

Semicontinuous

Judg. 4:1–7

Ps. 123

Complementary

Zeph. 1:7, 12–18

Ps. 90:1–8 (9–11),  
12

1 Thess. 5:1–11

Matt. 25:14–30

# Risk-Taking

**Goal for  
the Session**

*Tweens will be challenged by Jesus' parable to live boldly as they offer their time and talents in service to God.*

## ■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

### Focus on Matthew 25:14–30

#### WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” Thomas D. Stegman, SJ

The parable of the talents is situated near the conclusion of Jesus' discourse on the end times (Matthew 24:1–35:46). It is the third in a series of parables that teach what constitutes proper conduct as people await the return of the Son of Man in glory. Implicit is that the return of the master brings about the fullness of the reign of God (see Matthew 25:1). The opening words of verse 19 refer to the delay of the return of the Son of Man in glory. This delay is a key theme in Jesus' discourse.

#### WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” Mark Douglas

This parable isn't so much about talents as about the third slave, the master, and the relationship between them. These characters more clearly reflect Matthew's theological vision of how we are to live between now and the eschaton. The emotion that drives the third slave creates the conditions that lead to his downfall: fearing his master. This passage is not so much about the wise use of resources as it is about a willingness to resist fear and, like the first two slaves, to behave in risky and trusting ways, for in so doing we enter into joy upon the master's return.

#### SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” John M. Buchanan

The greatest risk of all, it turns out, is not to risk anything—to play it safe, to live cautiously and prudently. Orthodox, conventional theology identifies sin as pride and egotism. However, there is an entire other lens through which to view the human condition. It is called sloth, one of the ancient church's seven deadly sins. Sloth means not caring, not loving, not rejoicing, not living up to the full potential of our humanity, playing it safe, investing nothing, being cautious and prudent, digging a hole and burying the money in the ground. Jesus' warning is that the outcome of playing it safe is something akin to death, like being banished to the outer darkness.

#### NOW WHAT is God's word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,” Lindsay P. Armstrong

What we think about God and *do* in response to the master's gracious trust is neither trivial nor incidental. What we do or fail to do shapes this world and our lives. God is sovereign goodness and is all that we need. Knowing this news and failing to share it with others is like knowing of a treasure hidden deep in the earth, but through indifference or inactivity, leaving that treasure buried, rather than taking the trouble to dig it up and enjoy its abundance with everyone.

**FOCUS SCRIPTURE**

**Matthew 25:14–30**

## Focus on Your Teaching

Most tweens are aware of their talents and abilities, and it is good to help them consider how they might use these in service to God and neighbor. Most young people also are painfully aware of things they do not do well, especially when they compare themselves to other youth. Some may even be convinced they have nothing to offer. As you prepare to teach, think about your learners. What talents or abilities have you observed in each one? Use this session as an opportunity to affirm those gifts.

*Abundant God, help me to recognize and affirm the gifts of every learner.  
May these tweens and I learn to live boldly as we invest our lives in your realm. Amen.*

### YOU WILL NEED

- ☐ Resource Sheet 1 from October 22, materials listed there
- ☐ *Singing the Feast*, 2023–2024; CD player
- ☐ dictionary (optional)
- ☐ Color Pack 8, 29
- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ copies of Resource Sheets 1, 2
- ☐ calculators
- ☐ basket

### For Responding

- ☐ option 1: mural paper or newsprint, markers
- ☐ option 2: Color Pack 22, 23, 24; drawing paper; crayons, oil pastels, or markers
- ☐ option 3: modeling clay, pipe cleaners, paper, pens, recording of “Take My Life and Let It Be”




## ■ LEADING THE SESSION

### GATHERING

Welcome tweens by name. Encourage them to tell about their week, naming any joys and concerns. Try to partner any newcomers with learners who attend regularly.

Gather the group by playing or singing “God, We Sing” (Color Pack 29; track 8 on *Singing the Feast*, 2023–2024). Following the instructions on Resource Sheet 1 from October 22, set the worship table and begin your time together in prayer.

Introduce the focus scripture by talking about what it means to be entrusted with something. Work as a group to define the word *entrust*, looking it up in a dictionary if needed. Invite tweens to tell about times they have been given the responsibility of caring for something or someone:

-  For what or for whom did you have responsibility?
-  How did it feel to be entrusted with this responsibility?
-  Have you ever entrusted something important to another person? Was this an easy or difficult thing to do?

# FEASTING on the WORD

## CURRICULUM

### Risk-Taking

#### God, We Sing

God, we sing with praise  
to you,  
Light the flame of *hope* anew;  
Light this candle, light  
the way,  
Bring *hope* into our  
hearts today.  
Jesus, near us as we pray,  
Let *hope* be in our hearts  
today.

God, we sing with praise  
to you,  
Light the flame of *peace*  
anew; . . .

God, we sing with praise  
to you,  
Light the flame of *love*  
anew; . . .

God, we sing with praise  
to you,  
Light the flame of *joy*  
anew; . . .

God, we sing with praise  
to you,  
Light the flame of Christ  
anew;  
Light this candle, light  
the way,  
We celebrate new life today.  
Christ, be near us as we pray  
And celebrate new life today.

EASY  
PREP

### EXPLORING

Comment that in the Bible reading for today, Jesus tells a story about some people who were entrusted with something very valuable. Recall that in Matthew 25 Jesus is spending some time with his disciples and talking to them about the kingdom of heaven and the end time. At the time of Jesus, it was believed that one day the present world would come to an end and all creation would turn to follow in God's loving ways. Remind the group that the followers of Jesus in the early church expected the end time to occur during their lifetimes. When Jesus did not return as quickly as they expected, the followers of Jesus began to get discouraged. Briefly review the parable of the wise and foolish bridesmaids, observing that Jesus described the end time as a wedding party, something to look forward to and enjoy.

Ask learners to turn to Matthew 25 in their Bibles, encouraging them to help one another as needed. Read aloud verses 14–15. Explain that word *talent* describes the money given to each slave. One talent was equivalent to 15 years of wages for a common laborer. Hand out calculators and challenge tweens to calculate how much 1, 2, and 5 talents would be worth today, assuming an hourly wage of \$15.00, working 8 hours per day, and working 261 days per year. Be ready to help with the calculations if needed (1 talent = \$469,800; 2 talents = \$939,600; 5 talents = \$2,349,000). Reread verses 14–15, inserting those figures.

Ask volunteers to read the parts of the narrator, the three slaves, and the master in verses 16–30. Encourage readers to be as melodramatic as possible.

If your group is small, cut out the questions on Resource Sheet 1 (Questions), fold each one in half, and place them in a basket. Have learners take turns pulling out a question and reading it to the group. Discuss the answers together. If your group is large, form pairs. Read aloud one question and allow pairs time to discuss possible answers. Then have learners form new pairs to discuss the next question.

Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Take My Life and Let It Be) and read in unison the lyrics of the hymn. Allow a moment for learners to read the margin notes. Discuss:

- ✠ Which of the three slaves in Jesus' story is this hymn writer most like?
- ✠ What do you learn from this hymn writer about offering your time and talents in service to God? When is it a challenge to do this?

### RESPONDING

Mark the activities you will use:

1. **Mural** Help tweens consider the talents they have to invest in God's realm as they work together on a mural. Gather around a piece of mural paper or newsprint. Across the top, print: *What God Entrusts to Us*. Brainstorm all the abilities and talents that a person might possess. (See sidebar) Record each suggestion, scattering responses all over the mural. Have each tween take a marker and put a star or checkmark by each word or phrase that describes her or him. Be sure everyone marks at least one. Pick one or two

of the responses and discuss how these talents might be used to show love for God and love for neighbor. Challenge tweens to find a way to use the abilities and talents that God has given them to serve others this coming week. Finish with a group high-five to celebrate all the amazing talents God has given your group.

**So many talents:**

reading, singing, math, athletics, making music, cooking, art, science, drawing, creative ideas, teaching, childcare, gymnastics, drama, clowning, crafting, gardening, sewing, computers, social networking, talking to others, making friends, writing, juggling, praying, dancing, making money, giving, speaking a foreign language

2. **Self-Portrait** Like the servants in the story, we all have talents to invest in God's realm. Show Color Pack 22, 23, and 24, noticing the different styles of artwork. Invite tweens to use the art materials provided to create self-portraits. Encourage creativity and emphasize that the purpose is to convey a sense of who they are rather than producing a masterpiece. Around their portraits, have them write words that describe their personalities, abilities, and talents. When the portraits are complete, display them. As a group, take a tour of the artwork, stopping at each portrait and affirming each other's talents and abilities. Suggest ways the tweens might invest those gifts in God's realm.
3. **Song** There are so many ways to offer our time and talents to God. Jesus' parable encourages us to do this with everything we have. Play a recording of "Take My Life and Let It Be." (There are many good ones on YouTube.) Invite tweens to respond to the song in a way that means the most to them. They could create sculptures from modeling clay or pipe cleaners, choreograph a dance, write a poem or letter to God, or doodle as the music plays. Allow time for learners to share their creations with the group.

## CLOSING

Gather around the worship table and ask tweens to tell one thing they learned about living as Jesus' follower today.

Invite learners to place their hands around Color Pack 8 on the table. Say this prayer or one of your own:

*God of love, thank you for stories that help us discover more about you and more about following in your loving ways. Help us to live and love as Jesus taught. Amen.*

Lead the closing charge:

**Leader:** Let us live boldly as we offer our talents and time to God.

**All: Amen!**

Extinguish the candle. Thank tweens for coming, and say you look forward to seeing them again next week.

## Questions



1. Why do you think the master was so generous?



2. What do you think the first two servants did to double the money they were given?



3. What risks did the first two servants take?



4. Why do you think the third servant chose to bury the money?



5. Why do you think the master was so upset with the third servant?



6. What do you think the master would have said if the third servant had tried to do something with the money and had failed?



7. What do you learn from this parable?



8. Which of the three servants do you feel most like? Why?



9. In the story, the servants were entrusted with the master's money. What things have you been entrusted with?



10. What part of the story surprised you most?

## Take My Life and Let It Be

**Consecrated** means set apart for God's use.

**Thee** and **thou** are other ways of saying "you."

This is a reference to Isaiah 52:7: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace."

At the time this hymn was written, God was almost always described as a male, even though there are both male and female images of God in the Bible.

In Jesus' day, a **mite** was the coin that was worth the least. After Frances Havergal wrote this verse, she realized she was not practicing what she preached. So she packed up most of her jewelry and sent it to the mission her church supported.

**Thine** and **Thy** are other ways of saying "yours" and "your."

Take my life, and let it be

**Consecrated,** Lord, to **Thee.**

Take my moments and my days;

Let them flow in endless praise.

Take my hands, and let them move

At the impulse of Thy love.

Take my **feet,** and let them be

Swift and beautiful for Thee.

Take my voice, and let me sing,

Always, only, for my **King.**

Take my lips, and let them be

Filled with messages from Thee.

Take my silver and my gold,

Not a **mite** would I withhold;

Take my intellect, and use

Every pow'r as Thou shalt choose.

Take my will, and make it **Thine;**

It shall be no longer mine.

Take my heart, it is Thine own;

It shall be Thy royal throne.

Take my love; my Lord, I pour

At Thy feet its treasure store.

Take myself, and I will be

Ever, only, all for Thee.

—Frances Ridley Havergal (1874)