



Skills for the Task

Greg H. Parsons



“**W**hatever skills you have, you will use them on the mission field.” I can’t remember when I first heard that but it was probably 30 years ago—and from a field missionary. At the time, I thought about using my skills in photography, or stained glass or in keeping old cars working. Later I thought about my experience running a small off-set printing press (that challenged my spiritual walk so much, that I kept quiet about it later!).

Now of course, we talk about using all the gifts God has given to us—natural and spiritual. Today, people take job inventory/skills tests to see where they are strong. Books are written in the secular market on topics such as “focusing on your strengths” and matching skills with the job.

While I understand these ideas, sometimes we may take it too far. When I was younger, I would have guessed I would use different skills than I have now developed. I have been able to do things and learn things I would have never learned or even asked for. Often, those are the kinds of things that help us to really learn and grow in all of life. Certainly, we grow in our capacity to see things from a different angle—something very important in mission work. Sometimes now, I see some young people having a better sense of what they believe they want. And, sometimes, they are correct!

As we seek to engage people at all levels—business, medical, technical, practical, non-profit—it is exciting to see the broad range of gifting and callings that God is using in His purposes.

But, I wasn’t ready for this one!

Recently, I was consulting with a church and I heard something that I would have never thought about. The church had a man who was an undertaker, and he had expressed interest in using his skills in their global outreach! He didn’t want to just go on a short term and do “spiritual” things like teach or do street drama.


Perhaps you are thinking ahead of me on this one, but my first thought was, “what do you do with that?” Here’s what happened:

The church already had a global disaster response team. They had prepared for and been involved in disasters around the world. When the tsunami struck in S.E. Asia, they knew they needed to be there to do what they could with as many of their people as feasible. They had contacts through their agency and began to prepare to have people out there within 3-4 weeks—as soon as team members could clear their work schedules and book flights. As they communicated with their field contacts, it became clear that one of the most important things that needed to be done was for bodies of the dead to be wisely and safely removed. The average village person, not to mention field worker, didn’t know how to do that and the government was not ready for the extreme level of this disaster.

So not only was there an invitation and an open door by the government to go into places where days before outsiders could not go, but they needed them to come in days, not weeks. And sure enough, the gifting and skills of the undertaker were crucial.

I don’t know all the details, but since then, this man has developed materials and training for people and governments to prepare for the next disaster. He is now traveling around and training government officials on how to prepare for this need during disasters! Who would have thought?

It seems like God has a way of surprising us. Yet we need to be ready too. I like the quote of Louis Pasteur, “Fortune favors the prepared mind.” I am trying to learn to prepare better so I can be ready for what God may open up next in the world. I encourage you to take the next step God has for you this year.

Another quote comes to mind, which Dr. Ralph Winter used to use a lot. It is from Dawson Trotman, “If you can’t see very far ahead...go ahead as far as you can see.” 



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