



## What Am I Doing with What God Has Given Me?

**Matthew 25:14:** (NASB) *For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them.*



As Christians, we are truly blessed. Having given our lives to Jesus, we are assured that all our experiences are overruled for our best benefit. This is not to imply that we can just coast along as though we were given a ticket for some magical ride to heaven riding on fluffy clouds of comfort. On the contrary, being a Christian is hard. We are expected to work in the service of God through Jesus on a regular daily basis. We are also expected to be accountable for what we do or do not do. In the Parable of the Talents, Jesus shows us that we are given specific work to do for him and that we have exactly what we need to get the job done. The question to ask ourselves is, how am I doing? What godly things have I been given to do, and am I daily working at accomplishing them?

The Parable of the Talents is taught in Matthew 25:14-30.

The story is about a master traveling to a faraway place. He gathers his servants to him and gives them each a large sum of money to work with while he is gone. Upon his return, he demands an accounting of their activity in his absence. To those who have worked profitably, he doles out a generous reward. To those who have not, he doles out a punishment.

**Why did Jesus speak this parable? The following text starts with the last line of the Parable of the Ten Virgins:**

Matthew 25:13-14: (NASB) <sup>13</sup>*Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.* <sup>14</sup>*For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them.*

The context of the story and the other parables relating to the same context point to the return of Jesus AND *the kingdom of heaven*. All these parables set the stage to illustrate **the required actions** on the part of the true disciples of Jesus during the time he would not be personally present to guide them. He was telling them: *I am leaving. I am going to be crucified and will be in heaven, so I will not be with you. Here are my expectations for you.*



**Now the story begins:**

Matthew 25:14: (NASB) *For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves <1401> and entrusted his possessions to them.*

The **MAN** going away represents **JESUS**. The entire context of Matthew 24 and 25 points to this symbolism.

**THE SLAVES REPRESENT THE FOOTSTEP FOLLOWERS OF JESUS.**





**Slave:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #1401 *doulos*; a slave (literal or figurative), involuntary or voluntary

When we hear the word *slave*, we often think of someone bound in chains who has no choice. But in the case of the Parable of the Talents, it means voluntary servitude on behalf of those that accept the call of God and commit to following in His son's footsteps.

The Bible describes an indentured servitude where people voluntarily worked for someone (often to discharge a debt), sometimes for their entire lifetime. They would commit themselves to their master. This relationship was very different than how we think of slaves in today's world. Under this type of servitude, the slave had a much higher standing as we will see in the Parable of the Talents.

John 13:15-16: (NASB) <sup>15</sup>For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. <sup>16</sup>Truly, truly, I say to you, a **slave <1401>** is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him.

Jesus used the exact same Greek word for *slave* to describe his followers in this scripture. The slaves (followers) here are **voluntarily** bound to Jesus. They have **chosen** to follow him, and he sets the example for them of himself *not being greater than the one (his Father) who sent him*.

The master literally hands his wealth over to them. This tells us they **MUST** be trustworthy.

### There are three aspects to this wealth:

1 Corinthians 4:1-2: (NASB) <sup>1</sup>Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and **stewards <3623>** of the mysteries of God. <sup>2</sup>In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy.



1. The gospel is part of the Jesus' wealth. Servants are to be stewards of the mysteries of God.

We must take care of the good news (the gospel) and preserve its original meaning so that Satan does not come in and twist it. Remember, it is *good news of great joy for all people*, not just believers.

A *steward* was a *slave* who took care of their master's goods as if they were their own:

**Steward:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #3623 *oikonomos*; a house-distributor (i.e., manager), or overseer, an employee in that capacity; by extension, a fiscal agent (treasurer); figuratively, a preacher (of the gospel)

### The second aspect of wealth for the true church:

1 Corinthians 6:19: (KJV) *What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the holy ghost (spirit) which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?*



2. Our growth and development in Christ are part of Jesus' wealth.

Since we are his, Christlikeness should be seen within us as we develop the fruit of the spirit. If we are not developing the fruit of the spirit, we need to ask ourselves why and correct the problem.



### The third aspect of wealth:



3. Our fellow disciples are part of Jesus' wealth - we should wash one another's feet.

John 13:14: (NASB) *If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.*

We need to respect, assist and value the brotherhood. Do we work as a team, shoulder to shoulder? If not, we are missing the mark.

In summary: The master's wealth consists of these three different things. It is important to understand the responsibility of all Jesus gives us. This includes teaching and preserving the true gospel, to look to our spiritual growth and development as called-out ones of Jesus, and to care for one another - to support the communal growth and development of our brethren.

The master figuratively placed his wealth into the hands of his servants, similar to how God placed Moses' staff in his hand:

Exodus 4:2: (NASB) *The LORD said to him, What is that in your hand? And he said, A staff.*

After our master put these three things in our hands, what was he saying? Make these things grow. Go to work! Teach the good news. Develop Christlikeness. Develop special bonds with the brotherhood.

Val, a Christian Questions contributor, sent us this story about her father. She has been thinking about the Parable of the Talents since her father passed away.



#### Val's background, *Using Our Talents*

- *After working in the corporate world, then being a stay-at-home mom for two years, I had the opportunity to get my certification as an athletic coach. For the next 25 years I was able to teach and coach athletics in public and Christian schools. In this case, what was in my hand wasn't a shepherd's staff, but running shoes, volleyballs, and whatever else was in those physical education closets. I was given the opportunity to coach and train wonderful student athletes, but even better, we used our time together for inspirational character-building time, Bible discussions, and prayer. God was faithful to help me keep looking at what he had put in my hand.*



Val talks about God being faithful to help her to understand what He put into her hand.

*What is that in your hand?* Think about this as we go through this parable.

#### Continuing with our story:

Matthew 25:15: (NASB) *To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own **ability** <1411>; and he went on his journey.*



**HOW MUCH WAS A TALENT WORTH?**

There are many thoughts on this – one common but high value definition (Greek English Lexicon) is that **ONE TALENT WAS WORTH 6000 DRACHMA.**

**ONE DRACHMA = ONE DAY'S PAY FOR A LABORER.**  
**6 DAYS PER WEEK X 52 WEEKS = 312 DRACHMA.**  
**ONE TALENT = OVER 19 YEARS OF LABOR.**

If a laborer in today's market conservatively made \$12.00 per hour, that would equal about \$25,000 per year.  
**\$25,000 x 19 years = \$475,000**

Therefore, according to this generous method of calculating, the master turned over almost **\$4 MILLION OF TODAY'S DOLLARS** to these servants.

Even if we do not know the exact amount in today's dollars, the point is that **THE MASTER TURNED OVER HIS INCREDIBLY VALUABLE WEALTH.**

He handed over his wealth in an uneven fashion. One slave received five talents, the next two, the last only one. At first glance this might be considered unfair, but he was specifically focusing on each one *according to his own ability*:

**Ability:** Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon #1411 *dunamis*; 1) strength power, ability;  
 1a) inherent power, power residing in a thing by virtue of its nature, or which a person or thing exerts and puts forth

There are two points here:

1. The master knows them well.
2. He has great confidence in what he knows about them.

Here is what we know so far:



- Jesus is teaching his followers about what they will be responsible for while he is physically absent.
- He hands over his wealth – the value and responsibility of Christianity and the gospel – to them all.
- He apportions the *weight of responsibility* according to the readiness and maturity of each person.
- He exhibits implicit trust in these servants and immediately leaves the country, having left his wealth in their hands.

The master was saying: *I trust you; I'm leaving.* This was shocking for the disciples.



## TAKING ON THE TASK OF MANAGING AND GROWING TALENTS:

True Christians have been entrusted with the sacred and powerful value of expanding and representing the gospel of Jesus, personally maturing in Christ and caring for the body of Christ.

**These responsibilities and privileges cannot be taken lightly!**

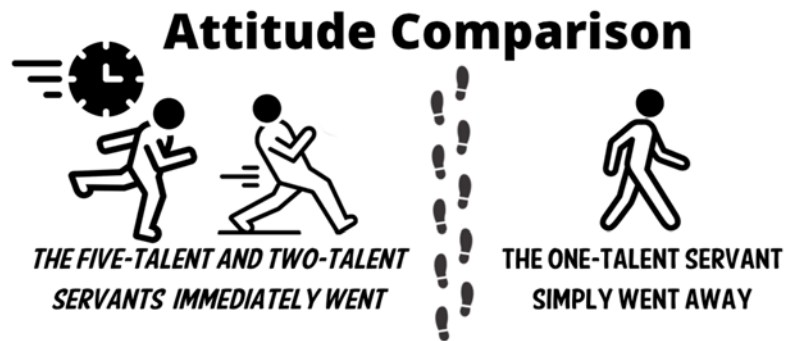
Suddenly this story of servants managing their master's goods in his absence looks a lot more serious than before.

**The storyline is set, and it is time to go to work!  
What opportunities and pitfalls lie ahead?**

The key factor to remember going forward is that each servant was given a very large sum of money *according to his own ability*. Expectations would therefore be higher for the one given the most, and lower for those given less. Everyone rightfully had expectations placed upon them. No matter who they were, they were expected and trusted to do the work set before them.

There are two types of activities and two types of attitudes displayed once the master left and the servants are on their own:

Matthew 25:16-18: (NASB) <sup>16</sup>Immediately the one who had received the five talents *went <4198> and traded <2038> with them, and gained five more talents.* <sup>17</sup>In the same manner the one who had received the two talents gained two more. <sup>18</sup>But he who received the one talent went *away <565>*, and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.



*There is a subtle difference in the way those who prospered responded and he who did not prosper responded.*

(Immediately) *went*: Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon #4198 *poreuomai*;  
1) to lead over, carry over, transfer; 1a) to pursue the journey on which one has entered, to continue on one's journey

The five-talent and two-talent servants got right to work. In several translations of this scripture, the word *immediate* does not appear. It was added in the New American Standard Bible because it is implied in the definition of the word.

These servants had an urgent, focused, goal-driven attitude. The master had a clear expectation, and they knew that expectation needed to be met.



On the other side of the ledger, the one-talent servant simply *went away*:

*Went (away)*: Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon #565 *aperchomai*; 1) to go away, depart; 1a) to go away in order to follow any one, go after him, to follow his party, follow him as a leader

This definition does not convey any sense of urgency. This servant had a lax attitude of defeat and self-preservation. Though he was capable (the master knew his capabilities), he chose to respond to the master's expectation with minimal effort. This plays out in a big way as the parable unfolds.

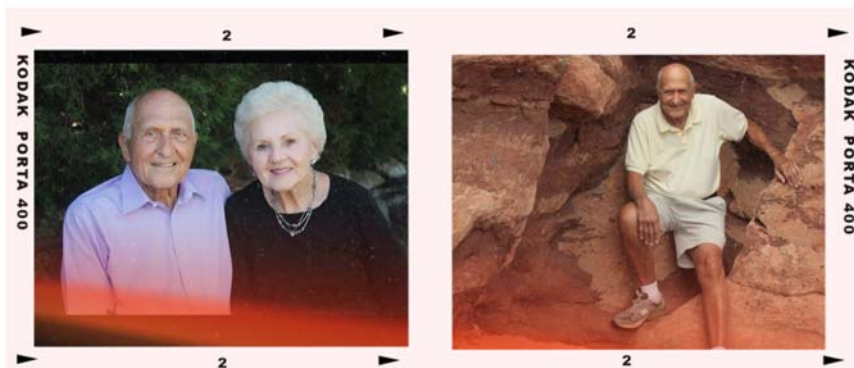


We must ask ourselves, what is MY attitude regarding what I am called upon to do every day? Do I look at it with an 'If only I could do that instead' attitude? Do I see the daily grind of my life as a WASTE or an OPPORTUNITY?

Let's return to Val's story about her dad, Art, who was a very faithful Christian. He always tried to do the work that was put in front of him, even when he became feeble.

 Val's transition, *Using Our Talents*

- Watching my parents age and become "less useful" in their own eyes made me become a coach or encourager of a new generation. It was time to let go of the job and opportunities God had given me in teaching and coaching youth and move into a caregiving role for my elderly parents. What I learned was that God had used my past experiences to help me navigate this new season of life.*



- My dad was always fit, active, encouraging to others, always willing to lend a hand no matter what needed to be done, and above all, a strong Christlike man. As he got into his late 80's and early 90's, his body began to fail him and he felt pretty useless. It was heartbreaking for an adoring daughter to watch. One day he asked me to go to the hobby store and pick up a number of things for him. Come to find out, he had heard about an elderly woman who knitted hats for children in cancer hospitals; she had done hundreds. He said, "You know, I can learn to do something like that since I can't move around very well anymore." By the time my dad passed away at 93, he had knitted over 75 hats, most of which went to the preschool his granddaughter worked at in Indiana, blessing little ones from infant to four years old with what some of their parents called "a hat from Grandpa Art." He didn't quite understand why the recipients of his hats thought they were so special. I explained to him that a lot of those kids didn't*





*have grandparents or even parents who would take the time to pass along a blessing like that.*

Despite no longer being able to do the service he had been capable of in his younger years, he found another way to express love for his fellow human beings in his elder years. What a wonderful example. It is touching to see how Art looked around thinking, if he could not do this, then what was he able to do? This opens the door to a proper attitude and fits so well with this parable.

For the true Christian, the opportunities to serve our master come *through* our daily experiences and not *instead* of our daily experiences. We can choose to observe, engage and LEARN spiritually - or observe, shut down and WISH for spirituality. The parable is telling us this is a choice on our part.

## Effort Comparison



**THE FIVE-TALENT AND TWO-TALENT SERVANTS WENT TO WORK AND TRADED WITH THEIR OPPORTUNITY**



**THE ONE-TALENT SERVANT DUG A HOLE AND BURIED HIS OPPORTUNITY**

**Traded:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #2038 *ergazomai*; to toil (as a task, occupation, etc.), (by implication) effect, be engaged in or with, etc. 1) to work, labour, do work; 2) to trade, to make gains by trading, "do business"

At age 12, Jesus said in Luke 2:49, *Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?* He recognized the responsibility he had even as a child. We must also recognize our responsibilities in the Lord's service.



The five-talent servants traded or toiled to fulfill the master's expectations. They LIVED the trust he had put in them.

*Do I live the trust God has in me every day? What am I doing with what God has given me?*

On the other side, the one-talent servant *dug a hole in the ground* and buried his opportunity to serve the master in the earth. Instead of engaging in the "toil" necessary to please the master, he chose to "soil" his opportunity by covering it over with dirt. His actions violated the master's trust, as he made no effort to fulfill the expectations his master knew he was capable of fulfilling.

He was focused on *earthly* things. He buried his talent in the dirt!

To "toil" means to be diligently attentive, to be engaged for the duration of the task.

This is exemplified to us by many people in the New Testament, including those we do not know a lot about:

Acts 16:14-15: (NASB) <sup>14</sup>A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul. <sup>15</sup>And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay. And she prevailed upon us.



Lydia was a faithful follower of Christ, and she wanted to be hospitable to the apostle and those traveling with him. She wanted to provide for them and do her best so they could continue their work. Lydia is a wonderful example tucked into this scripture.

Paul names many who were “toiling” to fulfill the master’s expectations:

Romans 16:21-23: (NASB) <sup>21</sup>Timothy my fellow worker greets you, and so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen. <sup>22</sup>I, Tertius, who write this letter, greet you in the Lord. <sup>23</sup>Gaius, host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer greets you, and Quartus, the brother.

The apostle mentions all these names because he wants us to meet these faithful brethren. We do not know anything else about them, but we know they were helping him, doing their part and using their talents.

To bury the talent in the soil is to rationalize,  
act minimally and then be idle.



One sad New Testament example of this type of reaction is Demas. He is mentioned several times in Paul’s writings (Colossians 4:14, Philemon 24) as a co-laborer with Paul. Paul trusted him, so we believe Jesus trusted in him.

At the end of Paul’s life, here is what he writes about Demas:

2 Timothy 4:9-10: (NASB) <sup>9</sup>Make every effort to come to me soon; <sup>10</sup>for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia.

Demas loved this world more than his spiritual work and focus. As it says in Galatians 6:9: (NRSV) *let us not grow weary in doing what is right* - in other words, do not stop toiling. It sounds like Demas became weary. He had been helping the apostle for a long time, but it sounds like maybe he gave up. It might have seemed like Paul was old and dying in prison. Maybe he grew discouraged in that after all they had done, this was what it came to.

He lost his focus and the interests of the world pulled him away. Little did he realize how much his work with Paul would continue to resonate and help the church down through the centuries! Much like the one-talent servant buried his one talent in the earth, Demas lost his direction. We can see the difficulty we can run into, losing our zeal.







**TAKING ON THE TASK OF MANAGING AND GROWING TALENTS:**

The labor of the true followers of Christ throughout the age of the gospel is to be engaged in the work of developing “according to their ability,” what the master has given them.

The end result is to be fully exercised in the work of Christ.

There is a lifetime of work involved in doing the work that Jesus trusts us to do. Never stop reviewing, adjusting and working!

None of our actions and attitudes can escape accountability before Christ. How did the “toilers” do?

The whole point of this parable was to illustrate that Jesus was trusting all aspects of his mission to his faithful followers. While the responsibility is immense, it is not without the assurance that these followers are fully capable of accomplishing the mission. As we will soon see, faithfulness to the expectations of Jesus brings blessed rewards.

The responsibility Jesus gives us may seem overwhelming at times, but it is given based on our ability. He will not give us more than we can handle. That is what this parable is about - *each according to his own ability*.

We know what the servants were given and what they did with it. Time for accountability:

Matthew 25:19: (NASB) *Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them.*

Here Jesus hints that his return and the following kingdom were not on the immediate horizon. This gives us the sense that what Jesus expects of us is not some small task for a short, focused period of time. Rather, his expectation spans our very lifetime!



*I'm saved! Oh good; I'm going to heaven!* No, no, no, it's more like, *I'm saved, good - now go to work and stay working until the day I die.* That is what it comes down to. This seems tough. Our previous two podcasts were on the Beatitudes in Matthew 5. In those “*Blessed are...*” verses, we saw how rich the blessings are in this life as well as in the next. It comes down to getting to work!



Uncovering the life-directing principles in the Beatitudes of Jesus



Learning and applying the grand conclusion of Jesus' Beatitudes



When we stand accountable before Christ, there is no longer time for second-guessing, regret or do-overs. The reality of what our lives have produced is now cast in stone:

Matthew 25:20: (NASB) *The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents.*§



This servant produced 100 percent growth. Reporting that he produced this growth is NOT a prideful statement; rather, it is a **factual accounting** - *you expected me to work, I did, and here is the result.*

The Apostle Paul understood the effort and discipline needed to see his Christian development all the way through.

**This was illustrated in the five-talent individual:**

1 Corinthians 9:25-27: (NASB) <sup>25</sup>*Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.* <sup>26</sup>*Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air;* <sup>27</sup>*but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.*

Paul is serious. If he was worried about his faithfulness, how much more should we be! He is intent on saying that just because he had done this or that in Christ's service does not mean he is "in"; it means that he is on the right track. However, he must continue to keep his body under control; he cannot stop focusing on growing the talents he was given.



There are few who would fit this five-talent servant picture. These individuals and their abilities are so trusted by Jesus that they are given MUCH more responsibility than others. This is a rarefied group of individuals. This is what is comforting in this parable - the responsibilities were distributed *according to his ability.*



**What will I do with what God has given me if I am a five-talent servant?**

The answer would have to be that we must recognize Jesus has given us a big portion of his wealth to manage. We would have to work hard to meet this responsibility. There would be a lot going on. We would need to delegate and organize. If we were given all this responsibility, how would we handle it? This is an important question to answer for ourselves.

**The parable's accountability continues with the master's response and reward for faithfulness:**

Matthew 25:21: (NASB) *His master said to him, Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.*

Well done! Your focus, discipline and fortitude produced a 100 percent return!

*You were faithful in a few things* - a few things? How about a major portion of the master's wealth! The parable says he turned over his wealth to them. We can see how Jesus is comparing the small troubles of our earthly walk with the grandeur of the heavenly reward.



**The Apostle Paul looked forward to the joy of his Lord:**

2 Timothy 4:6-8: (NASB) *6For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. 7I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; 8in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved his appearing.*

The privilege of being given a *crown of righteousness* is beyond human comprehension! This is what is meant by *enter into the joy of your master*. Imagine being resurrected and the Lord Jesus is there waiting for you. And then he says: *Come with me, I want to introduce you to our Father*. What joy! It is hard to imagine.



In the beginning of the parable, the servants are referred to as his slaves, and yet they were chosen and given this beautiful, wonderful treatment because they had the ability. Now we can see all they have been given for this accepting responsibility.

**The two-talent servant is next in line for accountability:**

Matthew 25:22-23: (NASB) *22Also the one who had received the two talents came up and said, Master, you entrusted two talents to me. See, I have gained two more talents. 23His master said to him, Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.*



Here as a two-talent servant is where many faithful ones fit in. They have opportunities and the Lord trusts them, not to the ability of the five-talent, but he trusts them to the extent they are capable.



Notice the similarity between the two and five-talent servants. This servant also produced 100 percent growth. His saying: *I have produced this growth - I have gained two more talents* - was also NOT a prideful statement; rather, it was a **factual accounting** - *you expected me to work, and I did - here is the result*.

This servant did as much as the five-talent servant because **he did what was expected of him**.

This is the beauty of the parable and of what the Lord Jesus expects of us. We do not have to be the Apostle Paul in order to be 100 percent faithful. We can be just as faithful with fewer abilities.

This servant also received the same reward of entering *into the joy of his master*.

The bottom line - he was just as faithful even with fewer abilities. There is power in knowing we are not expected to do or be more than we are capable of.

As we see in the story of Val's dad, Art, sometimes our capacity becomes limited with time and age. Here is one of the great lessons from Art.

**Best efforts are enough, *Using Our Talents***

- I remembered what it felt like for some of my athletes to think their best efforts were not "enough." It was time for me to remind my dad that God honors what you do to be a blessing, no matter how "small" you think it is. Getting to church was getting harder for my dad at the end of his life. He had been an Elder in the church for over 50 years and very active in teaching and leading. I had watched him make a conscious decision to never stop learning more about God and the Scriptures, even though his capacity for retaining information wasn't what it used to be. Because he always had his Bible and study materials out, the healthcare workers who came to the house asked questions and loved to talk with him about what he was "working on." In his mind, his talents weren't what they used to be...maybe not, but God was still using him to bring light and hope to the world. "O God, from my youth you have taught me, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds. So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim Your might to another generation, Your power to all those to come" (Psalms 71:17-18).*

When we think about this, we realize our best efforts ARE enough because we are judged on our abilities to take care of what we were given for Jesus. This is all we are expected to do.



**What will I do with what God has given me if I am a two-talent servant?**

This description fits many more of us. If we have fewer opportunities than other individuals, we need to ask what we are doing with what we have. Are we toiling every day to meet the master's expectations of us? This is not necessarily in earthly things, but in heavenly things. Are we using whatever we have towards the heavenly work?

We must be careful not to compare ourselves to others who are more talented than we are. That could cause discouragement and make us want to give up.

Discouragement is one of Satan's most effective tools. Also, if we continually tell others that we cannot do what they are doing, we could be feeding them the wrong kind of encouragement as well!

This parable reminds us of the tenacity we must put into managing and growing the talents we are given. It is helpful to remember the tenacity, sacrifice and faithfulness that Jesus ALREADY put into us, long before we knew what was happening.





**Romans 8:35-39: (NASB)** <sup>35</sup>*Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?* <sup>36</sup>*Just as it is written, For your sake we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.* <sup>37</sup>*But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through him who loved us.* <sup>38</sup>*For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,* <sup>39</sup>*nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our lord.*

There is one thing that can separate us from the love of Christ - ourselves! Are we working to the ability that Jesus knows we have? Or do we let the world seep in and sap our strength in following our Lord?



**TAKING ON THE TASK OF MANAGING AND GROWING TALENTS:**

Focusing on managing and growing what Jesus has given us is a challenging and lifelong task. Fortunately, we are only accountable before our Lord for what we are capable of doing and for how we are capable of changing - all with the help of God's spirit.

*This is hard, but it is most certainly doable!*

Even though we feel the pressure to do the work of Jesus, we are relieved from the pressure of unrealistic expectations.

**We have seen the blessings of fulfilling Jesus' expectations.  
What comes to us when we don't?**

Such a question can make Jesus seem to be harsh, but nothing could be further from the truth. As we will see from our parable, Jesus can be made to look mean, but in fact he is clear in his love and justice in whatever he requires of us. Our job is to live up to what we have promised him as his disciples.

The accountability continues with the one-talent servant. Notice how he begins his report:

**Matthew 25:24-27: (NASB)** <sup>24</sup>*And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed.*

This is bad. He was reversing the responsibility by **blaming** his master. He did not come up and explain what he did; instead, he presumed to tell the master about the master's own shortcomings! It is all backwards.

This servant saw his master through eyes of blame and harshness, which in his own mind justified his own inactivity, his own violation of doing that which he was commissioned to do. Instead of owning his responsibility, this servant chose to engage in **three actions that are the opposite of responsibility:**



*Master... YOU are a hard man -*  
We blame when we feel inferior, inadequate, fearful, jealous, doubtful and guilty. We blame our church, our ministers, our family, our boss, or even the Lord. We blame away our personal responsibility.



<sup>25</sup>And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours.



*I was afraid* - It is easy to excuse away our failure to make spiritual progress. If things go poorly, it is always someone or something else or where we live, or the circumstances were not right, or we just cannot catch a break.

There is always some kind of excuse - *the sun is not shining, I lost the paper, if only my pencil point did not break, the dog ate my homework...* Whatever it is, there is an excuse to get in the way.

Not only can we rationalize our inabilities, but Satan can reinforce our doubts and fears so we do not make progress. When we start down that road, Satan is waiting to say: *Hey, buddy, come this way! You are right, this really is too tough! He really is too hard* - and he can ruin us because we allow him to.



*I went away and hid your talent in the ground. We do not even try. Instead, we talk about and dwell on the problem.*

He probably thought about that buried talent every day and continually convinced himself he was okay. He tells himself: *No, no, it just needs to be buried; it is too hard if I lose it.* It never left his mind as it was buried in the earth - *No, it is where it should be, it is in safekeeping, no one will know it is there...* He knew where it was and he thought about it, but he was not doing with it what he was supposed to.

**The master responds by using the servant's own reasoning against him:**

<sup>26</sup>But his master answered and said to him, *You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no seed.* <sup>27</sup>Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest.

This is a huge lesson. Jesus is comparing small movements in the right direction to no movement at all. He indicates that we need to at least keep moving, at least do something, at least be proactive and head in the right direction.

This one-talent servant shows we are presented with a choice.



**What will I do with what God has given me if I am a one-talent servant?**

This is a tough question. We talked before about the idea of how difficult it is to compare ourselves with others. If we are the one-talent person and look at those with five or two talents and see we are not as good as they are, we may think: *I cannot be expected to do what they can do.* It is then easy to take our foot off the gas - and then forget where the gas pedal is entirely!



This happens because we have compared ourselves right out of our own ability. We must look at this and remember we were given our talents *according to our ability*. We must put the others out of our minds and realize, *Jesus has given me this. I can work with this because he knows I can.*

**We can choose activity - we can choose effort - we can choose discipline:**

Romans 12:1: (NASB) *Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.*

We often use this scripture to share with those who are new and wanting to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. But it is speaking to brethren who have already given their lives to God. This reminds us to rededicate ourselves to Him. We need to go back often to this verse and remind ourselves to be a *living and holy sacrifice*.



Someone once said, the problem with a living sacrifice is that it is always trying to crawl off the altar! This is the challenge we all must face every day - to get back on the altar. We need to use the talents Jesus gave us to glorify him with the work he knows we can do.

**The consequence of inactivity and avoiding assigned responsibility is to lose the opportunity and standing one is trusted with to those who were most worthy of that trust:**

Matthew 25:28-29: (NASB) <sup>28</sup>*Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.* <sup>29</sup>*For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away.*

We can say, "That's not fair!" Of course, it is! This servant had been deeply trusted to manage a portion of the master's entire wealth while he was away. **He in no way fulfilled his responsibility.** He **chose** to not do what he was capable of doing.

If we are being called to follow Jesus, God's perspective is that we ARE capable of fulfilling our responsibilities or He would not have called us. This is the point - if we are called to God through Christ and we do not think we can do this, inevitably it is because we are comparing or expecting something we think is beyond our ability.

This parable is telling us that God would not call us unless we are capable of fulfilling that call. It is a matter of FAITH, knowing that God through Christ will help us in our feebleness even if we are one-talent individuals. Faithfulness will be there for us if we do what our ability indicates we can do.



Romans 12:2: (NASB) *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

***Do not be conformed to this world - do not bury your talent in the earth! Be transformed instead and do the work for Jesus.***



**There is a sad end result for this servant:**

**Matthew 25:30:** (NASB) *Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

Many Christians think this verse refers to hellfire, but it does not. The symbolism of *outer darkness* is to be taken as a contrast to *enter into the joy of the Lord*. *Outer darkness* is to be surrounded with worldly influence. This was fitting for this servant because he hid his one talent in the earth.

**Episode 869:**  
**Do the Fires of Hell Come From God?**

**(Part I)**

Defining “weeping and gnashing of teeth”

It is important to understand that this man was still the master’s servant. It does say he must suffer the consequences of his actions because he did not act in accordance with the master’s will. If we have been making the mistakes of the one-talent servant, it is not too late.

**How do we begin this change of course?**

**1 John 2:1-2:** (NASB) *My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.*

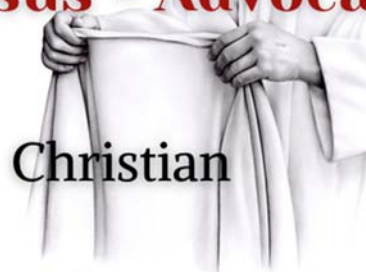


If this one-talented individual was faithful with his one talent and produced a second one, are we saying he will receive a reward according to his ability, like the two or five-talented ones?

Yes, the same reward is promised - *enter into the joy of your master*. **How do we get back on track?** We have an advocate with the Father in Jesus Christ. It is interesting that this one who cares so much for us and who will intercede for us with the Father is also the master who looks so mean in the parable! He sacrificed himself for our sins. We can go to him and tell him we have made mistakes, but that we will work at putting things back in order so that we can serve him to the best of our ability and our talents.

**God** ←→ **Jesus = Advocate**

*An advocate is someone who sits with you on your side and pleads your cause before a judge.*







**))) Decluttering the soul, *Using Our Talents***

- *Here is a quote I appreciate from a devotional reading from Decluttering the Soul, by Erin Greneaux: "We all know that the enemy of what is best is something good. If we chase the feeling of significance that comes from prestigious ministry rather than serving for the glory of God, we miss the purpose. When we let go of our glory from past achievements, we are willing to serve as Jesus did, in the small and unseen ways. Instead of putting our energy into preaching to the masses, we focus first on praying alone on the mountainside. Decluttering the trophies of kingdom work makes room for embodying the hands and feet of Christ." This is presently the big lesson in my life. I went from a successful teaching/coaching career to caregiver and companion and now that my parents are gone, there is a hole. I sometimes struggle with looking back wistfully. It's time for me to "declutter" and ask God to show me the best use of the talents He has given me and remind me what ones I may have forgotten about.*

Val is telling us she needs to take what the Lord has given her and find new work in serving Jesus. The work changes at times in our lives. It changes, we grow and circumstances alter, but we must continue to move forward, serving Jesus daily.



**TAKING ON THE TASK OF MANAGING AND GROWING TALENTS:**

**It is of massive value that we execute growth in our experiences, opportunities and our literal talents and abilities in the Lord's service, whether we are five-, two- or one-talent servants. THE LORD EXPECTS GROWTH!**

**Growth only happens when we put it all on the line, knowing that Jesus knows what we are capable of.**

It is not only a matter of Jesus knowing what we are capable of, but we must **believe** he knows! We must **believe** he is not going to leave us holding something that is going to crush us. We must **believe** that we are there by grace, and often with the help of the brotherhood, we can rise above whatever the challenges are to take steps forward. Sometimes victory looks like defeat because there are things that do not happen perfectly in our lives. This is okay, because if we believe in our ability to serve God through Jesus, we will work with whatever responsibilities he has given us with our whole heart. We will work to glorify God and then even defeat is victory in the eyes of our Lord Jesus!

***So, what am I doing with what God has given me?  
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...  
Think about it...!***

All quoted scriptures are from the 1995 version of NASB unless otherwise indicated.





Join us next week for our podcast on February 14, 2022

Ep. 1216: What Do I Say When I Talk to My Spouse?

### Bonus Material and Study Questions

1 Corinthians 9:20-24: (NASB) <sup>20</sup>To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law; <sup>21</sup>to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law. <sup>22</sup>To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some. <sup>23</sup>I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it. <sup>24</sup>Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win.

To the world this is a waste - why develop these incredibly valuable *talents* for the gain of Christ and not your own gain?

A story of accountability: This is a story about four people named Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody. There was an important job to be done and Everybody was asked to do it. Everybody was sure Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry about that, because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought Anybody could do it, but Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn't do it. It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done.

The opportunity to be a true Christian inherently requires taking responsible risks:

- Greatest risk (activity) produced the greatest reward.
- Minimal risk (bank investment) would have been tolerable.
- No risk - respectful protection or burial of this opportunity is punished.
- The choice of inactivity is the choice of loss.
- The irony - the one who was most protective suffered the greatest loss.
- The Lesson: It is of massive value that we execute growth in our experiences, opportunities and our literal talents and abilities in the Lord's service.
- The Lesson: Just because an assigned task takes much longer than anticipated does not give us permission to forget about it or not take it seriously.

# Study QUESTIONS

## Ep. 1215: What Am I Doing with What God Has Given Me?

<https://christianquestions.com/parables/1215-talents/>

See:  CQ Rewind  
SHOW NOTES

1. What was Jesus' purpose in speaking the Parable of the Talents? Describe the context of the parable. Who do the man and the slaves represent? How does the man treat his slaves? (See Matthew 25:13-14, John 13:15-16)
2. What do the talents represent in the parable? Describe the three aspects of this wealth and how they apply to us. (See Matthew 25:15, John 13:14, 1 Corinthians 4:1-2, 6:19)
3. How did the attitudes of the servants differ in the way they handled their talents? How did this show their dedication to the Lord's work? (See Matthew 25:16-18)
4. What are some examples in the New Testament of attitudes like those of the slaves in the parable? Can we see these attitudes in our own actions? What should these examples prompt us to do? (See Acts 16:14-15, Romans 16:21-23, 2 Timothy 4:9-10)
5. How did the servants with five and two talents respond to the master during the time for their accountability? What was each of their rewards? (See Matthew 25:19-23)
6. What lessons are there for us from the actions of the first two servants and the master's response? Why do we not have to worry about being given too much to do in the Lord's service? How does this parable bring us comfort when we feel overwhelmed? What is our reward? (See Romans 8:35-39, 1 Corinthians 9:25-27, 2 Timothy 4:6-8)
7. How did the response of the one-talent servant to the master differ from the first two servants? How did he explain his actions? What three actions can we take (like the one-talent servant) that are the opposite of responsibility to justify our inaction? (See Matthew 25:24-29)
8. What can we do to avoid falling into the attitude of the lazy servant? Why should we not compare ourselves to others who are either more talented, or less talented, than we are? Why does Satan love to see us discouraged? (See Romans 12:1-2, 1 John 2:1-2)
9. What "reward" did the master give the one-talent servant? Was his reward justified? Did the master (Jesus) send this man to hellfire in the parable? What is the contrast between this servant's fate and that of the first two servants? (See Matthew 25:28-30)
10. Is your attitude towards your Christian responsibilities like the first two servants or like the lazy one? What will you do to be like the first two?