

Applying My Abilities to Ministry

(Adapted from Raymond Woodward's *Life Course 301*)

“And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all”
(1Corinthians 12:6).

“There are different **abilities** to perform service”
(1 Corinthians 12:6, *Good News Translation*).

Trying to be good at everything never works, because God calls each of us to different things. Success in ministry comes when we know what we are good at . . . and we concentrate on doing our best in that particular thing.

A PARABLE: THE ANIMAL SCHOOL

(George H. Reavis)

<http://www.janebluestein.com/handouts/animal.html>

A group of animals decided to improve their general welfare by starting a new school, in which the curriculum consisted of running, climbing, flying and swimming. All of the animals took all of the subjects.

The duck was good at swimming and fair in flying, but he was terrible in running. So he was made to drop the swimming course and stay after school to practice running. He kept this up until he was only average at swimming, but average was acceptable. The others, including the teacher, were no longer threatened by the duck's swimming abilities, so everyone felt more comfortable – except the duck.

The eagle was considered to be a problem student. For instance, in the climbing course he could beat all of the others to the top of the tree, but he insisted on using his own method of getting there. He had to be severely disciplined and finally, because of his non-cooperation in swimming, he was expelled for insubordination.

The rabbit started at the top of the course in running, but was woefully inadequate in other areas. Because of so much make-up work in swimming, he had a nervous breakdown and had to drop out of school.

The turtle was a failure in almost every course offered. His shell was considered to be the leading cause of his failure, so it was removed. This did help his running a bit, but sadly, he became the first casualty of the new curriculum when he was stepped on by the horse.

THINK ABOUT IT

What went wrong in this story? Every animal was very good in at least one activity. They were created by God to perform at least ONE THING exceptionally well. Where did they fail? What should they have done? (Take 5 minutes or so to answer these questions on the lines provided below.)

Everyone is a “10” in some area . . . but no one is a “10” in everything.

“I ... have given him skill, **ability**, and knowledge in all kinds of crafts ...” (Exodus 31:3).

One of the most common reasons people give for not getting involved in ministry is, “I just don’t have any abilities to offer.” Nothing could be further from the truth. The simple key is to **MATCH** your abilities with the right ministry.

SIX MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT ABILITIES

- MYTH #1:** An average person has only a few abilities.
TRUTH: Many studies have proven that the average person has from 500 to 700 skills.
- MYTH #2:** People aren’t born with skills; all skills must be learned by experience.
TRUTH: There are a number of talents that seem to be inborn, or developed very early in infancy.
- MYTH #3:** If you have certain abilities, you will be aware that you have them.
TRUTH: You are probably using a number of talents or skills that you are not even aware of.
- MYTH #4:** You must have a lot of natural talent to develop useful skills.
TRUTH: We can learn to do a number of things well without possessing natural talent.
- MYTH #5:** The skills that are most useful are learned primarily in the classroom.
TRUTH: Many of your basic skills were learned at home or somewhere else outside of the classroom.
- MYTH #6:** Job skills are useful only in that environment, and couldn’t be used in ministry.
TRUTH: Hopefully, you already see the fallacy of this idea.

HOW TO DISCOVER YOUR ABILITIES

1. Look over your list of accomplishments from the “Taking a Spiritual EKG” exercise (in the previous lesson called “Monitoring My Heartbeat”) once again. Circle all the verbs that indicate ACTIONS you performed.
2. Now compare those ACTIONS with the list below and indicate any of the abilities you have.

SPECIALIZED ABILITIES

- Entertaining ability:** to perform, act, sing, speak, or amuse people.
- Recruiting ability:** to enlist and motivate people to get involved.
- Interviewing ability:** to discover what others are really like.
- Researching ability:** to read, gather information, and collect data.
- Artistic ability:** to conceptualize, picture, draw, paint, or photograph.
- Graphics ability:** to create layouts, design, create visual displays, signs or banners.
- Evaluating ability:** to analyze data and draw conclusions.
- Planning ability:** to strategize, design and organize programs and events.
- Managing ability:** to supervise people and coordinate details to accomplish a task or event.
- Counseling ability:** to listen, encourage and guide with sensitivity.
- Teaching ability:** to explain, train, demonstrate, or tutor.
- Writing ability:** to write articles, letters, books, or news releases.
- Editing ability:** to proofread or rewrite articles for publication.
- Promoting ability:** to advertise or promote events and activities.
- Repairing ability:** to fix, repair, restore, maintain or renovate.
- Feeding ability:** to create meals for large or small groups.
- Recall ability:** to remember or recall names and faces.
- Mechanical operating ability:** to operate tools, machinery or equipment.
- Resourceful ability:** to search out and find inexpensive materials or resources needed.
- Counting ability:** to work with numbers, data, or money.
- Coursifying ability:** to systematically file books, data, records and materials for easy retrieval.
- Public relations ability:** to handle complaints and unhappy people with care and courtesy.
- Welcoming ability:** to convey warmth, develop rapport, and make others feel comfortable.
- Composing ability:** to write music, lyrics, poetry or drama.

- **Landscaping ability:** to do gardening and work with plants.
- **Arts and crafts ability:** to beautify a setting for a special event.
- **Musical ability:** to sing, play an instrument, or direct musical groups.
- **Other ability:** _____

- **Other ability:** _____

Study Questions

1. What is one of the most common reasons people give for not getting involved in ministry?

2. What is the simple key to getting involved in ministry? _____

3. List the six (6) myths (untruths) given in this lesson about everyone’s abilities.
1) _____
2) _____
3) _____
4) _____
5) _____
6) _____

4. Give a brief definition of the each of the specialized abilities listed below.
Entertaining ability _____
Managing ability _____
Researching ability _____
Counseling ability _____
Recruiting ability _____
Teaching ability _____
Writing ability _____
Counting ability _____
Editing ability _____
Recall ability _____
Welcoming ability _____
Public relations ability _____

