CHARIS YOUTH

Series: Life Lessons From Jesus

Lesson 1: The Parable of the Talents

About This Lesson

This series of "Life Lessons from Jesus" is designed to show the young people that Jesus has relevant messages for their lives. The Parable of the Talents reminds the youth that God invested greatly in them through sending Jesus to pay for their sins. They can choose to accept, use His investment, and live abundantly, or not accept and someday face eternal punishment. This lesson points out the importance of avoiding a victim mentality, which is so prevalent today. The young people will be challenged to look at the gifts and talents God has given them and prepare now for the opportunities that God will bring.

Key Takeaway: God gives talents and opportunities to each person. God lets each person choose how they will respond to His investment in them, but He sets everyone up for success.

Key Verse: Matthew 25:29 *For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away.*

Teaching Outline:

I. THE ABUNDANT LIFE

A. Jesus wants you to have an abundant life! His plan for you is better than you can imagine!
John 10:10 *The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.*

B. This abundant life is found in the Word of God!
John 6:63 *It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.*

C. It is essential that you both HEAR and DO what Jesus has to say!

II. PARABLE OF THE TALENTS (MATTHEW 25:14-30)

A. The Parable of the Talents involves a man who left his three servants with varying sums of money while he went away. When the man returned, each servant accounted for what they did with the money entrusted to them. Matthew 25:29 *For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away.*

B. A talent in today's money might be about $400,000.

C. A talent could represent money, but could also represent opportunities.

D. Everyone will have opportunities in life. They will vary from person to person. Talents given to each according to his own ability, according to verse 15.

E. There will be an opportunity. Keep working. Be prepared! When your preparation meets an opportunity, you'll be ready for success.

F. When opportunity presents itself, seize that opportunity, don't fail to use it, be blind to it, or bitter about that opportunity.
   1. Give a personal example of an opportunity that you capitalized on because you had prepared by using your gifts so you were ready to succeed.

G. Good and faithful servants enter into the joy of the Lord, according to verse 23.
   1. "Good servant" means you do things with excellence. You are useful!
   2. We need to be both faithful and good, which means you are valuable and useful!

H. Faithfulness is very valuable! It is rare, so that makes it important.

III. DON'T ADOPT A VICTIM MENTALITY

A. The servant with one talent was called "wicked and lazy" and faced eternal consequences (verses 24–30). He chose to play the "victim card."

B. Three trademarks of a victim mentality are blame, pessimism, and fear.

1. Blame others: *"I knew you to be a hard-hearted man"* (verse 24).
   a. Some people blame God for their situation. They have the wrong image of God. God is not the author of evil! He is not stealing from or destroying anyone.

   b. God wants you to be victorious, successful, more than a conqueror, and have an abundant life!

   c. Blaming God and playing the victim card goes all the way back to Genesis!
   Genesis 3:12 *Then the man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate."*

   d. Adam said it was God's fault because God gave him this woman. God could say, "No, Adam. I gave you a talent, an opportunity, knowledge, understanding, wisdom, a relationship with me, access to my presence, and my favor! I gave you a good thing—a wife!"

   e. God is not your problem—He's your answer! Romans 8:31 reminds us that if God is for you, who can be against you?

2. Pessimism: *"You reap where you have not sown, and gathered where you have not scattered"* (verse 24).
   a. This was a lie because the master was a sower. He sowed 8 talents, about $3.2 million, into the hands of his three servants. Like any wise investor, he expected a return on his investment.

   b. God invested Jesus Christ, His biggest asset, in you and me!
   Isaiah 55:11 *So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.*

   c. Faith will cause you to be an optimist!

3. Fear: *"I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground"* (verse 25).

a. Fear is the number one reason people don't seize opportunities when they present themselves. Fear causes people to step back when they should be stepping forward in faith.

b. When you have faith, it will cause you to step out! Faith comes from knowing God! If you know God, you know that He loves you, cares about you, and protects you. Stepping out in faith can feel like walking out on a tightrope. Knowing that God loves you and no evil shall befall you forms a huge safety net right below you all the time.

c. Whenever the enemy tries to sow seeds of fear, you can sow seeds of faith! Keep believing and speaking the word because it will produce a harvest! You will get more understanding, more revelation, and go from glory to glory, from victory to victory!

Bottom Line:
Use what God has given you and watch His blessings multiply to you.

Small Group Time:

1. God isn't planning for your failure; He is planning for your success. You can partner with Him and use your God-given gifts to fulfill the purpose that He created you to do. God has given everyone gifts and talents, but it's up to you to recognize them and use them.

- What talents has God given you? Affirm each young person's response and add anything else that you notice which they might not consider a gift or talent, such as being an outgoing friend maker, empathetic, quick wit, able to converse with anyone, recognizing a need and helping, knowledgeable, compassionate, and encouraging.
- What will you do with the talents God has given you?

2. The servant who buried his talent resorted to blame, pessimism, and fear. None of these reflects God's plan for people. When you feel these victim trademarks, you can stop them by forgiving, moving forward, speaking words of life over yourself, and acting in faith.

- Which of these victim mentality trademarks have you used: blame, pessimism, or fear? Did it get the results you wanted?
- How do you avoid being a victim?

3. The Parable of the Talents teaches about investing in people you believe in.
    - Who is investing in you? (teachers, parents, grandparents, youth leaders)
    - How have you responded to God's investment of Jesus Christ to be in you and reconcile you to Him through salvation? Take time to pray for salvation with anyone who would like to pray.

Declaration:
"I am not a victim. I am a victor! My best days are ahead of me. Even at this moment—God is sending opportunities my way! I will be prepared to experience God's success plan for my life."

Youth Weekly Journal:

Handout, Email, or Download

- **Question:** What opportunity have you been given by God?
- **Pray:** Ask God to affirm the talents He has given you and commit to using them for His glory.
- **Read:** Compare the two accounts of the Parable of the Talents found in Matthew 25:14–30 and Luke 19:11–27. List out the similarities and differences, and write down new revelations that the Holy Spirit gives you.
- **Live It:** Choose not to compare your God-given giftings and talents with others, but instead, affirm and encourage your friends in their gifts and talents. Each day, make sure you point out one person's gift, such as a friend solved a math problem really quickly, or someone made an awesome play in a sports event.
- **Create:** Think of a way to motivate yourself to prepare to use your gifts and talents for God. You might want to create artwork, a song, a poem, or a photograph of yourself holding a sign, "I'm going to use the opportunity I am given."

EXTENDING THE LESSON

Icebreaker Question: If you could have any talent, what would you choose, and why?

Opening Activity Suggestion: Look online for clips of interviews or performances from talented people who were given an opportunity to perform and do something they've practiced and prepared for years to do. Or show some inspiring short clips of talented teens.

Opening Affirmation: "I love the Word of God because it speaks to me about my situation. I will understand Jesus' parables and apply them to my life."

Giving Time: Matthew 28:11–13 *Now while they were going, behold, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all the things that had happened. [12] When they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, [13] saying, "Tell them, 'His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept.'"*

After Jesus was resurrected, the soldiers were bribed as a way to stop the spread of the news that Jesus was alive, fulfilling what He had promised. The enemy doesn't want the Gospel message to spread, but we get the opportunity to give money for the Good News about Jesus to spread!

BEYOND – ADDITIONAL APPLICATION FOR CHURCH OR HOME

Challenge: This week's challenge is for the young people to invest time in someone else and report next week how that investment turned out. Suggested investments of time: help tutor someone, practice sports skills, consistent encouragement, work together to do chores or yard work to bless someone, etc.

Biblical Worldview: The Bible never promotes a victim mindset. As the young people follow what God's Word says, they can choose to be responsible for their choices, not blame when things don't go as they wanted, speak words of life over a situation, and trust that God will be with them as they deal with life's situations. These responses aren't the norm for young people, but can be useful in opening up conversations with their friends about how their faith helps them avoid a victim mindset.

Outreach/Missions: Plan a youth talent night to showcase the young people's God-given gifts and talents. Invite other church youth groups to participate in this opportunity to celebrate all of the young people preparing and using their talents for God's glory.