



Jesus Teaches the Parable of the Talents

Matthew 25:14–30



LESSON GOAL

The child will respond to God's blessings by living a faithful and obedient life.

BIBLE TRUTHS

- Tell what happens in the parable of the talents.
- The master was as happy with the faithful stewards.
- Believers are to faithfully use the talents that God gives.

KEY VERSE

“For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away.” —*Matthew 25:29*

APPLICATION

- Thank God for the blessings that He has given you.
- Think of how you can serve God with your blessings.
- Rejoice that God rewards His faithful servants.

Symbol Key



Craft



Finger Play



Memory Verse



Object Lesson



Game



Visual Aid



Center



Activity



Q & A



Age Group

PREPARE WITH THE TRUTH

“Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul... you shall teach them to your children.” —Deuteronomy 11:18–19

Please take time to prepare your mind and heart to accurately handle the truths of God’s Word (2 Tim. 2:15). Read through the Bible background and study the truths contained in this lesson. Crucial background information is included here that will aid you in understanding the Scripture.

Bible Background

Introduction

Jesus spent most of the Tuesday before His crucifixion in the temple. He gave His attention to the chief priests and Pharisees. He responded to their attacks on His authority (Matt. 21:23–27), warned them in parables (Matt. 21:28–22:14), countered their attempts to trap Him with difficult religious questions (Matt. 22:15–46), and pronounced woes on them because of their wickedness (Matt. 23). After leaving the temple, Jesus and His disciples sat on the Mount of Olives where Jesus taught His disciples what events would precede the Son of Man’s coming in His glory (Matt. 24). Jesus told two parables which exemplified the attitude and actions of those who waited for Christ’s return. In the parable of the ten virgins, Jesus taught how those who waited for Him must exhibit an attitude of expectancy, eagerness and preparedness. In the parable of the talents, Jesus taught that those who waited for Him must be characterized by faithful service. Only those who use what God has given them to do His work are welcomed into His joy.

The Lord Entrusts Talents (Matt. 25:14–18)

Jesus began the parable of the talents by telling His disciples that the parable was about the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 25:1,14). Although the converted are the only true subjects in Christ’s kingdom (Matt. 18:3), the kingdom of heaven is infiltrated by those who claim to be believers but are not. In the parable of the wheat and tares (Matt. 13:24–30, 36–43), Jesus reveals that the sons of the kingdom grow alongside the sons of the wicked one. The two are separated only when Christ returns to judge the earth (Matt. 13:41–42). The parable of the talents also reveals that the kingdom of heaven is inhabited by both true and false servants. While both claim to be part of the kingdom, only some have actually submitted themselves to Christ.

The parable begins with a “man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them” (Matt. 25:14). In the parable, the man going on a journey represents the Lord Jesus who went to heaven after His resurrection. It was common in the ancient world for a master to leave his servants in charge of his possessions while he was gone. Servants in the ancient world differed widely in their education, abilities, and responsibilities. The master naturally left different amounts to each of his three servants, “each according to his own ability” (Matt. 25:15). To the first he gave five talents, to the second he gave two talents, and to the third he gave one talent. Although a talent clearly refers to money in this context, the exact worth of the talent is unknown. Many suggestions have been offered to explain what the talent represents, but since Jesus does not make it explicit, it is best to think of the talents as all the blessings which God entrusts to His servants. The number of talents each servant receives depends on his abilities.

Jesus next tells what each servant did with his entrusted talents. Both the first and second servant invested their master's talents. Because of their love for him and their acknowledgment of their responsibilities, they worked hard and traded with their talents. The master wisely judged the ability of each. The one who had been given five talents was able to double the amount and the one who had been given two talents was able to do the same (25:16–17). But the third servant simply dug a hole and buried his lord's money (25:18). While the servant acted sensibly in hiding the money, a common practice when protecting valuables, he had not acted obediently. The master had not given him the money to hide but to make a profit with. The servant would later reveal to his master that he hid the money not because it was in his master's interest but because he feared his master (Matt. 25:25). Although the master knew the third servant had less ability than the other servants, the third servant was just as responsible to use his ability for his master's good.

The Lord Evaluates Faithfulness (Matt. 25:19–23)

When the master returned from his journey, he evaluated the service of his slaves. Both the first and second servant reported that they had faithfully doubled their master's possessions (25:20,22). Their hard work was rewarded with their master's praise. He said, "Well done, good and faithful servant" (25:21,23). The master also promised that because of their faithfulness with relatively few responsibilities the servants would be given the blessing of serving in an even greater capacity. The final reward the master promised was the blessing of entering his joy (25:21, 23).

When the Lord Jesus returns to earth, He will also reward the faithfulness of His servants. Jesus requires that His servants use the blessings He has given them to bring further glory to Himself. He will not judge His servants by comparing them to each other, since different servants have different abilities, but will judge them for how diligently they labor. Both servants received the same reward even though one had had earned three more talents. The Lord will reward His faithful servants with the privilege of serving Him in an even greater capacity in both the Millennial Kingdom and the eternal state. He will also reward them with the joy of His presence.

The Lord Executes Judgment (Matt. 25:24–30)

Unlike the other servants, the third servant had gained his master no profit. His beliefs about the master being a hard man affected his decision not to try to gain a profit. He justified his decision to hide the money by indicting the character of the master. On the one hand, the servant was unwilling to work because he thought it unfair that the master benefit from risks taken by others. He thought of the master as "reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed" (25:24). He criticized the master for his right to profit from his servant's labor. But he was also afraid of the master. He was worried that he might lose the talent in a business venture and thus incur his master's wrath (25:25). He thought that by hiding the money he could satisfy his master, even though he had neither worked nor looked out for his master's interest.

The unfaithful servant is a picture of professing believers who do not love God's character. They not only resent that God has the right to profit from their labor but also are afraid that God will punish them if they spend what He's given on themselves. Instead, they do nothing with what God has entrusted them and try to find their comfort in complacency. They are afraid not to be called His servants but are also unwilling to do a servant's labor. Just as the servant had a wrong view of his master, these professing believers have a wrong view of God, one which is tantamount to idolatry. They think that obedience is an option instead of a requirement. These "servants" assume that Jesus will be pleased when He returns, even though they were not willing to use their abilities to advance His glory.

In the parable, the master judged the servant for his failure to serve. The master supposed for the sake of argument that he was just as the servant described him: reaping where he had not sown and gathering where he had not scattered (Matt. 25:26). If that were the case, the servant should have known his master required profit and at least deposited the money in order to gain interest for the master (25:27). If the servant had been convinced of his excuses, he would have acted differently. But the servant's real problem was that he was "wicked and lazy" (25:26). He had no love for his master and no desire to serve. Because he had neglected his responsibility, the talent he had was given to the first servant (25:29). Instead of being received into the master's joy, the unprofitable servant was thrown into the outer utter darkness, where there is "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (25:30).

The professing believer will be likewise judged for his failure to embrace service to the Lord. If he is unwilling to obey and pursue the Lord's glory, he will be cast into hell. The Lord will not let those who refused to serve Him enter into His joy. He is looking for those who will abandon themselves for the joy of pleasing their Master.

Conclusion

In Matthew 25:29, Jesus said, "For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away." Everyone who faithfully fulfills the responsibilities the Master gives him will be privileged with greater opportunities to serve. But the one who does not serve the Master will lose the opportunity forever. Until Jesus returns, those who wait for Him must be vigilant to use their resources for His glory.

POINT TO THE TRUTH

*"Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth."
—Psalm 78:1*

This section includes questions to review last week's lesson and ideas to prepare students for this week's lesson. Choose from the following ideas to point to the truths of this lesson.



Review Questions

What parable did Jesus teach about in yesterday's lesson?

Jesus told about the parable of the landowner.

Who watched the vineyard for the landowner while he was gone?

The landowner rented out the vineyard to men called vinedressers while he was away.

What happened when the landowner returned to collect his fruit from the vinedressers?

When the landowner sent servants to collect fruit from the vinedressers they mistreated the servants.

What did the vineyard owner do next?

He sent more servants than before.

How did the vinedressers respond to this group of servants?
They mistreated the servants just like the first group.

What did the landowner do last?
He sent his son to the vinedressers. He thought that they would surly listen to his son.

What did the vinedressers do to the landowner's son?
They took the landowner's son out of the vineyard and killed him.

What did the Pharisees say that the landowner would do to the vinedressers?
They said that the landowner would kill the vinedressers and put new vinedressers in their place.

What was Jesus saying that the Pharisees were like?
He was showing them that they were like the vinedressers in the story.



Use What God Has Given

Discuss with the students some different interests and abilities that God has given themselves or others. Explain that God created each person with a different set of gifts, abilities and talents. God puts different believers into different families, churches, schools, neighborhoods, and jobs to use these different gifts. These gifts are given to further His kingdom and to give Him glory. Have a missionary or pastor come into the classroom and talk about how he or she is using his or her gifts to serve God. Explain that one day Jesus will return and that in today's lesson we will learn what He expects of His people until He returns.



Faithful While They Wait

Instruct all the students to sit at their tables and give them the instructions and materials that they need for a project. This could be something such as drawing a picture for someone who may need encouragement. Tell them that you have to leave for a few minutes but do not tell them to wait for you to begin the project. (Be sure there are other teachers in the classroom while you are gone but for them not to give instruction.) Let them decide how they will use the few minutes. They could be faithful with the time or waste the time. When you return to the room find out how many students were faithful to work on the task while you were gone. Discuss with them that believers have been given instructions to be faithful until Jesus returns.



Using Your Talent

For an activity, give each child a piece of paper to decorate and ask them to tape it to the board when they are done. Some will undoubtedly forget to tape their picture on the board, others will fail to finish, and others will want to keep it for themselves. When you begin teaching the lesson, you can point to the lovely decoration at the front of the class and explain that each child was given the opportunity to contribute to the decoration. However, not everyone used their opportunity wisely. The teacher can explain why using some of the generic examples given above. Jesus once told a parable about some men who were given an opportunity to do something for their master, but one man did not use the opportunity wisely. Does anyone know what happened to that man? We'll find out in today's lesson.



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What Are You Going to Do With All of That?

In the parable of the talents, one of the men failed to make good use of the talents he was given. The children can be introduced to this concept using a short skit. Pretend to be a man who is given a job to do e.g. fix a leaking pipe. He can go back to his boss on a number of occasions, asking for help. Each time his boss can provide him with a necessary tool for doing the job himself e.g. a wrench, pipe, hose, tape, plunger, etc. Each time he can demonstrate real gratitude and excitement at what he was given, but fail to make use of it. You can have the boss come in at the end of the day and ask the man how much he finished. The man can offer excuses and complain about not having anyone to help him. The boss can point to all the tools he was given, which were more than adequate to do the job. Have the boss ask the class, "What should I do with this worker?" In today's lesson we will find out what happened to a servant that did not use his talents wisely.



Saying and Showing Thanks

Ask the children for some things which they are very thankful for. Explain that it is good to be thankful for what God provides, but God not only wants us to say thanks, but to show that we are thankful. We show that we are thankful by using what God has given us in the way he intends. Can the children think about how they should "use" those things they have already mentioned?



Using Your Gifts Together

Divide the class into small groups each with their own "color by number" picture to color. An ordinary coloring sheet can be adapted by enlarging it and filling in numbers by hand. Give each child in the group their own unique crayon to use on the picture. Collect the pictures and show them to the class, giving a treat to the group who did the best job. Explain that the picture looks best when everybody uses their crayon as they were told. In the same way, God has given each of us unique talents which He wants us to use for His glory. How do you think He will reward those who use their talents wisely? What will He do to those who do not use their talents for His glory? We will find out in today's lesson.

PROCLAIM THE TRUTH

“Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done.” —Psalm 78:4

This section includes the Bible lesson, lesson questions, and praise and worship ideas. Song suggestions are included that you can use to proclaim your worship to God. Use the lesson questions to check the students’ understanding. This section also includes various presentation ideas to use alongside the teaching time. Read the Bible passage several times before you read these pages. All teaching should be done right from the Bible.

Bible Lesson

Jesus was facing the last few days before He would die on the cross. He knew that the time for his death was coming, so He had returned to Jerusalem. He spent some of the week confronting and warning the Pharisees. He also spent some time alone with His disciples, answering their questions, teaching them through parables, and telling them about when He would come to the earth a second time after His death and resurrection. He told them that Christians must always expect Christ to return, to be excited and ready for it. In one of the parables, called the parable of the talents, Jesus taught them what He expected His disciples to do while they were waiting for Him to come again.

Jesus started the parable of the talents by telling them that it was about the kingdom of heaven. While only those who have repented and become Christians are actually a part of the kingdom of heaven, there are many people who pretend to be a part of it, or think they are a part of it but really they are not. Only when Jesus comes again will everyone know for sure who is truly part of the kingdom and who isn’t. In this parable Jesus tells the story about a man who was going on a journey to a far away land. Before leaving he gathered his servants together and gave them each some of his money to take care of while he was gone. In that time, money was sometimes called talents (like our dollars today). One of them got a lot of money, five talents. One servant got just some money, two talents and the third servant only got a little money, one talent. Their job was to take care of the talents that they had been given and to find a way to make more money while their master was away.

After a long time had passed, the master came back and called his servants to him to find out how well they had managed his money. The man with the most money said, “Lord, you have delivered to me five talents; look I have gained five more talents besides them” (25:20). So he started out with five talents, and ended up with ten talents. The master (or lord) said to him, “Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord” (25:21).

The second servant said to the master, “Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gathered two more talents besides them” (25:22). He had only started out with two talents, but he earned two more, and ended up with four talents. The master said to him, “Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of you lord” (25:23).

The last servant who had been given just one talent came to the master and told him that he had been afraid of the master because he had heard bad things about him. Rather than risk losing the money he had been given and making the master

angry, he hid it. So he started out with one talent, but did not earn anymore, so he ended up with only one talent. The master was not pleased with this servant. He said to him, "You wicked and lazy servant...take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents" (25:27–28). The master was angry with this servant because he had been lazy; not willing to work hard with what he had been given. Then, the servant tried to make excuses for why he had not worked hard by saying bad things about the master. The master finished by telling them that he expects a lot from those who he has given a lot to. Those who don't give anything back, he cast away.

Jesus' parable is about the blessings that God gives. God gives different blessings to different people. The more blessings He gives, the more he expects back in return. Christians must use the blessings God has given them to bring glory to God's name. The servant who returns nothing to God, like the servant with only one talent, will be judged for not being willing to serve the Lord. They were only pretending to be a servant in the kingdom of heaven, but they really weren't. Jesus said they would be cast into hell.

Jesus wanted the disciples to know that while they were waiting for Him to return after His death and resurrection, they must work hard and serve Him, using the blessings He has given them to bring Him glory.



Lesson Questions

What parable did Jesus teach in today's lesson?
Jesus taught the parable of the talents.

What happens at the beginning of the parable?
A man is about to travel to a far country and he left his servants in charge of his talents.

When the master returned what did he find the first two servants had done with his talents?
Both the first and second servant loved their master and invested their master's talents.

What did the master say to the servants who were faithful with his possessions?
The master said, "Well done, good and faithful servant" (25:21, 23). They were given the blessing of entering his joy.

What was the master's response to the third servant?
The servant had hid his talent and acted unwisely with what was entrusted to him. The master said that the unprofitable servant was to be thrown into darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

What do the people in the parable represent?
The man who went on the journey represents the Lord Jesus who went to heaven after His resurrection. The servants He left in charge of His possessions represent those who claim to follow and serve Him only. As we will see in today's lesson, some of these are true servants and others are false servants.



Presentation Ideas

A Beka Book® Flash-A-Cards®

Use appropriate A Beka Book® Flash-A-Cards® with the lesson.



Betty Lukens Flannel Graph

Use appropriate flannel graph pieces with the lesson.



Talent to Build

The parable of the talents can be graphically illustrated using blocks. As you teach the lesson you can liken the first servant to a man who was given some blocks to build a tower. He used all his blocks and built a tall tower. The same can be demonstrated for the second servant. The last servant can be likened to a man who was too scared that the blocks would fall over and that he would get into big trouble, so he did not try building anything.

Praise and Worship

Father, I Adore You

I Surrender All

Change My Heart, Oh God

PRACTICE THE TRUTH

“That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments.” —Psalm 78:7

Choose ideas from this section that review and apply the truths of the Bible lesson.



Well Done Faithful Servant

Give each of the students a coloring sheet or a blank piece of paper to draw on. Give some students five crayons, some two, and some one. Instruct them to be faithful with what they have each been given. After the students have finished coloring take a look at all the coloring pictures. For those students that were faithful in using the crayons given give them a “Faithful Steward” award to put on their picture. Explain that God is a judge who judges if we were faithful with the gifts and talents that He has given to every believer.



Well Done Review Game

Review today’s lesson with the students. When the students answer a question correctly say, “well done faithful servant” and give them a craft stick. The students who have the most craft sticks at the end of the game win.



Trading Game

Create 30 colored cards: 15 yellow, 10 red and five blue. Choose three students to be the servants who will try to wisely trade to collect as many of their own color as possible in the time allotted. Shuffle the cards. Give ten random cards to servant one, five cards to student two and three cards to student three. The remaining

cards can be given to a number of students. Tell student one that he/she is to find ten yellow cards, student two five red cards and student three, three blue cards. When the time begins allow the the students to begin trading. When the time is up see if they were faithful with the time they were given to successfully trade their cards and collect all the cards of their own color.



“Serve God With What You’ve Got”

Materials: copies of “Serve God With What You’ve Got,” crayons

Directions: Give each student a copy of Serve God With What You’ve Got. Instruct them to draw on the parts of the man that are missing. Talk with students about what the missing parts are and how they could be used for God’s glory.

Coloring Pages

Give each child a copy of the coloring sheets at the back of the lesson. He or she can color the pages in class or take them home to color.



MEMORY VERSE

“For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away.”

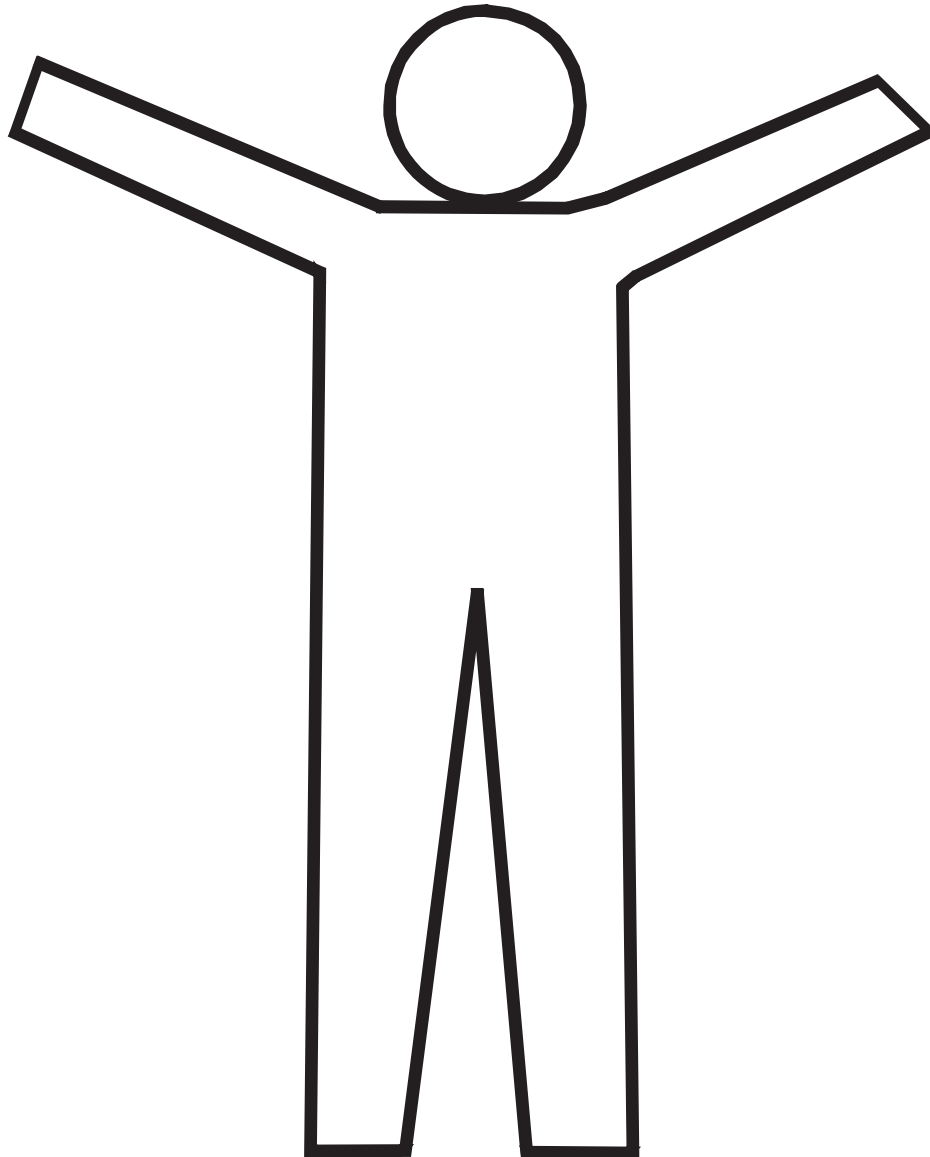
—*Matthew 25:29*

Faithful Steward Awards



Serving God with What You've Got

Draw on the parts of the person that are missing.



The parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14–30 teaches us to be faithful to use the gifts and blessings God has given us. For example, we can use our hands to serve and our mouths to praise God and encourage others.



"And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey."

—Matthew 25:15



“His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord...And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’” —Matthew 25:21, 30

