

Surrender Your Gifts to God

There are two distinct sets of temptations that assail those who have, or think they have, rather less, and those who have, or think they have, rather more than an average share of intellect; while those who have neither less nor more are generally open in some degree to both.

The refuge and very present help from both sets of temptations is the same. The intellect, whether great or small, that is committed to the Lord's keeping will be kept and will be used by Him.

Those who consider themselves to have less than average intellect are tempted to think they are excused from the effort to cultivate and use their small intellectual gifts; to suppose they cannot or need not seek to win souls because they are not so clever and apt in speech as others; to attribute to want of gift what is really want of grace; to hide the one talent because it is not five. Let me throw out a thought or two for these.

Which is greater, gifts or grace? Gifts are given to every man according to his ability. That is, we have just as much given as God knows we are able to use, and what He knows we can best use, for Him. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the

measure of the
gift of Christ.

Claiming and using that royal measure of grace, you may, and
can, and
will do more for God than the mightiest intellect in the world
without
it. For which, in the clear light of His Word, is likely to be
most
effectual: the natural ability—which at its best and fullest,
without
Christ, can do nothing (observe and believe that word!) or the
grace of
our Almighty God and the power of the Holy Spirit, which is as
free to
you as it ever was to anyone?

If you are responsible for making use of your limited gift,
are you
not equally responsible for making use of the grace and power
that are
to be had for the asking—that are already yours in Christ and
that are
not limited?

Also, do you not see that when there are great natural gifts,
people
give the credit to them—instead of to the grace that alone did
the real
work—and thus God is defrauded of the glory? To say it
reverently, God
can get more glory out of a feeble instrument—because then it
is more
obvious that the excellency of the power is of God and not of
us. Will
you not henceforth say, “Most gladly therefore will I rather
glory in my
infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2

Cor. 12:9,
KJV)?

Don't you really believe that the Holy Spirit is just as able to draw a soul to Jesus, if He will, by your whisper of the one word "Come," as by an eloquent sermon an hour long? I do! At the same time, as it is evidently God's way to work through these intellects of ours, we have no more right to expect Him to use a mind that we are willfully neglecting and taking no pains whatever to fit for His use, than I would have to expect you to write a beautiful inscription with my pen if I did not take the trouble to wipe it and mend it.

Those who consider themselves to have more than average intellect are tempted to rely on their natural gifts, and to act and speak in their own strength; to go on too fast, without really looking up at every step and for every word; to spend their Lord's time in polishing up their intellects, nominally for the sake of influence and power and so forth, but essentially for the sake of the keen enjoyment of the process; and perhaps, most of all, to spend the strength of these intellects for that which does not profit, in yielding to the specious snare of reading clever books on both sides and thus eating deliberately of the tree of

the knowledge of good and evil.

The mere mention of these temptations should be sufficient appeal to conscience. If consecration is to be a reality anywhere, should it not be in the very thing that you own as an extra gift from God, and that is evidently closest, so to speak, to His direct action, spirit upon spirit? And if the very strength of your intellect has been your weakness, will you not entreat Him to keep it henceforth really and entirely for Himself?

It is so good of Him to have given you something to lay at His feet; shall not this goodness lead you to lay it all there and never hanker after taking it back for yourself or the world? Do you not feel that in very proportion to the gift you need the special keeping of it?

He may lead you by a way you know not in the matter. Very likely He will show you that you must be willing to be a fool for His sake first, before He will condescend to use you much for His glory. Will you look up into His face and say, "Not willing"?

He who made every power can use every power—memory, judgment, imagination, quickness of apprehension or insight; musical, poetical, oratorical or artistic faculties; special tastes for reasoning,

philosophy, history, natural science or natural history—all these may be dedicated to Him, sanctified by Him and used by Him. Whatever He has given, He will use, if we will let Him.

Often, in the most unexpected ways, and at the most unexpected turns, something read or acquired long ago suddenly comes into use. We cannot foresee what will thus come in useful; but He knew, when He guided us to learn it, what it would be wanted for in His service.

So may we not ask Him to bring His perfect foreknowledge to bear on all our mental training and ?storing? To guide us to read or study exactly what He knows there will be use for in the work to which He has called us or will call us?

Nothing is more practically perplexing to a young Christian whose preparation time is not quite over than to discern what is most worth studying—what is really the best investment of the golden hours—while yet the time is not come for the field of active work to be fully entered and the thorough furnishing of the mind is the evident path of present duty.

Is not His name called “Counsellor” (see Is. 9:6)? And will He not be faithful to the promise of His name in this, as well as in all else?

The same applies to every subsequent stage. Only let us be perfectly clear about the principle that our intellect is not our own, either to cultivate, or to use, or to enjoy, and that Jesus Christ is our real and ever-present Counsellor, and then there will be no more worry about what to read and how much to read, and whether to keep up one's accomplishments, or one's languages, or one's -ologies! If the Master has need of them, He will show us; and if He has not, what need have we of them?

If we go forward without His leading, we may throw away some talent—or let it get too rusty for use—that would have been most valuable when other circumstances arose or different work was given. We must not think that “keeping” means not using at all! What we want is to have all our powers kept for His use.

In this they will probably find far higher development than in any other sort of use. I know cases in which the effect of real consecration on mere mental development has been obvious and surprising to all around. Yet it is only a confirmation of what I believe to be a great principle: The Lord makes the most of whatever is unreservedly surrendered to Him.

Adapted from Kept for the Master's Use by Frances Ridley Havergal. Published by James Nisbet & Co. Limited, London,

1879. Frances Ridley Havergal (1836-1879)
was a gifted pianist and hymn writer. The daughter of an
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Life for
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for the Master's Use is based.