



THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURES

Matthew 25:14-30, 1 Peter 4:10; Luke 6:38, Malachi 3:10, Esther 4:14

REFLECTION AND STUDY

DAY 1: Read Matthew 25:14-30

Read Matthew 25:14-30 In the Parable of the Talents each worker was entrusted with a very generous gift that belonged to the master and was told to put it to work for him and his estate until he returned. Two workers invested their gifts and doubled them. One of the workers buried his gift. Pastor Bob touched on the principle of excellence. Excellence has to do with honor and in this case, giving your best effort in the best interest of your master. Sometimes we tend to blur the distinction between "excellence" and "perfectionism." To strive for excellence means to live at peace with God, knowing that you are giving your best efforts; to be perfectionistic means to live anxiously, always worrying about the flaws in what you are doing or have done. A person who strives for excellence doesn't give up when he makes mistakes, and he doesn't avoid tasks for fear of failure. God calls us to move from perfectionism to excellence.

- What are some ways that God has used excellence in your life as a light to attract others to Him?
- Are there particular areas in your life where you strive for perfection?

Pray and ask God to help you remember that He is who you are ultimately working for, and to focus on trying to please the Him, and not on performing "perfectly." Ask God to help you use your gifts with excellence.

DAY 2: Read 1 Peter 4:10

The biggest issue with the third worker who buried his gift was that he was afraid (see verse 24). Fear is probably the most powerful enemy of success. So many people miss opportunities to do something significant with their gifts or talents or possessions simply because they fear failure. You may have been blessed with a natural ability to sing, but much of this talent has gone to waste because you fear you'd go to pieces once you stepped on the stage. What a tragic thing it will be if you bury your God-given talent. How many of us, because we fear to step out and invest the gifts and abilities God has given us, are missing opportunities to use and develop our talents to their full potential? How many of us instead, leave the gift lying buried in the dirt? **Read 1 Peter 4:10**

- Do you have any "buried treasure?"

Thank God for the gifts you have been given. Pray that you would grow in confidence and begin to boldly step out in the areas that God has gifted you.

DAY 3: Read Luke 6:38

On Sunday, you were challenged to substitute the "Fruit of the Spirit" for the "talents" in the Parable of the Talents. We thought about what it would look like if we used the Fruit of the Spirit that has been entrusted to us for Kingdom purposes. The gifts we have received are not ours alone. God gave them to us for the purpose of serving Him and serving other people. Each of us has something to give. We can give our money and our time to good cause, be a friend to someone who is sick or lonely, do volunteer work, or be an encourager, teacher or volunteer. We may give unselfishly of our time to our spouse, children or parents. We may choose a service-oriented occupation, or we may just do our everyday jobs with integrity and respect for others. It would seem that the more we give to others, the poorer we become, but just the opposite is true! Service to others brings meaning and fulfillment to our lives in a way that wealth, power, possessions and self-centered pursuits can never match. **Read Luke 6:38**

- What gifts has God entrusted you with and how are you using them?
- How has using your gifts added fulfillment to your life?

If you aren't using your gifts as you should pray for opportunities to use them. Pray that God would provide the perfect role for you to use your gifts to further His kingdom while enriching your life.

DAY 4: Read Malachi 3:10

One of the things that third worker was afraid to do was take a risk. Spiritual maturity is hampered when the Christian refuses to obey God. Sometimes that involves leaving what is safe or familiar. God is calling all of us to take some risks, not risk for the sake of being risky, but for the sake of the gospel. It is risky to be generous, it is risky to be different, and sometimes it can feel risky to live in unity. Risk requires vulnerability. He understands your wariness, but He'll never let you down. Step out in obedience, watch what He does to grow your faith.

- What risk is the Lord calling you to take?

Pray and ask God help you step out in faith and take risks.

DAY 5: Read Esther 4:14

The last thing we talked about on Sunday was the spectrum of influence each of us has during our time here on Earth. Do you know the story of Esther? Read Esther 4:1-14. She could have played it safe but instead she chose to put everything on the line. What amazing plans God had for her. Who knows that God has not put you where you are right now for such a time as this? You may be the only Christian in your family or the only believer in your neighborhood. You may be the only follower of Jesus Christ in your workplace or in your classroom.

- Like Esther, will you stand up for such a time as this?
- Will you use your influence where you can, when you can?

Pray and thank God for having you right where you are in His perfect timing. Pray that you would use your influence for His will and to bring God glory. Praise God for your church family and pray for your brothers and sisters in Christ as they consider their influence in their own spaces.

DAY 6

Today is your "Sabbath" and a time for reflection. How has God been speaking to you over the week? Use what the Lord has said to you to remold and reshape your life. If you are having trouble hearing God's voice, slow down or even stop what you are doing so that the busyness of life's demands do not squelch the whispers of God's language of love upon your heart.