

## Stewardship Lesson 4: Talents, Spiritual Gifts, Responsibilities to the Body (of Christ)

Theme Verse for Series: Matthew 22:36-39

*“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”*

*Jesus replied: Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.*

*This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself.*

Stewardship principles: Love God, love your neighbor, spread the Gospel.

### **Discussion points/introductory questions:**

What does it mean to be a steward of our talents?

Where do our talents come from?

Do we sometimes take them for granted because we haven't always “earned” them - in such a way that people tend to care more for something they work hard for and earn rather than something that is simply provided?

**What are some really good reasons you can think of for not using your spiritual gifts?**

### **Parable of the talents (bags of gold) Matthew 25:14-30**

The master in the parable “entrusted” his wealth to his three servants. He gave to each an amount of his money “according to his ability.” (v 14-15)

\*FYI - 1 talent is equal to 15 years' worth of wages

- Is there a difference between ‘entrust’ and give?
- In this parable, what do the “talents” or “bags of gold” represent? What is the currency that God is entrusting us with?
- What does this trust tell us about the nature of God?
  - He doesn't entrust everyone with the same thing.
  - He entrusts us with things according to our ability.

The servant with five and the man with two each put the money to work and doubled it. The servant with one (less talented) hid the money and kept it safe. (v 16-17)

When the master returns, he rewards the two more talented servants that doubled his money. He rewards them by giving them more responsibility. He tells them to come share in “his happiness.” (v 18-23)

Then there is the third servant, the servant with less ability. When the master returns, he tells him, “... *‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. 25 So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’*” (v 24-25)

This was clearly not what the master wanted to hear. First man put his money to WORK, last man did his deed in ISOLATION - Jesus doesn't say that this guy didn't put it to work - he says, he HID it. He calls the servant “wicked and lazy.” Then he tells him,

*“26... So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? 27 Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned, I would have received it back with interest.”*

Why is the master not happy?

Two problems the master has with the servant: you were a poor steward AND you didn't trust me. The master tells the servant he knew he was successful in business. Yet the servant didn't trust the master's belief in the servant's ability. He tells him that he should have taken the money to someone else to be worked.

What does this tell us about the nature of God?

- He expects us to utilize what he gives us.
- He expects us to take chances - not always play it safe.
- He knows what we are capable of and entrusts us accordingly, and therefore expects us to trust him.

So the master's response to the third servant is to take what he had entrusted him with and he throws him out.(v 28)

What does verse 29 *“For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them,”* tell us about stewardship?

“Health and Wealth Gospel vs. being a good steward  
BUT God is a rewarder - rewards us with what, though?

How much more is this the case with spiritual gifts than with something like a beautiful singing voice or a penchant for sports?

Whoever has, will be given more - more what? More responsibility, perhaps. When I am a good steward, I will be given more opportunities to be a good steward. What does it mean when it says what you DO have will be taken? Will I keep a spiritual gift if I don't use it? Salvation? Sometimes I don't WANT more responsibilities - does that make this parable difficult to digest?

### **Spiritual Gifts 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12**

Are our talents and abilities fixed or can they be developed? Do they need to be developed?

We are called to be stewards of many things or many ways. Ultimately, we are stewards of the Body of Christ or The Church. When we take an account of our own stewardship, we can get lost in the weeds when trying to figure out the details. However, the final measure is, are we growing closer to God and are growing The Church through taking the Gospel to all the world?

**Conclusion:** With stewardship, there is a pattern emerging: Good stewardship is about knowing the Father and finding balance.