Preschool–Grade 6

The Parable of the Talents

Sunday School Lesson for Preteens (Ages 11–12), 45–60 minutes

Main point: Be faithful with what God gives you. God doesn't compare you with anyone else; He looks for faithfulness.
Bible passage: Matthew 25:14–30. Students read Matthew 25:14–29 out loud themselves.
Memory verse: "His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." *Matthew 25:21 (KJV)* and "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much." *Luke 16:10 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each student, paper or a notebook and a pen for each student, a whiteboard and a marker, and one take-home sheet for each student.
Before class: read Matthew 25:14–30, Luke 16:10 and 1 Peter 4:10. Write both memory verses on the board. Decide who reads which verses, or go around the room a few verses each.

1. Opening game: Compare or Use? (5–10 minutes)

Read each situation. If it shows comparing ourselves with others, students cross their arms. If it shows using what God gave, they give a thumbs up. 1) "She sings better than me, so I won't sing at all." 2) A boy who is shy writes a kind note to a new kid. 3) "I'm not good at anything, so God can't use me." 4) A girl who is good at math helps her little brother with homework. 5) "If I can't be the best, I won't try." Ask: *Why is it so easy to compare ourselves with others? What does it make us do?* Say: "Jesus told a story about three servants who were given different amounts. Watch who compares and who doesn't."

2. Bible story: Students Read It (15 minutes)

Read out loud: Matthew 25:14–29. Students take turns, a few verses each. Old words in this passage:

- **delivered unto them his goods** (25:14): handed over his property for them to manage
- **talent** (25:15): a heavy weight of silver or gold, a very large amount of money (two talents of silver filled two bags, 2 Kings 5:23)
- **according to his several ability** (25:15): each as much as he could handle; **straightway**: right away
- **traded with the same** (25:16): bought and sold with it; **digged**: dug
- **reckoneth** (25:19): settles the accounts, checks what each one did
- **an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown** (25:24): strict, harvesting where he didn't plant; **strawed**: scattered seed
- **slothful** (25:26): lazy; **exchangers** (25:27): money keepers; **usury**: the extra money that grows on money left with them
- **abundance** (25:29): more than enough

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Look closer: Jesus said the kingdom of heaven is like this (25:14). The master gave "to every man according to his several ability" (25:15): different amounts, on purpose. The servant with five and the servant with two both doubled what they had (25:16–17), and both heard exactly the same words: "Well done, good and faithful servant" (25:21, 25:23). The third servant's problem was not that he had less. He said, "I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth" (25:25), and his master called him "wicked and slothful" (25:26). His talent was given to the servant who had ten (25:28).

Verse 30 is left out of the reading on purpose. If a student reads on or asks, answer simply and gently: Jesus told this parable as a serious warning that what we do with what God gives us matters. Keep it short, and go back to God's "Well done."

3. Questions to ask (15 minutes)

1. The servants started with different amounts (25:15). Why do you think God gives people different gifts?
2. The servant with two talents heard the same "Well done" as the servant with five (25:21, 25:23). What does that tell you about how God measures us?
3. The third servant said, "I was afraid" (25:25). What fears keep people your age from using what God gave them?
4. Read Luke 16:10. What "least" things are you being trusted with right now: at home, at school, at church?
5. The master was gone "a long time" (25:19). How do you stay faithful when no one is checking?
6. Read 1 Peter 4:10. How could your gifts serve someone else this week?

4. Memory verse (5 minutes)

Old words: **thou** and **thee** mean you; **ruler over many things** means in charge of much more; **enter thou into the joy of thy lord** means come share your master's happiness; **unjust** means not honest.
Read both verses together. Then students cover one phrase at a time and quiz a partner. Say Matthew 25:21 this week; keep working on Luke 16:10 next week too.

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5. What this means for us (5–10 minutes)

Say: "Everything we have comes from God. But the greatest gift of all is Jesus. God loves you, and 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, God who came as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:3–4, KJV). We obey the gospel the way Peter preached it: 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) We **repent**, turning from sin, and our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are buried with Jesus by baptism in His name, all the way under the water. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we rise to walk in newness of life, a brand-new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the Holy Ghost, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance, which means as He gives the words (Acts 2:4). Jesus called this being born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5)."
Pray with the students, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.

6. Activity: Journal (10 minutes)

Each student writes privately. No one has to share. Write these three prompts on the board:

1. What gifts, abilities or chances has God given me? List at least five, even small ones.
2. Which one am I "hiding in the earth" right now, because I'm afraid or comparing myself with someone else?
3. Write a short prayer asking God to help you be faithful with what He has given you.
   If there is time, invite a few volunteers to share one sentence.

This week: use one gift for God on purpose, in a small way, where no one will praise you for it.

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You for every gift You have trusted us with. Forgive us for hiding what You gave us because we were afraid or busy comparing. Make us faithful in little things, so we can hear You say, 'Well done.' Thank You for loving us and making a way to save us through Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen."

Keep it gentle: the talents in the parable are money (Matthew 25:18, 25:27). Using the story to talk about the gifts God gives us is an application, not what the word means in the verse. Say it that way if a student asks.

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