

## Lesson #1-26

# THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

Matthew 25:1-13 [or 25:14-30]



### Key Verse:

“Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.”

Matthew 25:23

### The Point:

We are to use our gifts for God’s glory.

### Making Connections:

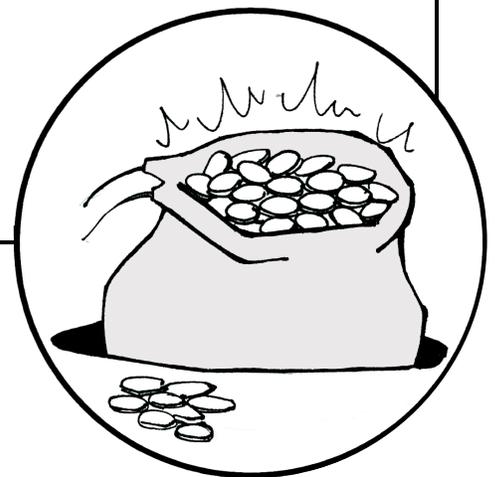
The Ways of the Kingdom

### Bible Nuts & Bolts:

Culture and Customs

### Spiritual Practice:

Service



# ACTIVITIES A LA CARTE

## ACTIVITIES

## SUPPLIES

### INTO THE STORY

#### GIVEN GIFTS

Explore gifts through a self-portrait.

- 10 MIN.**
- † Groupings Guide
  - † Materials for chosen cross+generational grouping
  - † Paper
  - † Marker or crayons

### BIBLE NUTS & BOLTS

#### CULTURE

Consider culture in the time of Jesus and today.

- 10 MIN.**
- † None

### MAKING CONNECTIONS

#### USING GIFTS FOR THE KINGDOM

Use gifts to make the kingdom more beautiful.

- 10 MIN.**
- † Self-portraits from the Into the Story Activity
  - † Markers or crayons
  - † Tape

### LEARNING THE STORY

#### MULTIPLY TALENTS

Learn the story through a skit.

- 10 MIN.**
- † Bible
  - † Pens
  - † Sticky notes

# ACTIVITIES A LA CARTE

## LIVING THE STORY

### USE YOUR GIFTS

Practice using your gifts for good.

**15 MIN.** † Various

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

### WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Imagine how to use talents for good.

**15 MIN.** † Activity Sheet #1-26.A  
 † Pens or pencils  
 † Paper  
 † Scissors  
 † Optional: identical coins or play money

### THANKS FOR SHARING

Thank someone who uses their gifts well.

**5 MIN.** † Paper  
 † Pens or pencils  
 † Markers or crayons  
 † Optional: envelopes

## SENDING THE STORY

**5 MIN.** † Sharing God's Story @ Home



# LIVING THE WORD

*Exploring God's Story Together  
Narrative Lectionary, Year 1*

Cross+Generational Ministry has at its core the concept that faith is formed through meaningful relationships. When we connect with people of a different generation, we are able to learn from them and share our own experiences, no matter what age we are. We find our place in God's story best by exploring that story as community.

Effective cross+generational experiences are:

- *Experiential*
- *Interactive*
- *Engaging*
- *Story-centered*
- *Home-based*
- *Equalizing*

all of which promote an **encounter with God**. All of the activities included in this leader guide are intended to engage these principles, through intentional cross+generational interaction and active, creative activities that bring the Bible story to life in our lives.

We pass on the faith through every action, experience, or relationship that nurtures a transformative relationship of trust with God and shapes the way we see and interact with God's world. When we do this in meaningful, intergenerational relationships, our faith is enriched from the diversity of the experiences we share with each other. Our communities are strengthened, and we have confidence in our sense of belonging to God and with each other.

# BACKGROUND FOR LEADERS

## Making Connections

Again, Jesus teaches about the kingdom of God and a life of discipleship through parables. These stories, while based in everyday events or occurrences, reveal deep truths about a life of following Jesus and the ways of God's kingdom. While last week the focus was on invitation, this week's parables focus on being prepared and wise and using the gifts God has given us well.

## Story Summary:

### *The Parable of the Talents*

Jesus continues to describe an aspect of life in the kingdom through parables. First, he tells a story about bridesmaids whose lamps were not ready for the bridegroom and gives an admonishment to be prepared. Jesus follows that with a parable of a landowner entrusting money to slaves. A landowner gives three slaves different amounts of money, called talents (a huge amount of money, about 20 years pay each), before he leaves on a trip. Two of the slaves make more with their talents, while the other does nothing. The master is pleased with the two who used their money wisely but displeased with the slave who did not. The slave says that he was afraid, so he did nothing. In the parable, he is sent away. Jesus teaches that God entrusts us with many gifts and desires us be courageous, using them boldly for God's glory rather than hiding them away.

## The Point

**We are to use our gifts for God's glory.** Just as the landowner entrusted his slaves with talents before leaving for a trip, God gives each of us talents and resources with the expectation that we will use them well. God desires that we will take what we have been given and thoughtfully use it to serve others, to further the kingdom, and to create joy and hope, ultimately bringing glory to God. However, if we only use our resources and abilities for selfish pursuits, or ignore the gifts we have been given, we squander God's gifts rather than multiply them.

## Bible Nuts & Bolts:

### *Culture and Customs*

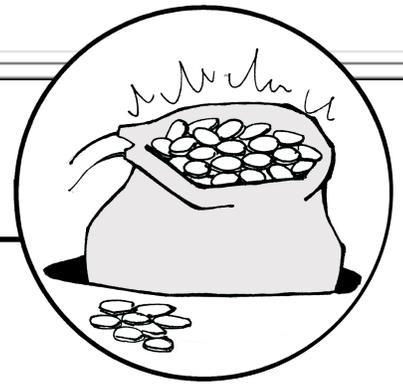
While parables were stories grounded in the everyday life of those Jesus taught, for us, thousands of years later, the premise or meaning of these stories can sometimes be less clear. The culture and customs at the time of Jesus' ministry on earth were very different than our own. Taking time to learn some of those customs as we read Bible stories will help make sense of the passage and give us a better framework with which to interpret it.

## Spiritual Practice: Service

Serving others is an important way in which we use the gifts that God has given us. Just as the first two slaves multiplied their talents while the landowner was away, by serving others and using our gifts to help others, we also multiply the gifts and resources that God has given us. God desires that we will live a life of generosity and service that glorifies God.



# LESSON PLAN



## INTO THE STORY (10 MINUTES)

### GIVEN GIFTS

Explore gifts through a self-portrait.

*You will need:*

- † Groupings Guide
- † Materials for chosen cross+generational grouping
- † Paper
- † Markers or crayons

*Before class:*

1. Determine how you would like to group participants at their tables (in a cross+generational grouping), using the Groupings Guide.
2. Prepare the materials indicated in the Guide.

*During class:*

1. Welcome the class and instruct them to group themselves cross+generationally according to the method you have selected from the Groupings Guide.
2. **If someone is sitting alone, please introduce yourself, and invite them to join you. Young children who are not comfortable leaving their families should sit at a table with someone in their family.**
3. Hand out paper to each participant and place markers or crayons on each table.
4. **Each of you will create a self-portrait, but it must display five gifts that you have been given as part of the picture. Think of not just material gifts, but also abstract gifts, or talents that you have been given such as kindness, or maybe you are a good listener or talented singer. Remember you will need to include at least five gifts in your picture. When everyone at your table is finished, share your pictures and the gifts you chose.**
5. Allow participants to create their self-portrait and share at their table.

## BIBLE NUTS & BOLTS (10 MINUTES)

### CULTURE

Consider culture in the time of Jesus and today.

*You will need:*

- † Nothing

*During class:*

1. **What is something that you have grown up doing, eating, or saying that most people do not do, eat, or say? Take a moment to think of a phrase, an event, or a food item that was or is an important part of your life, or was when you were a child, that is not widespread. This might be a custom or tradition passed down through your family or something common in a particular region.**
2. **Now, think of one word or very short phrase to describe that. For example, if you are thinking of a food it would just be the name of the dish.**
3. **Go around the table and share your one word or phrase. See if anyone else knows what you are talking about. Then, take a moment to share about your custom or tradition. Take turns allowing everyone to share.**
4. **Allow participants to share.**
5. **When reading the Bible, we are reading about a culture that is very different than our own. Those hearing Jesus' parables in person would likely have understood all the different customs that he mentions. Jesus wanted the parables to be about everyday things or events that people would be familiar with.**
6. **However, living almost 2,000 years later, we may not be familiar with some of the customs in Jesus' parables.**
7. **A majority of Jesus' parables have something to do with agriculture, harvest, growing crops, or land ownership. Some talk about a vineyard. Vineyards were quite common in the area of Jesus' ministry. Many of us are much less familiar with cycles and seasons as they relate to agriculture. Most of us do not regularly plant crops or have experience working in a vineyard.**
8. **There is a lot that is not as familiar to us, but that does not mean Jesus' parables do not have meaning for us today.**

9. Sometimes it is necessary to do research or ask for an explanation to better understand Jesus' teaching and the stories in Scripture. We have many tools at our fingertips to be able to learn more about the culture in first-century Palestine at the time of Jesus in order to gain a deeper understanding of Jesus' teachings.
10. Jesus' parables have important truths to teach us today, but often we need to better understand the culture and customs mentioned in the parable.
11. In today's story, Jesus talks about a landowner who leaves his slaves with talents. These are not talents like you and I think of talents, as in something you are good at. A talent at the time of Jesus was a unit of money. In fact, a talent was a lot of money; equivalent to a whole lifetime worth of wages for a day laborer!
12. Knowing that helps us understand the story today more fully, as we will see that the landowner came back to see how the slaves had used a whole lifetime worth of gifts, not just something small.

## MAKING CONNECTIONS (10 MINUTES)

### USING GIFTS FOR THE KINGDOM

Use gifts to make the kingdom more beautiful.

*You will need:*

- † Self-portraits from the Into the Story Activity
- † Markers or crayons
- † Tape

*During class:*

1. **Sometimes we do not even realize the gifts that we carry with us all the time, like those on your self-portraits that you created earlier. The gifts that we have been given can be used to glorify God.**
2. **Take a look at your self-portrait. I would like to you choose one gift from your self-portrait and turn your paper over.**
3. **Draw another image (or if you would rather, write an explanation) of how you can use this gift to make the world around you more like the kingdom of God. How can you use your gift in a way that it can be multiplied to further God's kingdom, to create more love or hope or beauty or justice?**
4. Allow participants to create their explanation or drawing.
5. If the group is large, invite them to share at their tables and then come and tape their image or explanation to the wall. If the group is small enough, participants could explain their image to the whole group as they tape it on the wall.
6. **As disciples, we are called to live into the ways of God's kingdom. By sharing our gifts, we can make our world more beautiful or bring about justice, hope and healing.**
7. **Look at all the ways on this wall that we can multiply our gifts to bring glory to God and further God's kingdom.**

# LEARNING THE STORY (10 MINUTES)

## MULTIPLY TALENTS

Learn the story through a skit.

*You will need:*

- † Bible
- † Pens
- † Sticky notes

*Before class:*

1. Write “1 talent” on eight different sticky notes.

*During class:*

1. **We are going to have a chance to act out our story today. I need 12 volunteers.**
2. Choose your 12 volunteers and assign them the following parts:
  - Landowner
  - Slave 1
  - Slave 2
  - Slave 3
  - Eight people who are “talents”
3. Place a sticky note on the forehead of those who are talents. If you have fewer than 12 people, volunteers can be more than one talent, simply label them accordingly.
4. **We will be reading our story from the Gospel of Matthew today. Your job is to act out your parts as you hear them read. Landowner, you will pass out talents** (point to the volunteers who are talents). **Slaves, two of you will need to create more talents** (show them where they can find more sticky notes to recruit additional volunteer “talents”).
5. Read, or invite a volunteer to read, Matthew 25:14-30. Assist the volunteers in acting out their part as necessary. The landowner should give the talents to the slaves. The first two slaves should go recruit additional talents as the story states.
6. **Since you now know that a talent was a lifetime worth of wages, what do you think Jesus was trying to teach with this story?**

## LIVING THE STORY (15 MINUTES)

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### USE YOUR GIFTS

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Practice using your gifts for good.

*You will need:*

† Various

*During class:*

1. **As we continue to practice serving in this unit, we will have a chance to serve here and now. Each of you have gifts, talents, or resources with you right now that God has given you. You will have five minutes to use one of your gifts to do something helpful right here at church.**
2. **If you are a good organizer, you could straighten a shelf of Bibles or a messy area. If you are an artist, you could draw a picture of the story today to hang up somewhere. You could make a word search for a younger child using today's story, weed a portion of a garden, or sweep an entry way. Perhaps you have something in your pocket, bag, or purse that you could use to serve.**
3. **Come up with a plan, or walk around until you find something you can do. Report back here in ten minutes.**
4. Allow participants to complete their tasks of service. Be sure to explain if there are any areas that are off limits or if there are any rules about where they can go, or if an adult should accompany children.
5. When participants return, invite each one to share with the whole group or at their tables what they did to serve.
6. **We have been given so many things from God. Some gifts we can see like clothing, food, money, or shelter. Other gifts we cannot see, but they are just as valuable. We can use our gifts in big and small ways each day, serving others and bringing glory to God.**

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

### WHAT WOULD YOU DO? (15 MINUTES)

Imagine how to use talents for good.

*You will need:*

- † Activity Sheet #1-26.A
- † Pens or pencils
- † Paper
- † Scissors
- † Optional: identical coins or play money

*Before class:*

1. Cut paper into pieces and write a number between 1 and 12 on each piece for the number of “talents” each participant will receive. There should be enough pieces of paper so that each participant receives one. Optional: use coins or play money and give each participant between 1 and 12 coins to spend.

*During class:*

1. Hand out Activity Sheet #1-26.A
2. **You will remember that the slaves in our story today each received a certain number of talents. You will get the same. The piece of paper (or number of coins) you will receive has a number on it that will tell you how many talents you have been given.**
3. Hand out one piece of paper or number of coins to each participant to indicate how many talents they have available to spend.
4. **Use the Activity Sheet you have been given to determine how you will spend your talents. If you have enough, you can spend them on multiple items. Circle what you would choose.**
5. **When you are finished, share with those at your table how many talents you received and how you chose to use them.**
6. Allow participants to make their decisions and share.
7. **Was it difficult or easy to make those decisions? How were your choices similar or different from the slaves in today’s story?**

8. Allow participants to share at their tables or as a large group.
9. **Each day we make choices about how to use the things God has given us. Sometimes those choices are easy, and sometimes they are more difficult. Sometimes we choose to use our gifts well, and other times we struggle to do so. Sometimes we are generous, and other times less so.**
10. **In our story today, we remember that God desires that we would use our gifts for God's glory. Are there gifts you think you use well and gifts you do not? Take a moment to share with those at your table.**
11. Allow participants to share.
12. **Now, share anything you will try to be more mindful about after learning about today's parable.**
13. Allow participants to share.

## THANKS FOR SHARING (5 MINUTES)

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Thank someone who uses their gifts well.

*You will need:*

- † Paper
- † Pens or pencils
- † Markers or crayons
- † Optional: envelopes

*During class:*

1. **Think of someone you know who uses their gifts well. This might be someone who has touched your life because they have shared the gifts that God has given them.**
2. **Take a few minutes to write them a note thanking them for the ways that they have made a difference in your life and the world by using their gifts. Let them know the impact that it had and the ways their gifts have been multiplied.**
3. **You might want to make it a card by decorating it with markers or crayons.**
4. Hand out supplies and allow participants to create their note.
5. **Mail or deliver your note this week as a reminder of the ways that our lives can impact others when we use what God has given us.**

## SENDING THE STORY (5 MINUTES)

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If your congregation is using the “Living the Word: Sharing God’s Story @ Home” insert, remember to hand them out at this point in the lesson.

**Our key verse today is, “Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.” Matthew 25:23**

**The master says to the slaves who use their gifts, “Well done!” God is so pleased when we use our gifts to further the kingdom. Let’s take a moment to remember that.**

Before the closing prayer, take a moment to go around and say each person’s name. Invite the group to clap after they say “Well done, (name)” for each person. If your group is large, you could ask participants to do this in their smaller groups.

**Let us pray:**

**Loving God, we thank you for the gifts that we receive. We thank you for each day—for a whole lifetime—to love and serve you, to share love and joy, to help others, and to do justice. Make us aware of the ways we can use what we have been given to serve others. May we multiply what we have been given for your glory that you may look at our lives and say “Well done, good and faithful one.” Amen.**

# WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

*Imagine how to use talents for good.*

<p><b>1 Talent (each)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make cookies</li> <li>• Go swimming</li> <li>• Plant flowers</li> <li>• See a movie</li> <li>• Go on a picnic</li> <li>• Buy coffee for the next person in line behind you</li> </ul>	<p><b>2 Talents (each)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Go out to lunch with a friend</li> <li>• Go golfing</li> <li>• Organize an activity at a nursing home</li> <li>• Give a gift to someone you love</li> <li>• Buy a new game</li> <li>• Bring a treat to first responders</li> </ul>
<p><b>3 Talents (each)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Go on a fishing trip</li> <li>• Visit a water park</li> <li>• Host an ice cream day for everyone at your school or place of work</li> <li>• Leave an extravagant tip for someone</li> <li>• Go to professional sporting event</li> </ul>	<p><b>4 Talents (each)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Donate books to a school library</li> <li>• Get dessert every day for a year</li> <li>• Have a shopping spree</li> <li>• Buy a new bike</li> <li>• Provide a meal at a Soup Kitchen or Food Bank</li> </ul>
<p><b>5 Talents (each)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Go on a weekend getaway</li> <li>• Clean up a playground</li> <li>• Buy a huge television</li> <li>• Volunteer at an animal rescue center</li> <li>• Get the latest cell phone or gaming system</li> </ul>	<p><b>6 Talents (each)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take your dream vacation</li> <li>• Go on an international mission trip</li> <li>• Buy a boat</li> <li>• Donate to build a well in a place that needs one</li> </ul>
<p><b>10 Talents (each)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buy a new house</li> <li>• Pay for someone to go to college</li> <li>• Organize a fundraiser for a charity</li> </ul>	<p><b>12 Talents</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build a school or hospital</li> </ul>