of producing the finest Tabernacle that was fit for the LORD to inhabit. Sometimes it is easy to think in terms of using one's natural talents to make money, or advance one's career, or for one's own enjoyment. As a parent I find it difficult to give my children's talents to God and then take a step back, but as a daughter I often have to encourage my elderly parents to make use of their talents within a more limited field of opportunity. Often other people's expectations can drown out God's calling to use your talent in a specific place and time. We should learn from the Israelites and consider how God is calling us to use our natural talents for the good of our local community, our church, our family. As the writer of 1 Peter says:

"Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received... so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 4:10-11)

Prayer

God our Father,

Thank you that you are the same, yesterday, today and forever,

You knew us even before we were born

All our talents and skills come from you.

We remember how you gave your divine spirit to the Israelites

To equip them to build the Tabernacle.

You gave them the skills even before they knew they needed them.

Thank you that each one of us is fearfully and wonderfully made

We are unique and loved.

Father, we want to help to bring in Your kingdom

Through Jesus we ask now that You would fill us again with your Spirit

Help us to discern our talents, and when to use them.

We want our lives to reflect Your glory.

We ask these things in the name of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Amen



Musical suggestions

CH4 497	Almighty Father of all things that be
CH4 502	Take my life, Lord, let it be
CH4 505	All that I am, all that I do
CH4 619	Spirit of the living God
CH4 795	Take, oh take me as I am



Additional Resources

Pray Now is designed to be a starting point for what you might look for in prayers.

Word of Life is available from [St Andrew Press](#).



SPIRITUALITY OF CONFLICT

The [Spirituality of Conflict](#) website publishes reflections on the Sunday gospel readings in the 3-year lectionary cycle of the church. The reflections explore the themes of conflict within the gospels and offer questions and commentary for private reading, group discussions and public worship. Whilst most of the content will be connected to the

Revised Common Lectionary, some will relate to occasions throughout the year – everything from St Patrick's Day to World AIDS Day. All of the content is free to download, use and share with others.

[Quick Guides](#) are designed to help people with the various elements of leading worship, gathering community and ordering space.

You may wish to email these three links to the people reading

Scripture on Sunday to support them in their involvement in worship: [Managing your nerves](#); [Creative readings](#); [Worship at the Lectern](#)

Quick Guide...



[Resourcing Mission](#) is host to Starters for Sunday archive material and other key mission resources for download and purchase. Online booking is available for [Mission & Discipleship events](#).

The Mission and Discipleship Council would like to express its thanks to the Rev Rosie Addis providing us with this material.

Please note that the views expressed in these materials are those of the individual writer and not necessarily the official view of the Church of Scotland, which can be laid down only by the General Assembly.

