

A Good Shepherd Parable

The Talents

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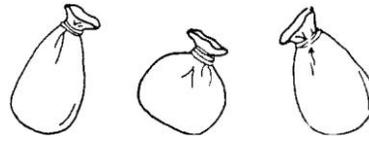
THE TALENTS MA TERIALS

- parable box containing:
 - gray felt circle underlay
 - brown felt piece
 - laminated master figure
 - 3 laminated servant figures
 - an envelope containing:
 - 15 laminated money pouches



Master

Money Pouches



Servants

THE TALENTS MATTHEW 25:14-30

ACTIONS

After speaking, walk slowly to the shelf and pick up the parable box with two hands. Return to your place in the circle and sit down.

After speaking, sit in silence as you gently trace the outline of the parable box with your finger and gather your words for the story.

Rest your hands lightly on the box, touching it reverently.

Slowly shake your head and smile.

Nod your head confidently.

Raise your eyebrows and shake your head.

Lift the lid just slightly.

Emphasize the words "amazing" and "wonderful" .

Shake your head as you speak.

WORDS

Watch carefully where I go to get this story so you will know where to find it if you choose to make this your work today or another day.

All of the words to this story are inside of me. Will you make silence with me, please, so I can find all of the words to this story?

This is a parable box. I wonder if there is really a parable inside this box?

You see parables are very precious.

This box looks a bit like a gift.

Parables are like gifts. We can't go buy one, or even rent one, like we do a movie. Parables already belong to us.

And like gifts, we don't always know what's inside by looking at the box.

We have to take the lid off. If we take the lid off our box, maybe we will discover a parable.

Once there was a man who said amazing things and did wonderful things. The man often talked of the kingdom of God.

The people who heard the man didn't know where the kingdom of God was or what it was like because they didn't know anyone who had ever been there.

Take the lid off the parable box. Remove the gray felt underlay. Carefully unfold and smooth it in front of you.

Place the master at left center on the underlay. Remove eight money pouches from the envelope and place them to the right of the master.

Place the three servants in a vertical semi-circle to the right and facing the master.

Touch each servant briefly.

Move five of the money pouches to the right of the servant at the top of the semi-circle.

Move two of the money pouches to the right of the servant at the center of the semi-circle.

Move one of the money pouches to the right of the servant at the bottom of the semi-circle.

Place the master back in the parable box.

Remove five money pouches from the envelope and place them to the right of the money pouches near the first servant.

Remove two money pouches from the envelope and place them to the right of the money pouches near the second servant.

Move the third servant and his money pouch a little to the right and "dig" an imaginary hole in the felt. Place the money pouch in "the hole" and cover it with the brown piece of felt.

Place the master back at left center on the underlay.

When they asked the man what the kingdom of God was like, he told them this parable:

The kingdom will be like when a man was going to go on a long trip.

He called all his servants to him and gave them his property.

He gave each servant the amount he thought they could handle.

To one servant he gave five talents.

To the second servant he gave two talents.

And to the third servant he gave one talent.

The one with five talents used the money to make more money. Then he had five more talents.

The servant with two talents did the same thing. Then he had two more talents.

But the servant with one talent dug a hole and buried the talent in the ground.

After a long time the master returned.

Move the first servant and the ten money pouches left, near the master.

Touch the servant briefly as you speak.

Move the second servant and the four money pouches left, near the master.

Touch the servant briefly as you speak.

Move the third servant left, near the master.

Move the brown felt piece to the parable box and move the money pouch from the "hole" to the right of the third servant.

Speak very softly and intensely.

Move the money pouch from the third servant to the right of all the money pouches near the first servant.

Touch the first servant and then the third servant.

Move the third servant far away from the master to the right side of the underlay.

The servant who earned five talents came and showed his master.

The master said, "Well done, good and faithful servant. Since you did so well with a little bit, I will give you more. Come and be with me in joy."

The servant who earned two more talents then came and showed his master.

Again the master said, "Well done, good and faithful servant. Since you did so well with a little bit, I will give you more. Come and be with me in joy. "

Then the servant who had hidden the one talent came to the master and said, "I know you are a hard man. I know you are not always fair and I was afraid of you. "

"So I went and hid the talent in the ground. Here you may have back what is yours. "

But the master became very angry with him and said, "You careless, lazy servant. If you were afraid of me, then, you should have at least put the money in the bank where it could earn more money. "

"So take the talent from this servant and give it to the one with ten. "

"For those who have much, they will get more; but those who have little, they will have even that taken away."

"And put the servant far away from me."

WONDERING QUESTIONS:

I wonder if the first two servants were afraid of losing the money they had?

I wonder what it means to be "good and faithful"?

I wonder what **it's** like to be close to someone in joy?

I wonder what I have that I can make grow?

Return the money pouches to their envelope. Place the envelope, the laminated pieces and the brown felt piece in the parable box.

Take one side of the circle underlay and fold it over against the opposite side. Smooth the straight line.

Take the top of the circle and lay it against the part nearest you. Smooth the straight line.

Repeat the top to bottom fold and the side to side fold and place it in the box.

After speaking, stand and carry the parable box to its shelf. Then return to the circle and sit down.

Be certain each child has had the opportunity to choose their work before dismissing them all together.

Watch carefully how I put these materials away so you will know how to handle them if you choose to make this story your work today or another day.

Circles can be very hard to fold. Just start anywhere and touch that piece to the other side. Then you have a straight line.

Next, take the top and put it by the bottom. There, now we have another straight line.

We need to touch the top to the bottom and the side to the side. Now it will fit in our box.

Watch carefully where I return this story so you will know where to find it if you choose to make this your work today or another day.

I wonder what you will make your work today? Let's go around the circle and choose what each of us will do.

THE TALENTS .•. TEACHER HELPS

Although this is a parable of judgment, it can be taught with more than one approach or thrust. While one of the lessons the parable teaches is that we will be judged for not taking a chance at living with all the possibilities God's creation represents, I would like to make a case for another emphasis. That emphasis can be the faithful use of what we've been given. This deals not only with our financial and material possessions, but the gifts of our time and skills. If you are particularly gifted in working with senior citizens, God expects that you will multiply that talent by using it. God does not wish for us to bury that talent somewhere so it will still be intact later on.

It is this second emphasis around which I would like to form the lesson. Notice that not everyone receives the same amount of responsibility or talents. The master gave the talents, the story says, "according to their ability". This is an understanding the children will need to grow into. They will only see that the servants were not given equal amounts and it may be upsetting to them that "things aren't fair!" Everything can't be equal, except our attempt to respond. Our efforts should be the best that we can muster. When they are, our talents are multiplied.

The term "talent" in the New Testament, means around one thousand dollars, or more than fifteen years wages for a laborer. The master left each of the servants with a great responsibility.

Let's consider the servants. Obviously, the third servant had a different relationship with the master than did the first two servants. We have no words from the first two servants about the master being harsh or about them fearing his response to their efforts.

The part of the story that implies no one knowing when the master will return is very important in our understanding of this parable's meaning for the people of the New Testament. Remember that Jesus had promised to return to this world. But no one knew when that would be. So until he came back, the followers of Jesus were to be faithful with what they had given, always prepared for the return of their master.

The first wondering question considers if the first two servants were concerned about losing the money they'd been given. I wonder. They seem to enter into their ventures with a great deal of enthusiasm, but we're never told about their feelings.

The second question wonders what it means to be "good and faithful". In a child's mind "good" is usually defined as doing things right and being kind or not being bad nor hurting other people. Young children find the word "faithful" difficult. Allow them to play with the word and give you their definitions and understandings of it. That is the only way they will understand how they, themselves, view being faithful.

The third question wonders what it's like to be close to someone in joy. You may wish to encourage the children to tell you about a time they were with a friend who was really happy about something that had just happened. The parable tells us that if we are faithful with what we've been given, we will enter into the most joyous relationship possible with God.

Finally, we consider with the children what we have that we can make grow. They will tell you of their gifts in sports, school and music. Encourage those responses. Remind them that when they do what they know how to do to the best of their ability, be it picking up their room or swimming on a swim team, they are being "good and faithful" servants of their gifts.

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR OLDER CHILDREN:

Why was the man who buried his talent given such a hard time? What did he do that was so bad?

How did the servant with one talent feel about the master? How do you think the master felt about that servant?

Share with the group what you see to be your greatest talent or gift. Then, have other people share what they see to be your greatest talent or gift. How are they the same? How do they differ? What can you do to make those talents grow? (Teachers: To help the children feel more comfortable sharing with each other, you may want to divide a large group of children into smaller groups.)