



YOU: Connect. Grow. Serve. Go!
Winter 2017-18 Leader Commentary

Unit 1: Everything Belongs to Him
Session 1: Taking Care of Business (see pp. 102-105)

The Question: Have I increased what God has given to me?

The Point: God expects a return on His investments.

Background Passage: Matthew 25:14-30

Focal Passage: Matthew 25:14-19,24-29

This commentary is designed to help you think about the question, “Have I increased what God has given to me?” and to drive home this one truth: God expects a return on His investments.

Focus on These Points

God Owns It
(Matt. 25:14-15)

Matthew inserted the parable of the talents in a section of other teachings dealing with the consummation of God’s kingdom (24:36–25:46). In the parable of the talents, Jesus challenged His followers to invest all that God has entrusted to them to advance His kingdom. He taught that living in God’s kingdom includes waiting, but it is an active waiting where people are provided resources by God, are expected to put them to use, and will be judged on their faithfulness. This parable deals with a man going on a journey. Before traveling, he called together his slaves and turned over his possessions to them.

During Jesus’ day, wealthy landowners often entrusted their property, possessions, and affairs to their trustworthy servants. Verses 15-18 highlight three important principles regarding the talents God gives to us today. First, God grants resources to all people. The master called three of his servants. Each was given an amount of a financial asset: To one he gave five talents; to another, two; and to another, one. A talent originally was used as a measurement of weight (about 75 pounds) before later referring to money. Determining the exact value of a talent is difficult, but certainly it was a large sum.

We should be careful restricting the talent in Jesus’ parable to money or expanding it to refer specifically either to spiritual gifts, natural abilities, the gospel, or anything else. Certainly, these items are assets God gives to further His kingdom, but such attempts may lead to narrowing Jesus’ meaning of the parable. It is actually possible that Jesus intentionally chose the talent because its symbolic meaning can fit various applications. Every person, even an unbeliever, has something God provides to bring Him glory.

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Second, God determines who receives what resources and the amounts. The master knew ahead of time the trustworthiness of each servant and acted accordingly. He determined who would receive how much. The same is true with God. He is sovereign, and we are not. In essence, God can do as He pleases, because He is God. Paul, for instance, made clear that God gives spiritual gifts to believers according to His will: “According to the grace given to us, we have different gifts” (Rom. 12:6).

We Manage It ***(Matt. 25:16-18)***

God expects the assets He provides to be put into use. The master expected that the servants do more with the money than simply hold on to it. Two obeyed. One did not. We too should not delay the stewardship of the resources entrusted to us. The two servants took a certain amount of risk—they could have lost the money entrusted to them—but reaped reward for their master in doing so. All believers should willingly take wise, faithful risks with their resources so God will provide a return on their investments.

The third servant acted in exactly the opposite manner. He went off, dug a hole in the ground, and hid his master’s money. By doing so, this servant chose a route that was (1) less work, (2) less time-consuming, and (3) less risky. As the first two servants, we need to show a willingness to reject procrastination and the temptation to take the easier, safer route in using those resources. Instead, we should be eager to serve, quick to act, willing to work, and open (when necessary) to take on tasks that may be risky but can reap great rewards for God’s glory.

We Must Give an Account ***(Matt. 25:19,24-29)***

The master returned after a long time and settled the accounts with his servants. God’s criterion for reward is what we do with what we have, not how much we have or how much we gain. First, the master commended the first two servants. Second, he gave them greater responsibility. Third, the master invited them to share his joy. All three of the rewards no doubt would have been extremely well received by the first two servants. The master’s commendation was the same for both the one given and earning two talents as the one who began with five. But instead of receiving blessings, the third servant suffered judgment for both his faithless attitude and his bad action.

Unlike the first two servants, the third servant sought to excuse himself and actually blame the master! He accused his master of greed and exploitation of others by reaping where you haven’t sown and gathering where you haven’t scattered seed. First, the servant’s problem was both moral and behavioral. Second, the master turned the servant’s words back on him. Third, not only were the servant’s character and excuses rebuffed, but he also suffered the loss of the financial asset given to him.

Being prepared for Christ’s return means refusing to “play it safe” doing little or nothing but instead serving with the goal of results. Ultimately, living in light of God’s kingdom means we

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make it our aim to acknowledge the resources God gives us and use them to promote His purposes.

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