

The purpose of each of the Lifespan series is to point the participants to the beauty, wonder, wisdom and grace of Jesus Christ. These studies are designed to be discussion-rich quests into some of the most profound words ever written. Professors, instructors, post docs, and/or graduate students may be surprised to discover that the Bible has a lot to say about their world as academics. Both Christian and non-Christian professors will find that there is much to wrestle with in these Bible studies.

Many book studies turn into arguments about the author's views. This study will be different. In this study, passages of the Bible are the focus and the study itself is more of a tour guide, providing background information and questions that open up the meaning of the passage for the participants to extract for themselves.

There are four of these Lifespan Bible studies for professors. Each one has six lessons each. The following will give you a glimpse into each study:

1. Parables for Professors is designed to explore Jesus' unique perspective of life and godliness. Since many of Jesus' parables were given while interacting with the Pharisees, who were the intellectual leaders of the day, it is not a far stretch to say that these very same parables have more than passing relevance to the intellectual leaders of our day – university professors.
2. Psalms for Professors looks at six of the Psalms that explore vastly different ways that professors experience God. Academicians tend to focus on things of the mind, but the Psalms help us to integrate the heart with the mind. It is amazing how these Psalms reveal Christ to be the apex of our experience.
3. 1st Peter for Professors is oriented towards Christian professors who may experience a sense of isolation in the university because of their faith in Christ. 1st Peter was written to a people who had been persecuted and scattered and was low on hope. This study shows how looking at difficulty from an eternal perspective can change one from being downcast to being joyful.
4. Proverbs for Professors looks at significant themes in the book of Proverbs and what they have to say about the world of the professors. These themes examine the professor's heart, tongue, attitudes, fears, friends, and intellect.

This is meant to be a participatory study with lots of interaction, with the scriptures alone serving as the authority. The value of this study will be in direct proportion to the willingness of the group to extract and share with one another truth derived *from the text itself*.

With that in mind, the following notes may be helpful:

1. Each of the six lessons follows the same format: Launch, Explore, Apply.
 - 👉 **Launch** is meant to create interest in the topic of the text. The discussion should be robust before leaving the "Launch"
 - 👉 **Explore** is designed to get the meat out of the text. Don't let participants glibly give their opinions. Make them wrestle with what the text is actually saying.
 - 👉 **Apply** will give opportunities to personalize the lessons of the study.
2. The vital part of each lesson comes at the end of the Explore section when the group is asked to discover the **Big Idea** of the passage. If the group will wrestle with that before sneaking a peek at the conclusion, the study will be far richer because of it.

3. Preparation prior to the group study is encouraged, but not necessary.
4. The scripture passage for each lesson is embedded in the lesson. There should be no need for participants to bring their Bible with them to the study unless they want to so.
5. Background information is given in the plain text and should be read out loud by someone in the group. *Discussion questions are given in italics. Time should be taken to allow each question to be answered adequately.* Each person is encouraged to write down his/her answer for future reflection.
6. Even allowing for extensive discussion on several of the questions, each lesson should be adequately covered in 50 minutes.
7. After the first or second lesson, the facilitator should give others a chance to lead some of the lessons.

The biggest benefit to this study will be in discovering and discussing what the passage has to say to us. For each question, keep going back to the text and look at it as if for the first time.

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"So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom." Psalm 90:12 | www.cruprof.com

**LAUNCH**

Suppose that your university did not expect you as a professor to pay fines on overdue books from your university library. Suppose also you had scores of overdue books in your office. Quite a few volumes had been overdue for over a year. You estimate that if you were required to pay fines, you would have over \$10,000 in fines from overdue books in your office. But, thankfully, you aren't required to pay.

If the library declared a "Forgiveness Day", when all fines are waived on books that are turned in on a certain day, would you search your office thoroughly for the overdue books and turn them in on that day? Why or why not?

Now suppose that your university did expect professors to pay fines for overdue books and you had those books that represented \$10,000 of fines in your office. *Would you then be motivated to search thoroughly and turn your overdue books in on "Forgiveness Day?" Why or why not?*

What is the relationship between our sense of indebtedness and our appreciation for forgiveness?

Who would be more excited about "Forgiveness Day," the professor who had \$2.50 in fines or the one who had \$10,000 in fines?

Today we are going to examine a passage about two people who had different views on their need for forgiveness and the effect that their respective views had on their relationship with God.

**EXPLORE****Survey the Big Picture:**

Jesus was in the early part of his ministry when this parable was given. However, he had already had several public confrontations with the Pharisees – the religious and intellectual leaders of that society. The Pharisees were considered very righteous by the people of that day because they were fastidious about observing the religious rules that had been passed down from their traditions and the first five books of the Old Testament. Jesus, on the other hand, was more concerned about the inner man than the outer actions.

The Passage: Read Luke 7:36-50 (ESV)

³⁶One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table. ³⁷And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, ³⁸and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. ³⁹Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner." ⁴⁰And Jesus answering said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And

he answered, "Say it, Teacher." ⁴¹"A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴²When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" ⁴³Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly." ⁴⁴Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. ⁴⁶You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. ⁴⁷Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven--for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little." ⁴⁸And he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." ⁴⁹Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?" ⁵⁰And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

In verses 36-40

Have you ever been in an innocuous family or social occasion (or departmental meeting) when, seemingly out of nowhere, a tension began to develop? Briefly tell what happened and how you felt.

In that day, dinner guests commonly reclined around a table which was low to the floor. The alabaster perfume would have been worth about a year's wages.

Though the text doesn't say, why do you think the woman was crying and anointing Jesus with perfume?

What do the thoughts of the Pharisee in verse 39 reveal about him?

Verses 41-43

A denarius was equal to a day's wages. Failure to pay debts sometimes resulted in imprisonment until the debt was paid.

Who does the moneylender represent in this parable?

Who do the two debtors represent?

Why would the one who was forgiven more be the one who loved more?

Verses 44-47

In what ways is it evident that the woman loved Jesus more than Simon did?

Looking at it from Jesus' perspective, do you think the woman was more sinful than Simon, or just more willing to recognize her sin than Simon was?

Put verse 47 in your own words.

Verses 48-50

What were the results of this encounter with Jesus...

1) for Simon?

2) for the woman?

Discover the Big Idea:

What did Luke want to make sure that the readers of his Gospel understood from this passage?

What is the big idea from this passage?

The consequence of self-righteousness on our relationship with God is that we become little lovers; the consequence of humbly acknowledging our sin and unworthiness is extreme love for God, forgiveness, and peace.



With whom do you identify most, the woman or Simon?

What does self-righteousness look like in your life? What sins in your life do you ignore while priding yourself on not being sinful like others?

What is the cost of not acknowledging our own sinfulness? How does it affect the intensity of our love for God? Why would seeking God's forgiveness cause us to love Him more?

It's Forgiveness Day. Would you rather bring a box-load of sins to God and experience His Grace and Mercy or would you rather assume that there is no indebtedness and experience little forgiveness and little love?



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**LAUNCH**

Do you know a professor who has paid an enormous cost (health, family, hardship or financially) to pursue his/her academic career? Briefly share about it if you can do so without betraying confidences.

*Have you ever known someone who sold **everything** he/she owned to obtain something they wanted more than anything else? If so, briefly describe what happened.*

Why do you think more people don't sell all the things that they don't value as much for the one thing they value most?

In the parables we are going to look at today, two men sold everything for the one thing they wanted most.

**EXPLORE****Survey the Big Picture:**

There is a turning point in Jesus' ministry in Matthew 12 after a confrontation in which the Pharisees accuse Him of being of the devil. He begins to speak to the crowds in parables, only revealing the meaning of these parables to His disciples. His objective is to explain to them what the kingdom of heaven is like. The kingdom of heaven began with Christ's appearance (Matthew 4:17; 12:28) and will continue until He comes again to establish a new heaven and new earth. Many of His parables in this section of Matthew begin with "The kingdom of heaven is like" He uses something that they are familiar with to explain something that they don't yet understand. Biblical scholars have defined the kingdom of heaven as "God's people in God's place under God's rule and blessing." (Goldsworthy)

The Passage: Read Matthew 13:44-46 (ESV)

⁴⁴"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. ⁴⁵"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, ⁴⁶who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

Matthew 13:44 The Parable of the Treasure in the Field

In the time before banks, safes, and vaults, it was not uncommon for people to hide their valuable possessions in their fields. It was also not uncommon for people to forget where their treasure was buried or to die before revealing where they had put their treasure. Thus, the possibility of finding buried treasure was not far-fetched.

What would you do if you found millions of dollars worth of gold buried in a field?

What emotions would this person have experienced upon finding the treasure, burying it, selling all that he owed, and buying the field?

Matthew 13:45-46 The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price

In what ways is this parable similar to the previous one?

In what ways is it different?

These are parables about two men who went to extremes to get something they valued above anything else. The older we get, the more difficult it is to have zeal and go to extremes. *Is that true of you, and if so, how does that affect your relationship with God and your pursuit of His kingdom?*

What does it say about your understanding of the kingdom of heaven if you haven't sold out everything in order to pursue it?

Discover the Big Idea:

What do these parables tell us about the kingdom of heaven?

There may be a double entendre in these twin parables.

Most people think that the protagonists (the purchaser of the field and the merchant) in these parables refer to “believers” who discover the kingdom of heaven. And if that is the case, the big idea would be: The person who finds the kingdom of heaven will zealously pursue it, holding nothing back.

How does it change the big idea if the protagonists in the two parables represent God?

In what ways do the two possible meanings of these parables work together?



In what ways do our emotions indicate to us what is most valuable in our lives? What is it that you get emotional about?

Have you ever felt like your academic career was your pearl of great price? If that were so, what would be the consequences?

If the protagonist in this parable is God and the treasure is you, what does that tell you about how God views you?

What are the implications if God truly treasures us this much?



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**LAUNCH**

Have you ever been tempted to hide something about your family, yourself, or your background from another person? If it is not too personal to share with the present company, briefly describe what the situation was.

What are some reasons that people are tempted to keep things hidden from others?

**EXPLORE****Survey the Big Picture:**

This parable occurs during the third major section of Luke's Gospel (Bock 1995:85) while Jesus is traveling through Galilee (Luke 4:14-9:50). This section is replete with miracles, revealing the power of Christ and His authority. However there is an underlying tension with the Pharisees, hence Jesus' effort in this parable and the proceeding one to convey what a true believer is and does.

The Passage: Read Luke 8:16-18 (ESV)

¹⁶“No one after lighting a lamp covers it with a jar or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a stand, so that those who enter may see the light. ¹⁷For nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest, nor is anything secret that will not be known and come to light. ¹⁸Take care then how you hear, for to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away.”

Immediately prior to this parable, Jesus gave the parable of the four soils, concluding with “But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.” *Describe what a Christian professor would be like were she/he a “seed in the good soil.”*

Describe, in general, where the lights are in your house. Why are they placed in those locations?

What/Who does the lamp represent in this passage? If you are not sure, cross reference with Matthew 5:14-16; John 8:12; 12:46. See these verses below:

¹⁴“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” Matthew 5:14-16 (ESV)

¹²Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” John 8:12 (ESV)

⁴⁶“I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.” John 12:46 (ESV)

In Luke 8:16b, where does Jesus say the lamp should be placed, and why should it be placed there?

What will happen if you as a professor try to conceal the light that is in you? Verse 17

How do you interpret verse 18?

Who is the one “who has”?

What does the “more” refer to?

Who is the one “who does not have”?

What does it mean when it says that “even what he thinks he has shall be taken away from him.”?

Discover the Big Idea:

What is the Big Idea from this parable?

We need to lift up Christ in our lives so that all around us will see Him and not remain in darkness.



How do you put your light on a lampstand as a Christian professor at a secular university?

What are the pressures and forces that make you want to hide your faith in Christ?

How would you describe someone who is trying to hide something when everyone already knows about it?

As a Christian professor, what are the consequences of hiding your lamp?

Verse 18 begins: “So take care how you listen.” *Take a few minutes to read over this parable and listen to what God is saying to you about it.*



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**LAUNCH**

What retirement goals does the world tell us that we should have?

Which of the following retirement goals are biblical? Check the True or False box by each statement.

1. I should leave a nest egg for my children. True False
2. I should be liberal in giving my money to others and let God provide for my retirement needs. True False
3. I should have enough money saved to provide for my wife and me for as long as we may live. True False
4. I should have enough saved to purchase a vacation home. True False
5. I should not retire, but I should work for as long as I am physically able to do so. True False
6. As soon as I am financially able, I should retire from my job and go to the mission field. True False

Discuss the answers given above.

In the parable we will read today, Jesus takes issue with some of the world's values regarding wealth and retirement, and tells us what the values are for the kingdom of God.

**EXPLORE****Survey the Big Picture:**

Tension continues to build between Jesus and the religious leaders of that day. In Luke 11:53, the Pharisees are plotting to catch Jesus saying something which would condemn Him. But Luke 12:1 tells us that thousands of people are crawling all over each other to get where they can hear Jesus. In this atmosphere, someone, whether planted by the Pharisees or not, shouts out to Jesus – asking him to intervene in a family matter regarding an inheritance. In the Jewish culture of this time, being rich was considered to be a sign of God's blessing.

The Passage: Read Luke 12:13-34 (ESV)

¹³Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." ¹⁴But he said to him, "Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?" ¹⁵And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." ¹⁶And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man produced plentifully, ¹⁷and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' ¹⁸And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.' ²⁰But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' ²¹So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."

²²And he said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on. ²³For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. ²⁴Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! ²⁵And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁶If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that,

why are you anxious about the rest? ²⁷Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ²⁸But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! ²⁹And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. ³⁰For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them. ³¹Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you. ³²“Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. ³³Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. ³⁴For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Verses 13-15

Have you ever had a student ask you to intervene in a personal matter? What happened and what was your response? If you had two siblings in your class, and one asked you to tell the other to divide the family inheritance, what do you think you would do?

What did Jesus discern to be the root of the problem?

What was Jesus’ advice concerning covetousness?

How much covetousness is allowable?

According to Jesus, what is the relationship between a person’s life and her/his possessions? What does verse 15b mean?

How did Jesus’ own life illustrate his words?

Verses 16-21

In keeping with His pattern of speaking in parables and explaining them only to his disciples, this is a story that Jesus told the whole crowd to explain what he meant in the previous verses.

Who did the rich man use for a sounding board?

How many times did the rich man say “I” in this parable?

What does God call the rich man? Why is the rich man a fool?

How does this parable tie into Jesus’ warning about covetousness?

What does it mean to be rich toward God?

Verses 22-34

This is Jesus' explanation to the disciples (22a) of the previous parable.

What are things that these verses tell us not to worry about?

According to this passage, why should we not worry about these things?

What attributes of God must be true if one was to live this way without worrying?

Discover the Big Idea:

What is the big idea of this passage? What did Jesus want the disciples to learn from this parable and passage?

Coveting kills the life of our soul. Richness toward God yields true life.



What does coveting look like in your life?

How much "I" is in your retirement planning?

How would your relationship with Christ be affected if you were to give away all your possessions?

What does it mean in your life to be "rich toward God?"

Jesus gives a series of three personal applications in verses 31-33. *Which of these would be hardest for you?*

Go back to the true/false statements about retirement, and choose the one that you think best fits the message of this parable and passage.



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**LAUNCH**

What if one of your articles was turned down for publication in a respected academic journal, when another colleague who (in your view and in the view of others whom you respect) had a far inferior paper sent back for revision, review and publication? *How would that make you feel?*

Could you be truly happy for your colleague when you got the news of his getting published?

What would you be thinking about the journal's referees?

**EXPLORE****Survey the Big Picture:**

The parable of the prodigal son is the third of three parables that Jesus gave in response to criticism from religious leaders that He spent time with sinners. Each of the three parables follows the same pattern: something valuable was lost, it was found, and great rejoicing took place, with the main point being that there is great rejoicing in heaven when a sinner repents. But, this third parable brings a twist in the plot that is missing in the other parables.

The Passage: Read Luke 15:11-32 (ESV)

¹¹And he said, "There was a man who had two sons. ¹²And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them. ¹³Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. ¹⁴And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything. ¹⁷"But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! ¹⁸I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. ¹⁹I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants."²⁰And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. ²¹And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'²²But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. ²³And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. ²⁴For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate. ²⁵"Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. ²⁷And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.' ²⁸But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, ²⁹but he answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat,

that I might celebrate with my friends. ³⁰But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!’ ³¹And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³²It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.’”

Have you ever asked for something or been given something as a young person before you were either physically, emotionally, or financially able to handle it? What was the result?

What are some various ways we can respond when things hit rock bottom and our alternatives are not promising?

In what way was the son taking a risk by returning to his father? Did his father have reason to reject him?

Verses 20-24

In verse 20, what does the text say was the motivation for the father’s running out to meet his son?

Who does the father represent in this parable?

Who does the younger son represent?

What part of the son’s speech was cut off by his father? What does it tell us about God’s grace and mercy towards us that the last part of the son’s speech was cut off?

Look at the conclusions of the three parables in this series: Verses 6-7, 9-10, and 22-24. *In what ways do they correspond? In what ways do they differ?*

One way in which the three parables differ is that this is not the end of the third parable.

Verses 25-32

What was the basis for the older brother’s relationship with the father? Verse 29

Compare how the younger son described himself to the father (Verses 18-19) and how the older son described himself (Verses 29-30)? What do you think each son was hoping for from the father?

Who does the older brother represent in this parable in Jesus' time? Who would you say he represents in our day?

Discover the Big Idea:

What is the big idea of this passage?

Because of His compassion, God will always receive with mercy and grace those who come to Him as unworthy sinners. He rejoices when that which was dead comes to life.

Coming to God on the basis of our works/service to him will distort our view of God and ourselves by focusing on our perceived worthiness, and keep us from experiencing joy with our heavenly father and with others. When it comes to our relationship with God, we have the choice of sweet grace or sour grapes.



APPLY

Which son in this parable do you relate to the most? Why?

Do you tend to approach God on the basis of His grace and mercy or on the basis of your service to God?

How is your view of God and view of others distorted when you approach God with a self-righteous attitude?

What changes in your perspective are necessary in order to experience God's sweet grace?



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**LAUNCH**

Looking back over your life as a Christian, what was the most exciting/meaningful/abundant period for you?

What has been the most exciting/meaningful/abundant time for you since you have been a professor?

What were the reasons for that? What makes the Christian life exciting?

**EXPLORE****Survey the Big Picture:**

During the latter stages of his ministry, many of Jesus' parables were about persons going away and leaving their investments, vineyard, or kingdom in the care of trusted servants (Ogilvie 1979:296). As we know now, Jesus was preparing his disciples for his departure and eventual return. These parables should be very pertinent to us because we are living in the period between Jesus' first and second coming.

The Passage: Read Matthew 25:14-30 (ESV)

¹⁴“For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. ¹⁵To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. ¹⁶He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. ¹⁷So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. ¹⁸But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. ¹⁹Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.’ ²¹His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’ ²²And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me two talents; here I have made two talents more.’ ²³His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’ ²⁴He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, ²⁵so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.’ ²⁶But his master answered him, ‘You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? ²⁷Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. ²⁸So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. ²⁹For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. ³⁰And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

“For it will be like” – the “It” refers to the kingdom of heaven in verse 1.

It was not unusual for the prominent men of that society to be called to travel to Rome or provincial capitals for a period of time. They would entrust their responsibilities and businesses to their stewards while they were gone.

A talent was worth about 15 years of wages. Imagine if you received 15 years worth of wages to care for while your boss was away for several years. *Would you look forward to that responsibility or dread it? Why?*

According to the text, what determined which servant would receive five talents, which would receive two, and which would receive one?

Who does “the man” in this parable represent?

Who do the servants represent?

What “talents” were Jesus followers given when he departed and expected to multiply?

The English word “talent” is derived from the Greek word used in this text. It has come to mean natural endowments and special gifts. But be careful not to interpret the parable based on the evolved meaning of the word.

What was it that Jesus gave to us and expected us to multiply?

What did He give us that we will be accountable for when He returns?

What qualities did the servant of five talents and servant of two talents display?

*If you are going to seek to turn a major profit on someone else’s investment money, what do you have to be willing to do—
Take a ___ ___ ___ !*

What did the servant with one talent do with the master’s money? Why?

Verses 19-23

The master gave the exact same praise to one who had doubled the five talents and to the one who had doubled the two talents. *If both received the same praise, even though one brought more than twice the profit of the other, what was it that the master found praiseworthy?*

Did the servants ever receive any talents for themselves? What is the significance of that?

In what way did the servants “enter into the joy of the Master?”

In what way do people in the kingdom of heaven enter into the joy of the Master?

Verses 24-30

What are the reasons the man with one talent gave for not taking a risk on the investment which he was given?

What are reasons that Christians give today for not taking a risk with what God has entrusted to us?

What did the servant do that would be considered lazy? What did he do that would be wicked (verse 26).

What do verses 28-30 tell us about the kingdom of heaven?

Discover the Big Idea:

What is the big idea of this passage?

Jesus did not leave us in the earthly kingdom to maintain the status quo. We enter the joy of our Lord when we embrace the opportunities we are given to multiply the spread of the gospel which He has entrusted to us.

 **APPLY**

Which of the three servants do you relate to most? Why?

If Christ were to return today, would you be able to show Him an increase for what He has entrusted to you?

What might be some “risks” that you need to take to be able to enter into the joy of your Master when he returns?



“So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.” Psalm 90:12 | www.cruprof.com