

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>



FACILITATOR NOTE: We've giving you a lot of teaching material. Don't feel like you should cover everything here. You know your group better than anyone. Choose the material that will best fit your students and skip over the rest.

OPENING

PRAYER

1-2 minutes

Start your small group by asking the Lord to bless your discussion and time together.

OPTIONAL: Give students an opportunity to lead the prayer.

OPENING QUESTIONS

3-5 minutes

- How was the week? What's the best thing that's happened? Anything major going on?
- Describe what it was like to receive one of the best gifts that you've been given.



EXPLORE

EXPLORE GOD'S WORD

3-5 minutes

Toward the end of Jesus' earthly ministry, he gave a series of teachings on the Mount of Olives. Among these teachings were several parables, including this story of a master and his servants. Just before this parable, he warns his disciples to prepare for the Kingdom. Then he shares what it will be like when God's Kingdom comes. He says it will be like a man who trusts three servants with large amounts of money. Two faithfully use these resources. One, out of fear and distrust of the master, refuses the call. The master rewards those who faithfully use their gifts.

Read Matthew 25:14–18 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- 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.

- 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.

- 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.



Say something like: God is the one who gives us every good thing that we have, including our talents and abilities. These gifts are given to us to serve his Kingdom.

Read Matthew 25:19–23 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- 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 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.



Say something like: Since the purpose of our gifts is to use them for God's glory and to grow his Kingdom, God knows that we will be happiest when we are generous with our time, money, and talents. Not only will God give us more opportunities to serve with a profound purpose when we use our gifts to glorify him, but we will also grow in our relationship with him.

FACILITATOR NOTE: If you have extra time, go through the next set of questions. If not, skip to the **Connection** section.

Read Matthew 25:24–30 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- 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.

- 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!



Say something like: The wicked servant in this story was not only lazy, but he insulted the master who had graciously given him an opportunity for purpose and relationship. By refusing that opportunity, the servant shows he doesn't want a relationship with the master, and the master sends him away. Likewise, if we refuse a relationship with God, we will be left without him.



CONNECT & APPLY

CONNECTION

5-7 minutes

Show your students how Scripture connects to their lives: Use the example below OR share a personal story of how even in your weakness you still used what you had for God's Kingdom.



Example: Karé Adenegan was born with cerebral palsy to a Christian family in England. She has been in a wheelchair her whole life and was the only child in her grade school in a wheelchair. However, through her faith, she has overcome her challenges and become one of the best wheelchair-racing Paralympians in the world. Inspired by other Christian athletes, like Eric Liddell, who used their talents to share the Gospel, Karé says, “[Sport] has been a door to a platform to develop myself and share my faith. God will use all things—even things we think are weaknesses or negative things.” Karé has used her gifts of determination, hard work, and strength to share the Gospel. She says, “Doing this sport for God’s glory has always stuck with me, knowing that God will be glorified in everything.”²

- How can Karé’s story inspire us to use what we’ve been given to serve God’s Kingdom?

Answers will vary, but this story reminds us that we can serve God’s Kingdom even in difficult times with whatever gifts he has given us.

MARK OF A DISCIPLE

2-3 minutes

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

Use the Mark of a Disciple to reinforce the lesson and challenge students to apply it to their lives.

APPLY IT

5-10 minutes

Sometime this week, meet with a trusted Christ-following friend or mentor to discuss your gifts and how to use them.



Be specific:

- What are you going to do?
- When are you going to do it?
- Is there someone who can keep you accountable?



FACILITATOR NOTE: Allow students who are comfortable to share their plans for application. This may encourage or spark ideas for other students, plus add a level of accountability.



CLOSING

PRAYER

2-3 minutes

Take a moment to ask for prayer requests. Spend some time praying that God will reveal to us the talents he has given and how to use them for his Kingdom.

Write down any prayer requests mentioned and ask your students about them at your next meeting.

MEMORY VERSE

Send the memory verse graphic included in your download to your students later this week to keep the conversation going.

“As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace.”

1 Peter 4:10 (ESV)

NOTES

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

² Marcus Jones, “Christian Paralympian Karé Adenegan: ‘Everything I Do Revolves around My Faith,’” *Premier Christianity*, July 26, 2024, <https://www.premierchristianity.com/features/christian-paralympian-kare-adenegan-everything-i-do-revolves-around-my-faith/17958.article>.

