

Initiative

by George Verwer

The sermon calls believers to embrace initiative as a vital aspect of their faith and service to God and others.

Duration: 27:53

Scripture: Matthew 25:14, Hebrews 10:24

Topics: "Initiative"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the lack of initiative in the world and how the world system has to resort to incentives to motivate people. However, as believers, we are called to have a baptism of initiative and go the extra mile in our service to God. The speaker uses the parable of the talents in Matthew to illustrate this point. The parable teaches that God has given each of us talents and abilities, and it is our responsibility to use them wisely and invest them for His kingdom.

Transcript

...and delivered unto them his goods, and unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one. To every man according to his several ability, and straightway took he his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them another five talents.

Likewise, he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his Lord's money. After a long time, the Lord of the servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.

And so he that had received five talents came and brought the other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliverest unto me five talents. Behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His Lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant.

Thou hast been faithful over a few things. I will make thee ruler over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.

He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliverest unto me two talents. Behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. And his Lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant.

Thou hast been faithful over a few things. I will make thee ruler over many things. Enter thou into the joy of the Lord.

Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed. And I was afraid, and went and hid my talent in the earth. Lo, there thou hast, that is thine.

His Lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knowest that I reap where I sow not, and gather where I have not strawed. Thou oughtest therefore to put my money to exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received my own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents.

From every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance. But from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast thee, the unprofitable servant, into outer darkness.

There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Initiative. It's different than faithfulness, isn't it? Some have said, well, all we need to be is faithful.

And in one way that's true. Another way that can be a cheap excuse for doing little. Faithful.

You have practically no work at all. You're faithful in doing it, so you feel quite happy you're faithful. There's a great deal in being faithful over a great task that you've taken on from the Lord, and just merely being faithful in existing.

I don't believe God just wants faithfulness. I believe God wants success. I believe God wants productivity.

It's so easy to carry on a great deal of activity with very little productivity. And so I believe that this thing of initiative is something that God wants us to have. Everywhere I go I can see it.

You can see it whenever the teams of young people come in. Very seldom have I ever found anyone who had the initiative to, for example, when they were a bit tired or a bit hungry, to stay behind and perhaps make sure the truck was cleaned up. Make sure the papers weren't lying around.

Make sure the literature was taken to its proper place. Make sure the food was taken to its proper place. So little of this exists.

Now some people say, well, this is OM. Let's get off that. This is people.

This is everywhere. There's so little initiative in the world that the world system has to develop every possible form of prize, bonus, everything you can think of to get people to do the job. We don't have such things.

And so we're up against the streams. We're up against the down push of the current. But if we're going to get the job done this year, if we're going to accomplish what the Lord wants us to accomplish at this conference, and at every weekend we're going to have to have a baptism of initiative.

We're going to have to be immersed, to use the word, in a spirit of extra mile going. Talk about sometimes going the extra mile for the unconverted man. Most believers are hardly willing to go the extra mile for the believer.

Someone says, well, do you think you could carry this over to here? And he really didn't want to do that job, but anyway, he does it. It's on to the Lord. He takes this particular thing and he does it.

And when he's done with that, instead of scooting off, he goes back and he says, well, is there anything else I can do? Amazes me last night. Young man came in. I know for a fact he's one of the hardest working young men in all of OM.

And he happens to be one of the mechanics. He's got a whole pile of work he could be doing. He's been working very hard.

And he comes in late last night, he comes up to me and he says, you know, is there anything I can do? Is there anything I can do? You know, very few people have that kind of spirit. And unfortunately, there are so few that have that kind of spirit, they end up with so much work. Sometimes I wonder if it's right.

But imagine how their load will be liquidated. How the overall load will be so tremendously lightened as we all get a vision of initiative. A piece of paper on the bathroom floor.

Why wait for the man who is officially in charge of picking up the pieces of paper on the bathroom floor? Pick it up yourself. Something out of place, something dirty. Many a time we've seen something that we knew we could have taken a little bit of initiative, but we didn't bother.

We didn't bother. We were headed for the dining table or we were headed for the sack and so we just didn't bother. And I believe this is a curse in the age of softness.

We live in the age of softness where the word work has been put next to the word with just one more letter, curse. We just don't like to work. Now I know there's some exceptions and there's a few beaming oddbods who really have a lust for working hard, but it isn't a general rule.

Most of us like to see, if not consciously, unconsciously, how little we can get away with or how much we can get away with. And we think, well, as long as I'm faithful. In other words, certainly if George Berwer or Dale or Roger or Keith comes to me and says, well, you do this, well, I'll be faithful in doing it.

Well, let's face facts. Many can't even do that much. Many can't even be faithful, much less have initiative.

But it's one thing to just carry out what's assigned to you, what's clearly shown to you, and it's another thing to go beyond that, isn't it? It's another thing to have initiative. There's certain things you know you can do you know you don't even need permission for. You never really need permission to wipe up a dirty spot on the floor.

You never need permission to clean out a toilet that maybe is jammed. You never need permission much for that. You might need permission if you have to borrow and use some special tools.

But all day you'll discover things you don't really need permission for. But of course, at times, the initiative involves asking someone, finding out, well, who is in charge of this? Because I can tell you as someone who's in charge of a few things, I appreciate it when people remind me and say, well, look, what about this? It helps me. My tendency, my natural tendency is toward laziness, toward forgetfulness, toward wanting to get away from it all.

And so when someone comes up and says to me, look, what do you think we're going to do with these 40 suitcases piled in the front hallway? Well, that helps me to start thinking. Most of you perhaps think that I have some kind of a gift in solving problems. Certainly the Lord has done something in me because I know I couldn't do it in myself.

But many times I can't begin to solve a problem until somebody throws it on me. Somebody says, look, this isn't functioning right. That's initiative.

In other words, you see something going wrong, very much wrong. Don't bury it and say, oh, well, these young people, what a bunch of phonies. Oh, this isn't right.

This isn't of the Lord. But bring it out. Submit it to those of us who perhaps are supposedly solving it and then let us go to work on it.

Now, of course, quite a few people have come into my office with a problem. They don't come that very often. They come in.

I always make them the chairman of the committee to solve the problem. So, of course, you better be ready for action when you come with your suggestions because this is, as far as I'm concerned, is the number one problem, is the people to get into action and to do these things. Now, here in Matthew, we have the story of these three men.

One of them was given five bob. One was given ten bob and one was given a shilling to use proper English terminology. And the one who was given ten, he went out and really did a job with it.

He used initiative. He wasn't just, in a sense, faithful and just, well, put it in his pocket or in a bank or the earth and said, well, I'm going to guard it. I'm going to take care of it.

He used initiative. He went out and he invested it. He did something with it.

And when the Lord came back, he had something to give. Something real. Something tangible.

Something accomplished. And what did the Lord say? Well done. Now, good.

Have faithful servants. One of the other blokes went out with his five bob and he also invested it. And when he came back, the Lord said, well done, good, and faithful servants.

But the last crony, he was a real faker and he was a fearful one. The Lord probably had some loud sermons and it scared him. So he put his one shilling in the earth.

Faithful. Not really, was he? A false faithfulness bound up with fear. And the servant was told that it would have been better if he had gone out and put it to usury.

It would have been better if he had gone out and lent it for interest rather than putting it in the ground. But when it was all over, he came back with his one crummy little shilling which now had depreciated because of inflation. And what did he say? The Lord said, take it away from him and give it to the other guy, five or ten.

And God is giving us a tremendous lesson here. He's given all of us talent. He's given all of us ability.

It's what it says in the very beginning. And we need to look at verse 15. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one.

To every man according to his several ability straightway took he his journey. All of you have talents. All of you have talents.

I don't care how untalented you think you are, you've still got some talent. Now there's no place in Scripture where it says that the ten-talent men are the wheels, the five-talent men are the middle-roaders, the one-talent boys, these are just the nobodies. There's no place in Scripture that teaches that.

You are responsible for that which the Lord has given you. Not responsible for what he hasn't given you. If the Lord hasn't given you the gift to preach, well, you're not responsible for that.

Let me say, I believe many of you have more of a gift to preach than you think. And I believe this is something that oftentimes develops, and oftentimes the Lord gives. We need to be ready for whatever the Lord wants to give.

But you will not be held accountable for ten talents if the Lord has given you one. But you will be responsible for the one. Now most on OM are the one-talent varieties.

I don't know why, but the Lord seems to have chosen us as a one-talent band. And we got a few guys with a five-in-ten talent. And they're usually the biggest phonies among us because they don't know how to use how much they've been given.

But most of us are ten-talent and we're trying to stretch it to the end. And this is what we want. Maybe God has only given you a little bit of ability.

You say, well, I'm not very smart. I'm not much of a preacher. Boy, I'm just having a lot of trouble really accomplishing anything.

And you're just a one-talent man. Well, the main thing is take that talent and use it to the uttermost. Whatsoever you do, do hardly as unto the Lord.

If your gift, the only gift you have is a gift of health, gift of health, well then, use it hardly unto the Lord to the nth degree. Might God really grip us with the fact that he wants us to take the initiative that we'll be alert, provoking one another to good works? Look at that verse there in Hebrews. Turn to the book of Hebrews.

I believe we'll find it in chapter 10, verse 24. Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works. It oftentimes speaks to my heart.

In other words, not only should we be taking initiative, listen, but we should be provoking others to take the initiative. Do you know the best way to do that? Is take the initiative yourself. That's right.

You want to get somebody you're working with to get a vision for cleaning the toilets. I'll let you in on one of my secrets. I've given that vision to a number of people.

It's easy. It's hard, but it's easy. Just start cleaning them yourself.

It's amazing how that can provoke people to want to do it. And you know, dear brother Dale Roton and brother Jonathan McCroskey both ended up cleaning the toilets over in Zaventem last month. I started out doing it in the beginning of the month, and soon I didn't have hardly a job at all.

Brother Dale took over and did it much better than I did. And there were some others of course helping. And you'll discover this tremendous truth that through doing things yourself you can provoke others to do it.

You can get others to do it. And so God tells us that we are to consider one another and we're to try to encourage one another in doing good works. Might God really teach us during this conference.

If we can't do it here we'll never do it out there. What Dale said this morning is so true. We are living, listen, we are living in an unrealistic situation here.

Absolutely. One of the things that I feel about Bible school is that it is an unrealistic situation. It is not a life situation.

It is not a battlefield situation. And it might be okay for a few months, maybe even for a year or so. But we must realize it's not a life situation.

Everything here basically is provided for you, isn't it? So you're going to have a few chores. But I mean your food, your clothing in a sense, your place to sit, your place to stand, your place to wash. Basically it's all here.

These are the basic needs of life and you never learn to live until you learn to live without those basics. And you discover how hard it is to get along without water and how hard it is to live when you have to boil all your water. You've got to check all your food for diseases and you're sick yourself so often.

And if you don't learn how to live in victory over sickness, which plagues still today, plagues the mission field, well, you'll never learn to live in victory. Because seemingly with so many it comes sooner or later. Times are just down physically.

And this is why if we can't live it here with meetings every day, prayer meetings every day, challenges every day, guest speakers from all over the world every day, nice place to stay, heat, electricity, chairs to sit on, pencils to write with, paper to go, everything sort of at your hand. If you can't live for Christ here, if you can't rejoice here, well, I've got my doubts whether you're going to rejoice after six thousand miles in the back of a truck on the way to India or even a thousand miles on the way to Italy after days of not getting all the basics just as you want them. If you can't tolerate this diet here, boy, don't come to India.

I don't know where you can go, but don't come with me. You speak to your individual leader, but this diet here is peaches and cream compared to what we oftentimes have in India. And you don't have to worry about the forks, knives and spoons most of the time where we're going.

And you just have your hands. And I know some people sat down at the table and being from the West, they saw people putting food in their mouth and their hands, they could hardly eat just watching it. And I prefer the North Indians.

They never bother me very much. They eat the food just mainly from here down. But I might have this backward.

I think it's the South Indians, they eat it from up to here. And of course, if you're just not ready to adapt and to bend, down in Italy they have a different type of problem. You try to eat a noodle that's that long and the way they do it with the end of the fork.

So, I mean, if we can't live here, if we can't rejoice here, if we can't adapt here, well, we're just admitting that the rest of this, we're just kidding ourselves. And all of it, a lot of it is going to be solved by the word initiative. You take the initiative to learn how they do it.

That's right. The girls in India take the initiative to learn how to get a sari on and keep it on. Sure, it's hard.

I know you're not used to it. Oh, it's a burden. You don't like it.

But you still can take initiative and you can learn. If 280 million Indian women can learn to put a sari on, you can too. And in Italy, if they can learn to put the spaghetti in their mouth without drooling it all over the table and getting it caught around their head, you can learn too.

The initiative to learn that which is new. There's no room for the attitude, that's not the way we do it at home. That's not going to accomplish anything.

But the initiative to learn that which is new in culture, in language, in the way you eat. Many were shocked in India, almost knocked out when we discovered that most places, you look around for the toilet paper and it's just not available. And oh, I've heard, I know very few people from the West that ever have attempted to adapt to the Indian method and many other countries.

Turkey's the same way. I've always heard, that's impossible, that's wrong. But you know, I have met some of the most effective missionaries, one in particular I think of, that even on that point that 95% would never bend on that point, she bent on that.

And that woman and others I know, I believe, are really being effective. In other words, just ready to just do anything. You say, well, that's against my health standards.

Look, these health standards many times are very relative, very relative indeed. And if you're always going to be riding in on that one, oh well, it's not healthy, it's not healthy, you better not go. Because you're going to get into situations, at least where I am, where it's not healthy according to the way they do it in the local town here in Great Britain.

And it's going to mean at times you just have to lay yourself down to a new culture. And this isn't only true in India and in the East, such as Turkey or Persia, it's true in Italy, it's true in Spain, it's true in France. Each country has its different culture patterns.

I was amazed when I went to Holland. People in Holland, they cut their white bread with a knife and a fork. It almost threw me.

All my life we just grabbed the bread and put it in our mouth with our hands. They ate white bread as if they were cutting a sirloin steak. Well, I learned to do the same thing.

You must realize every country presents you with an opportunity for initiative like you've never had before. Initiative and adaptability. One great missionary veteran came back to me when he was lecturing.

We asked him what he thought was a key word to learn as we thought of going to the mission field. And he said the word adaptability. Adaptability.

And I leave you with those two words this morning. We are not here, young people, to get a series of messages. We are not here to merely accumulate more theological facts.

We are here with a desire to see you effective for Christ on the battlefronts of the world today. We are here to see you trained and prepared and made ready for assault against the enemy. And I believe it's as serious as the preparations that took place here in the 1940s when they planned the great invasion of the

European continent.

And without adaptability and initiative undergone by faithfulness, we're not going to accomplish the job. Paul said, out of all things, to all men, to win some. And if we don't go out of here with that desire, ready to scrap our culture, scrap our diet.

Praise God, I've scrapped mine. I'll take Indian food any day. Scrap your clothing.

Praise God, I'll take a loin cloth and a little white shirt over this monkey suit I've got on any day. Scrap some of your habits. I'll take finger-eating over silly forks and knives that you have to waste time washing any day in a leaf or a plate any day over the nonsense of the West.

I never thought I could adapt, but I only have discovered I can adapt. I love it. I'm yearning I take the first jet to Bombay tomorrow and never come back to the West.

And might there be some of us who get such a passion for these countries and for these nations that we won't care less if we never have our bow-tie back on our silly neck. We'll go out there with a desire to know these people, to adapt, and to have the initiative that will enable us to be soldiers of Jesus Christ. Not transplanting the Western culture to the East or the British culture to Spain, but transplanting and transmitting the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ that was preached by an Oriental and that went to India long before it ever came to France or to America or England.

Adaptability, it's a must. Initiative, it's essential. Take that one talent and use it, invest it, and lay it in the hands of God and watch Him do wonderful things.

And then He will say, Well done, my good and faithful servant.

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