

Steward Life

Lesson 26



STORY

The cabinet maker brushed the last few wood chips off his latest creation and stepped back to take a look. A satisfied smile came across his face. This was perhaps his best creation ever.

As he began to pick up his tools, he imagined the tools were alive—for so they often did seem when he was working with the wood.

Some of the tools were old—passed on to him by his father and grandfather. Some were quite new. While working on this latest project, one tool handle broke and another tool became rather dull, and some of the machinery showed that it needed routine maintenance.

The condition of the tools did not interfere with the cabinet maker's view of them. When he held them in his hands, they were all still precious extensions of his own skill.

He knew just how to sharpen the chisels, hone the edge on his plane, oil the movable parts and adjust the belt on the sander. In fact, grinding, polishing and maintaining the condition of his tools was as creative an act as using them on the wood.

This latest piece would join all the others in the showroom in his shop. People from all over would visit and remark how beautiful the cabinets were and how skillful the cabinet maker was.

Very rarely did they ever give any thought to the tools he used to do his work.

But the cabinet maker, gently sorting his tools, knew their value. Even though he had to repair, renovate and renew them from time to time—even sometimes completely rebuild them—he could never give up a single one. Not even when their useful life had passed did he toss them out, but kept them, safely put away, in honor of their past accomplishments in his hands. Without each one of them, he would have never been able to demonstrate his singular skill or display his wonderful creations.

INSIGHT OUT

God is like the cabinet maker. He uses us as his tools, selecting certain people to do certain tasks according to their abilities. Some of us are like new tools. Others have been ground and honed and renovated by the Master's skill over and over again. We are tools in the hands of The Craftsman, and whatever job we do, it is not because we are some incredible tool on our own, but because we are in His hands. And even when our work on earth is done, the Master will still care about us and provide us a place in heaven.

EXERCISE

Someone has said, "Every congregation is made up of people with all the gifts, talents and abilities necessary to do the work God has for it to do." Do you think this is true of your congregation? What do you feel you need in your congregation in the way of talents and skills that you "don't have?" Is it possible that God has given the congregation people with gifts to fill that need? How can you find out?

INSIGHT OUT

How do you apply the gifts and talents God has given you in service to Him? In many congregations members see service to Jesus as:

- election to a board or committee
- attending meetings
- hearing reports and making decisions
- going home.



EXERCISE

License plates—every vehicle you see as you drive today and this week will have one. If not, there's going to be trouble for someone! License plates identify at a glance the state in which a vehicle is registered and a number to identify the owner.

How do you go about knowing whether another driver belongs to God and is in the state of grace and forgiveness? How do you identify a driver's Christianity? Not by the license plate.

See if you can pick out a Christian on the road the next time you are driving. Perhaps it will be through a window decal, bumper sticker or fish symbol on the trunk. Perhaps it will be through driving behavior.

How will people know that you are a Christian driver? Will it be through symbolism, practice—or both?



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