



S1.Lesson 4: Parable of the Talents

Middle School Lesson Plans

Supplies Needed: Journals; 2 note cards per student; 1 pencil/pen per student; 39 small slips of paper - each one with a number between 1 and 39. No numbers should repeat; a hat or box to put the 39 slips of paper in; tv or laptop to show movie clip (movie clip link is available at rfour.org/curriculum.html)

Opening Prayer

EXPLAIN Opening Activity – A game of risk aversion (based on the same principles as the TV game shows of “Card Sharks” and “Deal or No Deal”)

TELL

- The point of the game is to end up with the highest total of points.
- I’m giving you each two blank notecards. Take a pencil or pen and on one card draw an up arrow and write "Higher" and on the other card have draw a down arrow and write "lower."
- Each of you starts with 5,000 points. I’m going to draw a piece of paper from a hat or bowl that contains 39 pieces of paper, each piece of paper has a number between 1 & 39. Each piece of paper has a different number.
- Ok, I’ve drawn the number. The number is ____.
- Now, I’m going to draw another number. Using one of your cards, make a decision as to whether you think the next number will be HIGHER or LOWER than the number I just read to you. Everyone must have a card up.
- Ok, I’m drawing the next number. It is ____.
- Who got it right? Ok, you get another 1000 points. Who got it wrong? Ok, you lose 1000 points. Keep track of your score. Write it down if you have to. We’re going to do this 3 more times.
- (have them choose higher or lower and draw a number 3 more times)
- Now, for this fifth time, the game changes a little bit. You can choose to not go a fifth time. If you DO choose to go a fifth time, the scoring changes a little bit. If you guess correctly, you DOUBLE the amount of points you have. If you guess INCORRECTLY, then you lose HALF of your current

points. So if you have 3000 points, and guess right, you end the game with 6000 points. If you guess incorrectly, you'd end up with 1500 points.

- Does everyone understand? Ok, those who are going a fifth time, raise your cards.
- Ok, I'm drawing the next number. It is. _____.
- Let's compare scores.
- Now that you're used to the game, want to try it again?

ASK

- For those of you who went on the 5th draw, why did you go for it?
- For those who didn't, why did you NOT go for it on the 5th draw?
- What you were doing in this game was assessing risk. In other areas of your life, how do you decide when to take a risk?
- How do you decide when to play it safe?

TELL

- We're going to read a parable that Jesus tells. In that parable there are behaviors of risk taking and behaviors of playing it safe. Listen to determine why the individuals in the story choose the way that they choose.

READ Matthew 25:14-30 (*International Reader Version*)

Jesus said, **14** "Again, here is what the kingdom of God will be like. A man was going on a journey. He sent for his servants and put them in charge of his property. **15** He gave \$10 million to one. He gave \$5 million to another. And he gave \$1 million to the third. The man gave each servant the amount of money he knew the servant could take care of. Then he went on his journey. **16** "The servant who had received the \$10 million went at once and put his money to work. He earned \$10 million more. **17** The one with the \$5 million earned \$5 million more. **18** But the man who had received \$1 million went and dug a hole in the ground. He hid his master's money in it. **19** "After a long time the master of those servants returned. He wanted to collect all the money they had earned. **20** The man who had received \$10 million brought the other \$10 million. 'Master,' he said, 'you trusted me with \$10 million. See, I have earned \$10 million more.' **21** "His master replied, 'You have done well, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things. I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' **22** "The man with \$5 million also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you trusted me with \$5 million. See, I have earned \$5 million more.' **23** "His master replied, 'You have done well, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things. I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' **24** "Then the man who had received \$1 million came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man. You harvest where you have not planted. You gather crops where you have not scattered seed. **25** So I was afraid. I went out and hid your \$1 million in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.' **26** "His master replied, 'You evil, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not planted? You knew that I gather crops where I have not scattered seed? **27** Well then, you should have put my money in the bank. When I returned, I would have received it back with interest.'

28 "Then his master commanded the other servants, 'Take the \$1 million from him. Give it to the one who has \$20 million. 29 Everyone who has will be given more. He will have more than enough. And what about anyone who doesn't have? Even what he has will be taken away from him. 30 Throw that worthless servant outside. There in the darkness, people will sob and grind their teeth.'

ASK

- Who do you think took risks? (This is up for debate. I think the only sure answer is: The master for trusting his servants. The first two servants took risks if they believed the master to be like the third servant believed him to be. The third servant takes a risk if you believe that the master expected profit. Though the story only says that the master was putting them in charge of the property, not expecting profit).
- Why?
- Who do you think played it safe? (Again, up for debate. I would say the third servant played it safe by doing as little as possible. Putting the money to work isn't a very safe thing to do. You could always lose it when using it. The third man, unless he forgot where he put it, or someone saw him and then stole it, put himself and the money in the least amount of risk).
- Why?
- Why do you think the first two servants choose to use the money? (Story doesn't say. Best guess is to go with the opposite of what the 3rd servant believes and use verse 14 as an insight into the master's frame of mind/motivation – he trusted his servants with the money in the first place. Because the master trusted the servants first, they trusted themselves to act as they thought was best).
- Why do you think the third servant didn't use the money? (verses 24 & 25).
- What is the consequence for being afraid? (The third servant lost what he had because he was afraid to use it. This is the ol' "use it or lose it" lesson).

TELL

- We're going to watch a movie clip from the movie, "Terminal" that has a little bit different ending than the parable does because the motivations of the master are a little bit different.
- Look to identify who is in charge (that'd be the equivalent of the master) and who is taking orders (that'd be the servant)
- Then look to see who is afraid and the reason why they are afraid.

WATCH Terminal Clip

Overview: The Tom Hanks character is stuck in the airport – he can't go outside the airport due to a technicality with his passport. The airport manager wants him gone and in this scene is trying to get the Tom Hanks character to leave the airport, which would then make the Tom Hanks character someone else's problem.

ASK

- So who was in charge? (the bald guy)
- What did he (the bald guy) want to have happen? (for Victor to leave)
- Why didn't Victor leave? (He heard the camera move, realized he was being watched and got suspicious).

- What were Victor's last words in the scene? (I wait).
- So who was taking a risk and who was playing it safe? (Bald guy was taking a risk and got caught. Victor was going to take a risk but decided to play it safe when he heard the camera moving).

TELL

- So in this movie clip, Victor stays put, plays it safe, for the same reason that the third servant buried his money: They didn't trust the person in charge.
- In both stories, the lack of trust is contagious. The master stops trusting the servant. Victor stops trusting the bald guy.
- This lack of trust then leads to not much of anything happening: Victor doesn't leave and the third servant doesn't make or lose any money. *Distrust breeds inaction.*
- One of the points of the parable is to help show how our thoughts about God (do we trust or distrust God?) determines how we act in life.

ASK

- Can you think of situations in your life where you are not feeling very trusting?
- When you feel that way, what do you do?
- The first two servants use their money because it seems they are not afraid of the master. If you are not afraid of God, but trust God, how do you think that might help you in every day life?
- If you could remember that no matter what you do, you still belong to God, would that make some things seem less risky/scary/untrustworthy? Why/Why not?

If there's time...

TELL/Journal

- Take a piece of paper and write down some of the situations that you often or sometimes find yourself in where you feel afraid. What is it about that situation that makes you afraid? What are you not trusting? How do you act when afraid?
- Now, think about and write down some of what God has entrusted you with. What do you think God has given you to use, to share, to explore with? (Hints: Life, a body, an abundance of experiences, your mind, your 5 senses, time, etc). How do you use what you have been given? Do you want to use what you have been given better? If yes, practice asking God to help you know how to better use what God has given you.

CLOSING PRAYER