

## Middle/High School Sunday School Lessons by

**rfour.org**

**Year 4: Session 5** – Parables: The Big 3

**Class 14: Matthew 25:14-30** – Parable Of The Talents

### CONCEPTS that will be covered in the lesson

- Read the parable of the Talents
- Highlight / discuss how the assessment of risk affects our decisions
- Highlight / discuss the perspectives of the boss and how that affected actions / choices

### Materials needed:

1. Movie clip (available on rfour.org) from the movie, *Terminal*
2. Electronics that show the video clip
3. For activity of “Cardsharks”:
  - Three notecards for each student
  - Writing utensil for each student
  - A regular deck (52) of playing cards
  - A way to display a row of 7 playing cards (face up) to the class (taping the cards to the wall or a whiteboard for example)
  - (online example of how to play the game: <http://www.freewebarcade.com/game/card-sharks/>)

## THE LESSON

### OPENING PRAYER

### OPENING QUESTION

- One of the things we do every class is ask and answer the opening question at the beginning of class – because it helps us 1. Learn more about each other and 2. Helps “warm us up” for some of the ideas in the upcoming lesson. So we’re going to do that now.
- So here’s the opening question for today’s class. I [the teacher] will ask the question and then to give you some time to think of an answer, I will answer first.
- Once I answer the question, we’ll go around the circle and each of us will answer.
- When it’s your turn, start with your name and then answer the question to the best of your ability.
- *Here’s this week’s question:* What is something that motivates you (gets you to do something)?

### TRANSITION TO VIDEO CLIP

- Last week, we began a new session about the most well-known parables that Jesus told.
- We talked about how parables are short stories that Jesus shared with the crowds of people that surrounded him.
- In fact, parables were the main way Jesus spoke to the crowds of people.
- The parables were an invitation from Jesus to the listener to think about God, each other, themselves and the Kingdom of God in a new and/or better way without having an argument
- This week, we're going to read the Parable of the Talents
- In it, we'll see how one person's understanding of another person affects the choices that person makes.
- To help us get started, then, let's watch this movie clip from the movie "Terminal."
- In it, the Tom Hanks character is a foreigner who is stuck in the international wing of an airport – he can't go outside that section of the airport OR get on a plane back to his country due to a technicality with his passport.
- He's stuck in what we sometimes refer to as "no man's land."
- The airport manager wants him gone and in this scene is trying to get the Tom Hanks character to leave that section of the airport, which would then make the Tom Hanks character someone else's problem.
- Let's see what happens

## WATCH VIDEO CLIP

### ASK

- So who was in charge? (the bald guy)
- What did he (the bald guy) want to have happen? (for Victor to leave)
- What did the bald guy do to encourage Victor to leave? (told the cops to leave early)
- Why do you think Victor was slow to leave at first? (he's a cautious character – we learn that throughout the movie, but you can see it in this part of the movie too)
- Eventually, why didn't Victor leave? (He heard the camera move, realized he was being watched and got suspicious).
- Why was the camera moving so much? (because the bald man wanted to watch every single move that Victor made)
- What were Victor's last words in the scene? (I wait).
- So who distrusted who the most, do you think?

### TELL / TRANSITION to Scripture Story

- In our previous class, we read the story of the Prodigal Son
- Do you remember what prodigal means? (wasteful)
- And we talked about how the story highlights a large number of warm characteristics of God.
- That God is generous, fair, welcoming, celebrative, forgiving, patient, and loving.
- We also talked about how both the sons were focused on things other than their relationship with their parent and thus made decisions and had understandings that were not influenced by all these good and warm characteristics of their parent.
- So in today's parable, we'll see that idea and theme continue
- We'll see three different workers and how they respond to their boss
- And before we read it, it's important to note that a "talent" is a measure of money that is equal to a lifetime's amount of income. So, in today's terms – average median income is 53k, let's round it up to 60k and let's say a person works for 40 years – that gives us 2.4 million for a lifetime. Let's round up and call a talent \$3 million.
- Let's see what happens

## **READ Matthew 25:14-30** (*recommend class reads it out loud; one person per verse*)

14“For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; 15to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. 16The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. 17In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. 18But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money. 19After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. 20Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, ‘Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.’ 21His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’ 22And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, ‘Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more

talents.’ 23His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’ 24Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, ‘Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; 25so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.’ 26But his master replied, ‘You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? 27Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. 28So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. 29For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. 30As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

## **ASK**

- In verse 15, what does the master give to each of his slaves/servants? (a whole lotta money)
- Also verse 15, If you compare between the servants, it’s easy to think that just one talent wasn’t much to entrust to the third servant, but if the other two servants weren’t there, and you ONLY think about the one talent, do you think being entrusted with \$3 million is a big deal?
- Verse 14, why is the master handing out such large sums of money? (because the master is going on a journey)
- Verse 16 and 17, what do the first two servants do? (use the money and make more with it)
- Verse 18, what does the third servant do? (buries the money)
- What does the master say to the two servants who doubled what they were given? (‘Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’)
- What do you think about that line, “a few things” – does 15 or 6 million dollars seem like a “few things” to you?
- Verse 24 and 25 – why does the third servant say he buried the talent? (because the master is a thief and harsh and therefore the third servant was afraid of what would happen if he messed up)
- Verse 26 and 27 – what does the master say the servant should’ve done at least? (played it safe and put it in a bank to make interest)
- Verse 28 and 30 – what happens to the third servant? (He loses his talent and thrown into outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth)
- Do you think this is a fair result for the third servant? Why?  
Verse 29 – How do you understand that line? Does it make much sense to you?

## **TELL**

- Before we do anything – I strongly urge to you consider this story as a story about life, not a story about the afterlife.

- The people Jesus was talking to did not have overly developed pictures or theologies of the afterlife – you were just dead and then some Israelites believed that there was a resurrection for everyone and some believed you just stayed dead.
- With that in mind, it's very very likely that Jesus is talking about what happens right here, right now, when we're alive.
- Second, let's just pause for a minute and note that the word usage of talent is pretty ingenious for us English speakers because yes, it could mean a lifetime's worth of money, but it could also mean a lifetime's worth of gifts that we can develop into skills, like the ability to draw, do math, draw, design, speak, write, play music, etc.
- Third, we see that the third servant doesn't use his talent due to how he thinks about the master. He thinks the master is harsh and a thief.
- But what do you think? Would a mean thief entrust you with a lifetime's worth of gifts?
- And, if the master were so harsh, why were the other servants not afraid?
- Regardless of these reasons, this misunderstanding that the third servant has of the master causes the servant to be fearful and distrustful of his master
- Due to that fear and distrust, the third servant acts in ways that are NOT beneficial to himself or to the master.
- For our opening question, if this servant was being super honest, he would say that "fear" is what motivates him to do (or in this case NOT do) something
- And that motivation caused him to not use what he had – which he then lost. Also known as "Use it or lose it." And he lost it.
- That's just how things work, right? Think of muscle development, for example: If we completely stopped walking, then we'd lose our leg muscles and would eventually stop being *able* to walk
- And this is what verse 29 is trying to say. For the people who used what they were given, they then received more.
- But for those who did not use what they were given, they lost what they had.
- And, if you think about it, the person who was given one talent but didn't ever use it – that servant actually acted like he had nothing.

## TRANSITION to ACTIVITY

- It is risky to use something, because when you do use something, you *might* lose it, right?
- For instance, if you play catch outside, it's possible that ball might go somewhere where you can't get it back.
- And, the more likely you think it is that you'll lose the thing by using it (ie the riskier you think something is), the more likely you are to NOT use or do the thing
- To help us think about how risk informs our decision-making, let's do the following activity based on tv game show from the 80s called "Card Sharks"

## EXPLAIN ACTIVITY

- The point of the game is to end up with the highest total of points.
- I'm giving you each three blank notecards. Take a pencil or pen and on one card draw an up arrow and write "Higher," on the other next card draw a down arrow and write "lower" and on the third card make a dash and write "Stay"
- While you do that, I'm going to shuffle this deck of cards and draw a card.
- Once I draw the first card, you then have to guess if the NEXT card will be higher or lower than the card that is showing

- You'll tell me your choice by holding up one of the up, down or stay cards that you just drew
- Don't SAY your choice and don't tell anyone else – but I'll count to three and then you all show me your choice by holding it up
- The ace will count as one – every number card will count as its number and then jack will count as 11, the queen will count as 12 and the king will count as 13.
- The suit of the card does not matter
- If the next card is the same amount, another card will be drawn in its place
- If the card is higher and you picked higher, then you receive 500 points
- If the card is lower and you picked lower, then you receive 500 points
- If you chose wrong, you lose 500 points
- If you chose to stay, then you don't win OR lose points
- Each of you will start with 5,000 points.
- A round consists of 7 cards being drawn (not counting ties)
- You win the round by having the most points
- Any questions?
- Let's play

## **DO one or two rounds of ACTIVITY**

### **TELL**

- For the next round, we're going to do something a little bit different
- The person who is drawing the cards (one of the teachers) will look at the card and then tell you if you should bid UP or DOWN.
- The person telling you MIGHT be lying or might NOT be lying
- You'll have to decide if you trust him/her and make your choices accordingly

*Note:* To the person who is flipping the cards, it is best if you tell the truth the whole way through the round, but make devious faces from time to time and laugh during inappropriate moments to give them pause about trusting you.

## **DO the last round of ACTIVITY**

### **ASK**

- So – did you do better in the rounds where the the dealer told you or didn't tell you what the card was beforehand?
- Did you find it difficult to trust the dealer?
- Why?

### **TELL**

- Hopefully this exercise helps us to think about how it can be difficult to trust someone even when they don't give you any REAL reasons for you to distrust them
- Which is why Jesus tells these stories that are meant to remind us that God has many, many *trustworthy* characteristics.

- And, should we choose to trust God, then the outcome of what we're trusting God with will be for the better.

## **CLOSING PRAYER**