



TOOLS OF THE TRADE

PART 1 - PHONE TECHNICIAN

Matthew 25:14 For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.

15 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 his journey.

16 Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents.

17 And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two.

18 But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.

19 After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.

20 And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliverdest unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more.

21 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.

22 He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliverdest unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them.

23 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 thy lord.

24 Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strowed:

25 And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine.

There seems to be so many talented young people in our local congregation. I appreciate them! Some are very special to me. Each young person has different talents. Some inherited them from their parents, some learned from school training, and some learned them on their own, but all talents come from God. A young person might want to learn to sing and enroll in a music school, but if he does not have a talent for singing, he will never learn. However, he might have a talent in another field.

Tools are an important part of realizing your talents. In my job as an electronic technician for the local phone company, I use many basic tools to help me complete my job. They do not look like much, but they are just what I need. I would like to illustrate the tools I use, and what they accomplish on the job.

I work in several different offices, each office representing the first three digits of exchange of your telephone number, such as the 366 office or the 345 office. Every time someone dials the phone, it goes through one of my offices, if he or she is calling to or from one of these exchanges. Years ago, before the computer system was established, we used a mechanical system. Every time you picked up your receiver to make a telephone call, something we called a "line finder" would complete the call. Then, each number you dialed would be searched by a selector that absorbed each digit you dialed until your line was connected to the number you were calling.

After working on this mechanical system for about twenty-five years, I had everything memorized and could easily do my job. One day, however, this system was hit by lightning, and within thirty-six hours we had a new digital computer system. This was a different world than I had ever been involved in. I had no idea what was going on. The company sent me to several schools, and I had to learn my job completely over again.

Now that we are in a digital system, I need to explain what the interiors of my offices look like. They contain several metal frames with thousands of feet of different colors of electrical wire attached by several small pins, plus several computers. One end of each wire goes to the computer system, and the other end of the wire goes through an underground cable system, out to a pole and to each of your homes.

The first tool I use a lot is a simple pair of needlenose pliers. I use them to get little pieces of wire out of tiny or tight places. I thought of how I could liken those small pliers to my spiritual life. When God spoke to me one day, there were a lot of little things in my life I could not reach, things I could not remove. But when God reached down to me, He found all those little sins I could not get out of my life, and He removed them. My literal pliers specialize in finding small things in hard-to-reach places and pulling them out. That is just the way it is when Christ finds us. You might say, "But these are just small things." Yes,

but it is the small things that separate us from God. Any small problem in an electrical circuit, such as a ground, will knock out a phone. The devil would like to knock out every one of us just as easy.

The next tool I want to tell you about looks just like a pencil but is called a wire wrapper. Each wire is covered with plastic insulation and must be unwrapped to work with. This tool really does a good job of unwrapping wire, but sometimes that little rascal can cause more trouble than you can believe. You can unwrap a wire and get called away from the job and that little unwrapped wire just blends in with the other wires and you can never find it until someone calls in having trouble with their phone. You can look and look for it, and it looks fine, but something is wrong. It is like the devil coming along and sneaking something in our lives and saying, "There's no problem there," but there is!

After I skin the wire back, I use a tool called a wrap gun to shoot the wire on a pin that holds it on the metal frame. It does a neat job, and holds the wire so tight you cannot unwrap it from the frame. (It is just like a good connection with God. We must have it to live for Him.) One of the guys I work with comes in and says we have a dead wire somewhere. I will look, and sure enough, there is a loose wire. We have to have a good connection with any electrical circuit, and we must have a good connection with God.

I also use a simple pair of side-cut pliers every day. I use them to cut and trim wire to make the finished job look neat. As I listen to our pastor or an evangelist whittling on me, digging around me, and skinning me a few times, I realize that he is just trimming me up and making me look a lot better spiritually. I appreciate this!

The last tool I want to mention is an ohm meter. An ohm meter tells us if there is trouble on a line and where that trouble is. It will tell you if the current is flowing through a certain line. I compare my ohm meter to my Bible. My Bible shows me all my trouble spots, all my weak places, and where the current has stopped flowing. That is why we need to read the Word of God. If we would study and eat of it daily, we would save ourselves a lot of trouble.

The Bible is just like my tool belt. I just reach down and get whatever I need. Some tools I use more than others, but my tools never get jealous of each other. They never say to me, "You use him more than you use me." None of us can do the same job equally. Some have talents greater than others. Some can sing well, others play the piano, and others can get up and speak well, but we all have to do our part to fulfill with what talents we have. God will help us with the talents He has given us.

Young person, if I could give you some advice, it would be to not neglect the good part of your life, which is serving God, to gain things from this world. One of these days we are going to leave this world, and everything we own is going to mean nothing to us. We will leave here to meet God, so why not work and use our talents for those things that will last eternally? Young man, young woman, get as close to God as you can and use all your talents for Him.

Paul Chapman

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