



PARTICIPANT WORKBOOK

LESSON 1-6: 100% RETURN ON INVESTMENT (ROI)

"If you devoted every moment of your whole life exclusively to His Service, you could not give Him anything that was not in a sense His own already.

C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

WELCOME & PRAYER

FOLLOW UP FROM PRIOR LESSON

In Lesson 5, you explored the concepts of meaningful work and loving your neighbor and were asked to pray specifically for your boss and for those who report to you. Additionally, you were asked to pray for coworkers with whom you have had conflicts or tensions. What was this experience like? Did it change your outlook towards these people?

KICK OFF QUESTION

- What is something that you really enjoyed in high school?
- What is something that you really excel at in the workplace?

KEY SCRIPTURES

Matthew 25:14-30 (*See also* Luke 19:11-28)

The parable of the talents in the New Testament is powerful example of Jesus communicating the Father's will through accessible imagery. The passage depicts the story of a master entrusting "talents" (monetary resources) to three separate servants that each, ultimately, have a different approach for handling their new responsibility. Eventually, the two servants who put their talents to work on behalf of the master earn praise and are rewarded, whereas, the fearful servant that buries his talent is rebuked, condemned, and has his only talent taken away.

We can use the text to extract God's vision of His people as stewards of His Creation. God created everything, therefore, all gifts, resources and responsibilities come from Him. As God's stewards, we are charged to be fruit bearers on His behalf, multiplying what we have been given by putting these gifts "to work." Simply remaining in neutral and approaching our work (and life) with complacency is counterproductive to God's commission. What we are entrusted with (based on what we can handle) should be used for Kingdom growth.



BIG PICTURE

1. God has entrusted each of us various gifts, resources and responsibilities.
2. God expects us to invest and multiply the various gifts, resources and responsibilities He has entrusted to us.
3. Everything is God's to be used for his Glory.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- With what has God entrusted you? What are you doing with it?

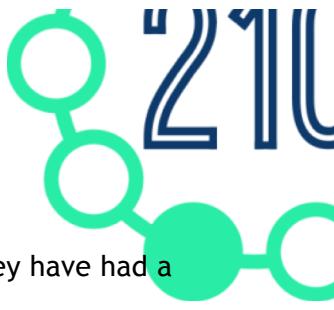
- From this passage, what can we learn about God's view of work? Of business? Of money? How is this parable valid or invalid in today's business world?

- What can we learn about the first two servants? What characteristics did they demonstrate that God desires? What can we learn about the third servant? What characteristics did he demonstrate that God rejects?

- Why do you think the Master entrusted five (5) and two (2) talents, respectively, to the first and second servants, but only one (1) talent to the third servant? Does God promise that He will always provide us with an abundance of financial blessings if we "follow" him? Why or why not?

- At the beginning, middle and end of the story of each servant, who owned the talents? How does this apply to your life/work/business?





WEEKLY APPLICATION

Write a modern parable based on your life, describing your “talents” and how they have had a significant ROI (return on God’s investment) for the Kingdom.

CLOSING PRAYER

SCRIPTURE AND BACKGROUND

Matthew 25:14-30 (See also Luke 19:11-28)

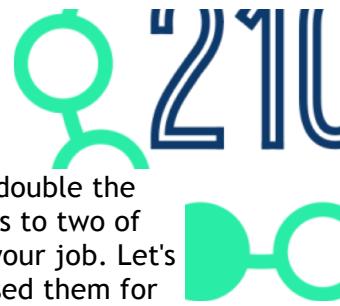
Note: Jesus is giving a parable, an illustration. Do not take everything as literal for business. The Kingdom of Heaven example Jesus is describing is focused on the Pharisees and teachers of the law; therefore, the wicked servant that did nothing represents these Pharisees. These folks have been entrusted with God’s Kingdom (His Words) on earth and they have buried it so not one can find it or change it. In v.29, this discussion about being given ‘more’ is a dialog about giving more responsibility and opportunity for the Kingdom work, not material blessing (although this may occur).

THIS LESSON - PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

Each of us appreciates a well-deserved (not shallow) compliment. Such compliments make us smile, make us thankful and, often, lead us to give credit to others. Encouraging words help us to recommit to our purpose and continue to work to serve our customers, our employer and others. Effective compliments: 1) must be earned, and 2) must be sincere. Jesus does this very thing in the Parable of the Talents. Let’s look at this passage in more detail...

Matthew 25:14-30 is the fifth of six discourses (which start in Matthew 18), where Jesus teaches about the Kingdom of Heaven. In each of these discourses, Jesus contrasts something that the crowds can relate to the Kingdom of Heaven. In this parable, Jesus compares His Kingdom to a master and three servants; this has parallels to business in the modern world.

In the New Testament, the term "talent" meant something very different than it does today. The talents Jesus Christ spoke of in the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Matthew 18:21-35) and the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30) referred to the largest unit of currency at the time. Thus, a talent represented a rather large sum of money. According to *New Nave's Topical Bible*, one who possessed five talents of gold or silver was a multimillionaire by today's standards.



Given this context, Jesus is effectively complimenting His faithful servants with double the responsibility by entrusting them with additional talents. The Master (Jesus) says to two of his servants: "Good work! You used your skills and abilities well and excelled at your job. Let's continue to work together. You have done so well, let's throw a party!" He praised them for how they used what they had been given.

Can you imagine this? Jesus, the master, is so excited about what his servants have done that he intends to throw them a celebration!

So, the question is "what happened" that resulted in this excitement? First, from a Kingdom perspective, the master has entrusted something of great significance to the servants: God's grace. The servants have taken the knowledge and responsibility of His grace and magnified it to the people they meet. Second, from a business perspective, the servants have put to use the capital entrusted to them and doubled it. What an excellent return on investment. In fact it is a 100% ROI!

So, what are some of the observations we can glean from this parable?

OBSERVATION 1: The Master did not explicitly instruct each servant on what to do with the talents. God does not always expressly tell us how to use the resources he places under our stewardship. (See Romans 12:2) Instead God entrusts us to make wise decisions regarding those resources.

OBSERVATION 2: The third servant failed to act because he was fearful, wicked and lazy. Operating out of fear does not honor God. (See 2 Timothy 1:7) Being slothful/lazy does not honor God. (Proverbs 6:6-9)

OBSERVATION 3: The first and second servants were faithful with what God gave them. God will build on your experiences when you are faithful and give you greater experiences and opportunities when you remain faithful. (See James 1:12)

OBSERVATION 4: The first and second servants were equally rewarded and praised. God cares about our faith and efforts more than he cares about the results. (See Philippians 4:6,7)

OBSERVATION 5: God has entrusted each of us with His Kingdom on earth, and he does not want us to speak or act in ways that make it harder for our co-workers, employers, vendors, employees, friends and family to find and experience the Kingdom.

Additional Scripture References you can explore

- 1 Samuel 18:14
- Ecclesiastes 3:9-15
- Luke 12:48b
- Luke 16:10a