

Junior Soldiers

Unit 11 : Lesson 7



Parable of the Talents

PURPOSE : For the children to explore and understand that God asks us to be faithful and true in how we use the talents, gifts, relationships and opportunities he gives us.

‘Each of you has been blessed with one of God’s many wonderful gifts to be used in the service of others. So use your gifts well!’

1 Peter 4:10 (CEV)

Consider & Prepare

Read:

Read Matthew 25:14–30

Access ‘The Parable of the Talents’ on the Max7 website (www.max7.org/resource.aspx?id=c78994a7-b082-46bf-a2c4-c116d5cbe990&creatinguser=1). It can also be found on YouTube (www.youtube.com/watch?v=JQOPwZpRoI8).

The parable of the talents is a well-known story Jesus told to help people understand what is required of us when it comes to using what God has blessed us with. This parable may not be too familiar to the children, so this is a great opportunity for you to explore this story with them.

In the parable, the first and second servants both received the same recognition and praise from the master—which helps to remind us that the parable is not about the total amount they earned but, rather, the faithful responsibility in living up to one’s potential and giftedness.

Some of the children might find it difficult to understand how the master could throw the third servant out of the kingdom. The third servant, even though he had not multiplied the money that he was entrusted with, had looked after it, and so the master’s actions might seem harsh and unfair. Again, this is a great opportunity to work through this passage with the children and wrestle with what this might mean for them. With all that God gives us, it is important to look at the consequences associated with us not using those opportunities and gifts from God.

Think about a gift that you have spent time planning and saving for so that you could give it to someone, and then—when they have received it—they leave it in the box and don’t use it. I wonder how you would feel. Imagine how God feels when he gifts us with things and we don’t use them as we should.

This parable has some tricky elements to it and we encourage you to do a little more research than just reading the Bible passage; maybe you can also read about these verses in a Bible commentary or discuss the passage with your small group or ask your officer about it. We can’t expect the children to understand it if we don’t understand it ourselves.

What you will need:

For 'Connecting In'

- Money (real, fake, Monopoly or chocolate coins will do)
- Sheets of A4 paper
- Butchers paper or whiteboard
- Pens or markers
- Playdough
- Box or bag
- Slips of paper

For 'The Main Thing'

- For Option 1: a DVD/computer loaded with the video clip
- For Option 2: a Bible or copy of the verses printed on sheets and props if you would like
- Paper, pens, money (real or otherwise)
- Bag or box, pieces of paper with 'talents' written on them
- Butchers paper, Bibles and textas

For 'Tying In'

- Packet of seeds
- \$5 note
- Greeting card
- A3 paper and textas

For 'Home & Beyond'

- Print off the 'Home & Beyond' cards for each child.



Connecting In

All that cash...

Place a large amount of money on a table in front of the children. (You could use real money although I would not recommend this; gold chocolate coins, Monopoly money or even pieces of paper with dollar values written on them will suffice.) For this activity it would be good to divide the children into small groups or pairs and give each group some paper and textas. You might like enough money so that each group has their own that they can hold as they work on this activity together.

- Ask the children in their groups to decide: if this was their money, how would they spend it? What would they do with it?
- Give the groups a time limit and then, when everyone is finished, ask the groups to share what they have decided.
- On a whiteboard or large sheet of butchers paper have a grid divided into three sections with the headings 'Spend it on others', 'Spend it on yourself' and 'Invest it'.
- Ask the children to go through their lists and to work out which items fit into each of the three categories and write them on the whiteboard/paper.

Link: 'It would be really nice to receive this money as a gift to be able to spend as you would like. I wonder, though, if someone in your family gave you this money and said that you must return it to them in a year, what would you do with the money? (Give the children some time to respond to this question and add any new thoughts to the paper or whiteboard.)

'Jesus told a parable about some people who faced this exact situation. Before their master went away on a long trip, he gave each of his servants a different sum of money to look after while he was gone. They

had to make a very important decision: what were they going to do with the money that they had been trusted to look after? How would they use it? They probably knew that when their master returned home, he would ask them what they did with it. I wonder what they did. Today we are going to explore what each of the servants did, how the master responded and what that might mean for each of us.'

What's my talent?

For this activity you will need a box or bag and some slips of paper that includes a variety of examples of skills, talents, abilities and spiritual gifts. For examples: music, dance, encouragement, a great smile, being friendly, caring, joyful, sense of humour, helping others, cooking, teaching, reading, writing, drawing, singing, sport, talking, listening etc. You might like to use any of the above or come up with some of your own. You will also need some playdough, whiteboard or butchers paper and appropriate markers for this activity.



'Today we are going to play a game a bit like charades, however, it is not just about acting out what is on the slip of paper that you choose. You will also be given one of three ways that you will have to use to communicate what is on the slip of paper: acting it out, making it out of playdough or drawing it on the board/paper.'

- Explain to the children that the things that are written on the slips of paper are things that you would consider skills, talents, abilities, spiritual gifts and things that you might be good at.
- Choose one child to start the game, once they have chosen the slip of paper from the box/bag have a leader tell them which of the three ways that they are going to use to try and communicate it.
- Provide a time limit for the children to try and communicate what they have on their slip (e.g. one minute).
- The other children must attempt to guess the 'talent' that is being drawn, constructed or acted out.
- Have the child that has just finished their turn choose the next child to participate.
- You may not get through all the children depending on the size of your group.
- As the 'talents' are guessed, place them on the table for all to see.

Link: 'Today we have done an activity that helped us consider some of the things that we might be good at; you might call these skills or talents. There are different things that each of us do well. There are also some skills and talents we have that God gives us and some people might refer to these as spiritual gifts or gifts from God.

- If someone gives you a gift or a present what do you do with it? (*Allow some time for the children to respond and talk about some of the gifts that they have received and how they have used them.*)
- I wonder if you have ever been given a gift that you have never taken out of the box or container and used.
- I wonder how the person who gave you this gift might feel if they knew this.

'Jesus told a parable about some people who faced a similar situation to this. Before a master went away on a long trip, he gave his servants each a different sum of money to look after while he was gone. They had to make a very important decision: what were they going to do with the money that they had been trusted to look after? How would they use it? They probably knew that when their master returned home, he would ask them what they did with it. I wonder what they did. Today we are going to explore what each of the servants did and how the master responded.

'Many of the skills and talents that we are good at (that we looked at in the game) were given to us by God. If God has given them to us as a gift, I wonder how he might feel if we did not use them and use them well. Let's explore this parable and what it might say to each of us about the things that we receive from God and how we might use them.'



The Main Thing

I wonder...

- I wonder if there is something that you might like to receive at the moment, perhaps for your birthday or next Christmas or maybe just because. Maybe a new bike, scooter, video game, iPad, book, clothes etc. *(Allow a few moments for the children to respond.)*
- I wonder if you received that present if you would keep it in its box and not use it. Why/why not? *(Again allow the children a few moments to respond.)*
- Imagine that you did leave that gift in its box; I wonder how the person who gave it to you would feel.



'We have been talking about skills and talents and gifts, things that are given to us. Usually things that are given to us are meant to be used and enjoyed, not kept in a box. We are going to have a look at a parable that Jesus told that will help us to explore this idea further.'



Let's explore the parable...

'Parables are stories or illustrations that Jesus used to help people understand who God is and what his Kingdom is like. The parable we are looking at today is called the parable of the talents and it is found in Matthew 25. I wonder if any of you know about this parable and what Jesus was trying to help people understand. *(Give the children an opportunity to respond and have discussion about which parable this is.)* Let's have a look together at what really happens in the parable and what Jesus might want us to take away from this passage.'

Option 1: Watch the Max7 clip 'The Parable of the Talents' (www.max7.org/resource.aspx?id=c78994a7-b082-46bf-a2c4-c116d5cbe990&creatinguser=1).

Option 2: Read the passage in Matthew 25: 14–30 and then read it again and have the children act out the roles

- Before reading the passage, explain the meaning of the word 'talent' and how it is used in this parable.
- 'When we use the word talent we usually mean something that a person is good at. But in Bible times, a 'talent' meant a lot of money—about the value of 20 years' wages. That might be about \$1.2 million today!'
- Invite some children to play the 'master' and 'servant' roles. The 'master' is to distribute the money as the parable is read.
- Read the passage as the children act out their roles and what is happening.

Following Option 1 or Option 2

For this section it would be good for the children to be in small groups and each group be given some butchers paper and textas as they explore the passage a little more.

Explore the following with the children in your small group.

- I wonder what stood out for you in this parable.
- What did you like about this parable?
- What did you dislike?
- Was there anything that you thought was unfair? Why?
- Jesus used parables (stories) to help others understand a particular message, I wonder what you think Jesus wanted people to see or understand from this parable about the talents.
- I wonder if you see yourself in this parable: share with the group.
- I wonder what you might have done with the talents if you were given them by the master.

'The money from the master was not a gift. The master trusted each servant to use the money wisely and care for it while the master was away. What mattered most to the master was not how much the servants were given or how much they returned to him, but what they did with what they were given.'

'When Jesus told parables he wasn't just telling stories to amuse people or keep them entertained, he told them to teach a lesson about God and our relationship with God and others. In this parable, Jesus teaches that God has given us each special talents, gifts and abilities and that we have a responsibility to use them to glorify God.'

'The servant who wasted his talent—remember, he buried it in a hole—was told off by the master. God doesn't like it when he gives us the ability to do something special for him, and we don't do it.'



Tying In

What will you do?

'The parable of the talents helps to remind us that God wants to give us good things and trusts that the gifts he gives to us will be used well. We have many things to be thankful for, some big and some small things. It is important that we use all that God has given to us even when it might seem like a small thing.'

For this activity the children will need to be divided into three small groups (if you do not have enough children for three groups then you might like to choose one or two of the items below.) You will need a packet of seeds, an assortment of cards and a \$5 note.

- Each group will be given an item that they will be entrusted with from the list below, a sheet of paper and some textas to record their brainstorming.
- Give the groups 60 seconds to brainstorm the best way to make our world better, to encourage others or to serve someone using the little things they have been given.
- When the time is up, allow each group some time to share the ideas they have come up with.

Examples of items:

- Packets of seeds: Plant the seeds and grow the flowers. Give the flowers to someone, make an arrangement for church on Sunday.
- Assortment of cards: Make more cards and send them to people who are sick or send a thank you.
- \$5 note: Give it in to the offering on Sunday, buy someone a little gift to encourage them.

'Wow! What a great bunch of ideas to use a couple of small items to make a difference. I wonder how you might be using your own talents and the abilities that you have right now. I wonder if you are using them or if you might be burying them like the third servant.'



Prayer...

For this section you will need some A3 sheets of paper, textas or other drawing implements.

- Give each child a blank piece of paper.
- Ask the children to write their name in the middle of the page.
- Give the children a few minutes to reflect and write down the gifts, talents, skill and opportunities that they believe God has given them. *(If some of the children are having difficulty, you may need some leaders to help them talk through some options.)*

- Ask the children (when they are finished) to stop and reflect on the good things that God has provided them with. Take some time to thank God for these things and helping you to use them the best you can.
- Have the children stand in a circle holding their piece of paper out in front of them.
- Encourage each of the children to pray for the child to their right, that God will help them to use their talents and give them opportunities to do so.



Home & Beyond

Print off the 'Home & Beyond' cards attached. The children might like to keep these in their journals or notebook where they could write or stick the challenges, reflect, answer questions or complete activities each week.

Using our gifts and talents...

- Talk with your family and Big Bud about the things you are good at and the things you like to do.
- Ask them to share with you what they think your talents are.
- I wonder how you might be able to use your talents for God.
- Talk to your Big Bud about working on a project together where you can use some of your gifts to help others. If you are good at cooking you might like to make something together to serve at morning tea at church or to deliver as a gift to someone's house. If you are good at drawing and writing you might like to work on some cards or letters for people who you would like to encourage in the church, at your school, those who are unwell or someone who is serving overseas. If you are good at talking and making people laugh you might like to go and visit a nursing home or someone who is unwell. If you are a good helper then you might like to work together on helping someone around their house, in their garden or to do some shopping for them. There are lots of opportunities to use your talents for God...be creative!



