

Daniel Kolenda: Our Talents Do Not Belong to Us

When I was a teenager, I went on a missions trip to England and stayed in a “host home” with a lovely British couple. I’ll never forget a poster they had hanging on their wall that reported the results of a survey given to 10 groups of people.

There was a group of 10-year-olds, 20-year-olds, 30-year-olds, all the way up to 100-year-olds, and each was asked the same question: “What is your number one regret at this point in your life?” All the answers were interesting, some were funny, but the only answer I remember was from those who were 100 years old.

For some reason it is burned into my memory, and I can never forget it. After living a long life, they said their No. 1 regret was that they “should have taken more risks.” I determined then, as a very young man, that when I come to the end of my life I don’t want to look back and realize that I never really lived at all because I was too afraid.

To many people, fear seems to be a legitimate reason not to do something. But I want you to see that the master in Jesus’ parable was not sympathetic toward the servant who buried his talent. When the servant said, “I was afraid,” the master did not put his arm around him and say, “There, there, it’s all right, you poor little servant. I’m sorry I put you in such an uncomfortable position.” No, the master rebuked him sharply with anger and said, “You lazy servant!”

Why did the master accuse the servant of laziness? Because rather than facing his fears and taking a risk for his master’s sake, he chose to take the easy path: bury the talent, stay at home, and relax.

If you think fear is a good excuse for not doing God’s will,

you'd better think again. If you want to know how to overcome your fears, there is only one way—face them! Most of the time fear is like a mirage; as you walk toward it, it will become more and more transparent until it disappears completely. But to face your fears requires courage.

After Moses died, his protégé, Joshua, became the new leader. God promised to be with Joshua as He had been with Moses. God promised to give Joshua every place upon which the sole of his foot would tread. God promised to prosper Joshua wherever he went.

But there was one requirement: “Be strong and very courageous,” the Lord said (Josh. 1:7). Imagine you are about to embark on the most challenging undertaking of your life. You have no idea what lies before you, and then the Lord comes to you and says, “Be very courageous.” That would scare me! Why? It's because courage is needed in the presence of danger. Courage is *not* the absence of fear. In fact, there is no courage without fear. Courage is the willingness to face fear. All the promises, victories and destiny awaiting Joshua were dependent on his willingness to face his fear.

If fulfilling God's will for our lives were just a matter of promoting our own names, reputations and personal destinies, I would say, “Don't even bother. Stay home, watch television and enjoy a comfortable, quiet life.”

But we must remember that what is at stake is God's eternal kingdom! Our talent does not belong to us—it belongs to the master. He has entrusted it into our hands. But one day He will return, and we will have to give an account for what we did with His investment.

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