

MARK OF A DISCIPLE

Disciples of Christ manage their gifts to be used in God's Kingdom (1 Peter 4:10).

SCRIPTURE

MATTHEW 25:14–30

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Though there are similarities, this parable is different than “The Parable of the Ten Minas” in Luke 19. The talents in this parable do not refer to our abilities but rather opportunities to use our abilities. Each servant was given money according to their abilities. God gives us abilities that we are born with and provides opportunities for us to use those abilities for his glory. Our job is to be faithful with the abilities and opportunities we've been given (1 Cor. 4:2).¹

Check out the *Teacher Prep Video* for this lesson: <https://vimeo.com/1065899744>



OPENING

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

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GAME or ICE BREAKER

Based on your group's size, choose a **Game** from **Deep Discipleship Games** OR use the **Ice Breaker** prompt.

- **Game**—We recommend **Crunch Time** or choose another screen game from **Deep Discipleship Games**
- **Ice Breaker**— Describe what it was like to receive one of the best gifts that you've been given.

WORSHIP

Craft a time of worship with a live band or sing along to a playlist.

- Check out our curated Spotify list. We understand that every church has a different theological view of worship. These songs are suggestions, please pick what works best for your church.
- <https://open.spotify.com/playlist/2xmeIKGUjkEE7bJYSGbRwe?si=d254ec715a4749e5>

MEDIA AS STUDENTS ARRIVE

1. Play background music (optional)
2. Display **SERIES TITLE Slide** and announcement slides in a loop or customize the provided **PowerPoint**.
3. Play a 5-minute Countdown Timer 5:00 minutes before you start.

DEEP DISCIPLESHIP GAMES

Find free games in **Deep Discipleship Games**. It's already included with your Deep Discipleship subscription. View the game in advance in case you need supplies or slides.

SLIDES (optional)

Use **SERIES Background & Blank Slides** or **PowerPoint** to create lyric slides.

TRANSITION TO MESSAGE

Include a brief element that transitions students from worship to teaching time, like a prayer or video. This will keep students focused and prepared for the message while the band leaves the stage.

VIDEO (optional)

Show **SERIES Promo Video** or **LESSON Intro Video** after the last worship song.

MESSAGE

Use the following teaching points and suggested illustrations as a starting point to build your message.

POINT 1: Our gifts come from God, not us

Read or have someone in your group read Matthew 25:14-15

Sometimes it can be hard to be generous with our time, money, or talents, which is why it's important to know where our gifts come from. In this passage, Jesus reminds us that everything we receive comes from God. The master in the story doesn't expect his servants to bring their own money to him; rather, he gives them money to invest and grow. He "entrusted to them his property" (v. 14). None of this is theirs, yet the master is loving enough to enable and equip his servants to serve him in amazing ways.

ILLUSTRATION: Tell a **personal story** about a time when you were given an opportunity that you felt was from God, not merely from your own hard work.

All our good gifts come from the Lord (James 1:17).

SLIDES (optional)

Use the **SERIES PowerPoint OR the Background & Blank Slides** to create these slides to support your message:

- Matthew 25:14-15
- Point 1

POINT 2: We can choose how we use our different gifts and abilities

Read or have someone in your group read Matthew 25:16-18

In this story, the master gives different amounts of money to different servants. Each servant is responsible for serving the master with what he is given. Likewise, each of us is given gifts and abilities. We are asked to serve Jesus and his Kingdom faithfully with those gifts and abilities. We are able to choose how we use our God-given time, talents, gifts, and abilities. We can choose to use these resources wisely or poorly.

SLIDES (optional)

- Matthew 25:16-18
- Point 2

POINT 3: God enjoys it when we use our gifts for his Kingdom

Read or have someone in your group read Matthew 25:19-23

In this passage, the master reacts strongly to the work of his servants. When he sees the faithful work of the first two servants, he praises them, saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master" (v. 21). The master's response shows us how happy God is when we use our gifts. In the story, the master praises the two servants and gives them even more opportunities to serve and flourish.

ILLUSTRATION: Tell a **personal story** about a time you enjoyed doing something you are gifted at.

Notice, it's not the amount of return that pleases the master but the servants' faithfulness.

SLIDES (optional)

- Matthew 25:19-23
- Point 3



POINT 4: Refusing God’s loving gifts separates us from him

Read or have someone in your group read Matthew 25:24–30

SLIDES (optional)

- Matthew 25:24–30
- Point 4

It may seem that the master in this passage is harsh with the third servant, but notice how the servant speaks about the master. He calls him a “hard man” (v. 24) and says, “he was afraid” (v. 25) of the master. This servant has the wrong view of his master. The master has generously called all three servants to use their gifts. He has equipped them to serve him, but this servant refuses to serve. Because of the servant’s desire to be free from the master, the master gives him what he wants: he removes him from the master’s service. Likewise, God doesn’t force us to follow him, but if we do not want to have a relationship with God, we will miss out on the “joy” of our master.

CLOSING

MARK OF A DISCIPLE

Disciples of Christ manage their gifts to be used in God’s Kingdom (1 Peter 4:10).

SLIDES (optional)

- Mark of a Disciple

FACILITATOR NOTE: DO YOU HAVE SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION RIGHT AWAY?

- If YES, then **STOP HERE**, divide into groups, and provide Small Group Leaders with the **Small Group Breakout Questions** on the next page.
- If NO, then end your gathering with the **Reflect & Respond** questions and **Prayer** prompt below.

REFLECT & RESPOND

Give the students time to silently think through what they have heard and contemplate these questions:

- What gifts has Jesus given for you to serve his Kingdom?
- How does it feel knowing that God wants you to use the gifts he has given you?

SLIDES (optional)

Use the **SERIES PowerPoint OR** the **Background & Blank Slides** to display the **Reflect & Respond** questions.

FACILITATOR NOTE: Don’t rush this part. Give the students a few minutes to really consider how much God wants to give gifts to serve his Kingdom.

PRAYER

Take time to pray that the students would be eager to use the gifts God has given us for his Kingdom.



SMALL GROUP BREAKOUT (OPTIONAL)

Pick a few questions from each section to discuss. Close with prayer.

BREAKOUT QUESTIONS

Build Meaningful Relationships

- **What would it feel like to hear God say, “Well done, good and faithful servant” to you?**
We all enjoy being praised by authority figures in our lives (parents, coaches, teachers, bosses, etc.). Receiving praise from God would be infinitely more enjoyable!
- **When have you seen someone use a gift that God has given them for the good of others?**
Answers will vary. Come prepared to share your own example to help start the conversation.

Share Personal Stories & Ask Intentional Questions

- **Why do you think Jesus teaches this lesson through a story?**
The crowds would probably have been engaged in a story like this because they would be familiar with working for a “master” or boss. They probably would be surprised by the generosity of the master and the laziness of the wicked servant.
- **Why does the master get angry at the man who hides the money?**
The master has placed his trust in the servant and given the servant a great opportunity. The servant responded with fear and laziness, rejecting the master’s loving call.
- **What do you think it means to “enter into the joy of your master” (vv. 21 and 23)?**
The phrase reveals that the Kingdom of Heaven and a deep relationship with God are full of joy.
- **What were talents, and how do they apply to us now?**
In this passage, a talent is a large amount of money, like a certain amount of dollars. But the concept of using the master’s gifts wisely for his Kingdom applies to us using anything God gives us for his glory.

Make Life Application & Hold Students Accountable

- **How can we know what talents we have been given for Christ’s Kingdom?**
Through conversation with other disciples of Christ, prayer, and paying attention to what we’re good at and what brings us joy, we can see where God is calling us to use our gifts.
- **How can we ensure that we aren’t like the wicked servant in the passage?**
Trusting in God and obediently following his guidance will keep us from following the wicked servant’s example. Don’t waste your gifts, talents, and resources. Instead, use them to grow God’s Kingdom!

PRAYER

Take time to pray that the students would be eager to use the gifts God has given us for his Kingdom.
Use this space to keep track of any prayer requests.

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¹ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Wiersbe’s Expository Outlines on the New Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1992), 91.

