

5. Strategic Planning as a First Article Gift – Prioritizes Use of Limited Resources

Psalm 24:1-2

¹ The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein, ² for he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers.

Psalm 24 reminds us that God has and controls unlimited resources. Everything that has ever been created belongs to the Lord. Psalm 50 reinforces this:

Psalm 50:10-12

¹⁰ "For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. ¹¹ I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is mine. ¹² If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and its fullness are mine."

God has unlimited resources, but every congregation has limited resources. The Lord could provide an abundance of every kind of resource on every one of His congregations, but He chooses not to do this. Instead, He gives different gifts to different congregations according to His will.

The Parable of the Talents found in Matthew 25 is a familiar parable to many of us. However, we tend to focus on how the parable ends and often overlook an important aspect in how it begins. The parable starts with the owner of the property entrusting his money to different servants in different amounts "each according to his ability."

Matthew 25:14-15

"For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away."

Each congregation has been entrusted with God's property "each according to [its] ability." How does the Lord know the ability of each congregation? Like a potter who shapes clay (see Romans 9:20-21), He is the one who has shaped and fashioned each congregation according to His purpose for it. By God's design, every congregation has been provided with a set amount of resources. Some congregations are "one talent congregations," some are "two talent congregations," and others are "five talent congregations."

Because resources are not unlimited, every congregations faces limitations of time, money, people, etc. Without a clear purpose and focus, there is bound to be conflict in the congregation over how these limited resources should be used. Strategic planning provides a means to minimize that conflict.

- 5a. Why does everything in all of creation belong to the Lord? What does 'everything' include?
- 5b. For what purpose does God limit the resources available to a congregation?
- 5c. What resource limitations does our congregation face?
- 5d. In what things are we a ...
- "one talent congregation"?
 - "two talent congregation"?
 - "five talent congregation"?