Talents: Use Them or Lose Them

The Bible Lesson at a Glance
Jesus tells a parable about a man entrusting three servants with talents, each according to his ability. One hides his talent, the other two put their talents to work and double what they were given. The master returns and asks for an accounting. He praises the two servants who wisely used what they were given; he chastises the servant who hid his.

This is a lesson about service.
Jesus’ parable of the talents is a clear call for us to use His gifts in service to Him. We miss a blessing in service when we fail to use our God-given talents. This lesson explores many of the ways in which we can use our gifts to become effective stewards.

Teacher Enrichment
“The talents, however few, are to be put to use. The question that most concerns us is not, How much have I received? but, What am I doing with that which I have? The development of all our powers is the first duty we owe to God and to our fellow men. No one who is not growing daily in capability and usefulness is fulfilling the purpose of life. In making a profession of faith in Christ we pledge ourselves to become all that it is possible for us to be as workers for the Master, and we should cultivate every faculty to the highest degree of perfection, that we may do the greatest amount of good of which we are capable.

“The Lord has a great work to be done, and He will bequeath the most in the future life to those who do the most faithful, willing service in the present life. The Lord chooses His own agents, and each day under different circumstances He gives them a trial in His plan of operation. In each true-hearted endeavor to work out His plan, He chooses His agents not because they are perfect but because, through a connection with Him, they may gain perfection.

“God will accept only those who are determined to aim high. He places every human agent under obligation to do his best” (Christ’s Object Lessons, pp. 329, 330).

What am I doing with the talents I have been given? What areas could I develop more completely?
**Welcome**

Welcome students at the door and direct them to their seats. Ask them how their week has been. Encourage learners to study their Sabbath School lesson regularly, and debrief students on the previous lesson to help them see the chronological continuity of the Bible stories from one week to another. Then ask students to share a few things they learned from their study of the current lesson. Ask: **What was the most interesting part of the Bible story? What activity did you find most helpful?** Invite students to share their experiences and/or the handiworks they created for Sabbath School during the week. **Have students begin the readiness activity of your choice.**

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LEARNERS ACTIVITIES

Select the activity or activities that are most appropriate for your situation.

A

Hidden Talents

Beforehand, write one talent (i.e., good listener, musician, speaker, helper, artist, writer, comforter, teacher, encourager, athlete) on each slip of paper, enough for each student. Fold them in half and hide them in the room. When the students enter, ask them to each find one “hidden talent.”

Debriefing

Ask: What talents did you find? Do you possess that talent?

Say: Sometimes your special abilities may seem hidden, or you are unsure of what it is God gave you. He gave everyone at least one special ability to use in His service. If you’re unsure of what yours is, pray that He will help you see it clearly. Allow students who know the power text to say it either individually or in group:

“We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith” (Romans 12:6).

Have the entire class repeat the power text together. Allow visitors and students who don’t know it yet to read along. Affirm them for their effort. However, do not single out students by forcing everyone to say it, nor reprimand those who don’t know it. Sabbath School is a place where students need to feel comfortable and accepted as they grow in God’s grace.

Let’s remember that

We serve God when we use our talents to help others.

B

Blessed to Be a Blessing

Divide the students into teams of three or four. Have each team select a person who’ll be their gift. On “go,” teams must share in their groups the qualities of that person and how he/she is or could be God’s gift to someone. After one minute they will move on to another student and repeat the process of affirming that person for his/her God-given gifts, encouraging the young person to use those talents to serve God and others. The activity will continue until everyone in the group has been affirmed for ways he/she could be a blessing in making a difference in someone’s life.

Debriefing

Ask: What do you think the meaning of this game was? How are you a “gift”?

Say: Every person can dedicate their lives to be used as a “gift” to others. God asks us to serve Him by helping others and using our abilities to their fullest.

If you have not done Readiness Activity A, review now with the students the power text as outlined in the previous activity.

“We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith” (Romans 12:6).

We are learning that

We serve God when we use our talents to help others.

**Prayer and Praise**

**Fellowship**
Allow students to report things that they are pleased or troubled about. Acknowledge any birthdays, special events, or achievements. Give a special, warm greeting to all visitors. Get contact information from the adult who brought them to church. Early in the following week, send a postcard or e-mail letting the visitors know how much you enjoyed having them in your class and that you would like to see them again.

**Suggested Songs**
- “Give Me Oil in My Lamp” (He Is Our Song, no. 139)
- “We Are an Offering” (He Is Our Song, no. 136)
- “Take These Hands” (He Is Our Song, no. 127)

**Mission**
Use Adventist Mission for Youth and Adults (go to www.juniorpowerpoints.org and click on MISSION) or another mission report available to you. For the mission story, have a map of the world where the students can identify the location of the mission story and compare it to where they are. You could use pushpins to mark where the mission story takes place.

**Offering**
Say: God gives us many gifts. Our offerings are an opportunity to respond to God and thank Him for everything that He has given us.

**Prayer**
Say: Let’s stand in a circle to pray. I will begin by saying a talent that I am thankful for (such as “encouragement”), then everyone responds by saying, “Thank You, God, for all our talents.” Then the next person says a talent. It does not have to be one of your own. Again the group responds, “Thank You, God, for all our talents.” Repeat this around the circle. Close with a prayer for the students’ joys and sorrows, for the birthday and other special event celebrants, as well as for the visitors.

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**Talent Scout**
Beforehand, make a list of talents (i.e., sings, plays an instrument, encourages others, knits/sews, builds, good with fixing things, makes others laugh, reads well) to give to each student. Adjust the list to include hobbies that are relevant to your students. Say: Go around to each other and have someone sign their name next to ONE talent they feel they possess. You must have a different name for each talent. Ask each person who signs your list if they have a talent that is not on the list. Note what it is. Set a time limit, or go until the first person completes their list.

**Debriefing**
Ask: Who had [name talent from the list]? Go through all the talents. What other talents did you discover? We are all a unique mix of talents. What happens if you do not use your talents? (You lose them.)

Say: This is obvious if you have a musical talent and do not practice. The same applies to other talents.

If you have not done Readiness Activity A, review now with the students the power text as outlined in activity A.

“We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith” (Romans 12:6).

We serve God when we use our talents to help others.

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**YOU NEED:**
- talent lists
- pencils
- Bibles

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**YOU NEED:**
- offering plate/basket
Introducing the Bible Story
Bring different light weights to Sabbath School. Invite the students to lift them and guess how heavy they are. Say: In Bible times people had talents of money. In New Testament times a talent weighed between 58 and 80 pounds (26-36 kilograms) or x times heavier than the load you were trying to lift. Jesus told a story about a master who gave his servants talents. The talents can represent any gift or opportunity that God gives us to serve Him. Let’s look again at our power text, Romans 12:6.

“We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith” (Romans 12:6).

We serve God when we use our talents to help others.

Accommodations for students with special needs:
Students with physical disabilities may not be able to lift the weights. Have them guess how much they weigh as they watch the other students lift the weights.

Experiencing the Story
Have the students take turns reading aloud Matthew 25:14-30. Then ask for five volunteers to read the skit on pages 148, 149 (if possible, arrange for your volunteers to have the script a week ahead so they can practice).

Debriefing
Ask: Why do you think the master was so hard on the lazy servant? What excuses do people have for not using the talents they have? Are all talents obvious? Can some be developed? What are some talents other than skills? (Time, money, opportunities.)
Exploring the Bible

Divide the students into two groups, having one group find Romans 12:6-8 and the other 1 Corinthians 12:8-10.

Say: Each group should make a list of the spiritual gifts listed in their texts.

Ask: What spiritual gifts did you find? Write them on the board and underline any that appear twice. Are there any that surprise you? Why do you think prophesying was listed twice? Is it more important than the other gifts? What is prophesying?

Say: Prophesying is the power to speak authoritatively for God and is not limited to predicting future events. It is talk that builds up people’s faith and gives knowledge and explanation about God. (Point out to the students that Ellen White is not the only person given the gift of prophecy.) God gives us all gifts. Based on our lesson what is the most important thing about our spiritual gifts? (That we use them.)

Say: Spiritual gifts and talents are not necessarily the same thing. But with either talents or spiritual gifts, we want to serve God and others.

We serve God when we use our talents to help others.

Name That Talent

Hand out a sheet of paper. Say: Write your name down the side of the page like an acrostic. Swap your paper with someone else. Write a talent or gift that the person on the paper has, beginning with one of the letters of their name. Then pass the paper on. If you are the last one to write a talent against a letter of their name, pass it back to the person whose name is on the paper.

Afterwards say: We all have gifts, some big and some small, but each is enhanced and multiplied when it is used in God’s service. Remember, We serve God when we use our talents to help others.

Debriefing

Ask: Who is using their gifts? In what other ways might they use them?

Sample of an Acrostic

Draws pretty pictures for the people at the nursing home.

Often shares her lunch with me.

Never calls me names.

Not a fair-weather friend.

Asks me to be on her ball team when we’re at recess.
Using Our Talents
Ask students to share how they used their talents during the past week to help someone.

Debriefing
Ask: How did the people you helped respond to your service? What did you learn about the benefit of using your talents?
   Let’s say the power point together:
   We serve God when we use our talents to help others.

Prayer and closing comments:
Say: God has given us many different talents. Let’s pray and ask God to help us use our talents to bless those around us and to bring glory to Him.

Reminder to parents:
Say: Check out the student Bible study guide to find Parents’ Pages for your use in family worship, or however you wish to use them to spiritually guide your children. You may listen to the podcast of the lesson online at www.juniorpowerpoints.org/podcast.php?channel=1.

Coming up next week:
Say: Jesus talks about Sheep and Goats. We serve others as we become more like Jesus.
Think back to when you were learning to ride a bicycle. Did you manage it the first time? No? Some things take time to learn to do. In the same way we need to practice using our talents. The more we practice the better we will be and the more we can do to serve Jesus. Let’s imagine the story of three servants who were given talents by their master.

Jotham, Korazin, and Lamech looked at each other. They stood waiting for their master. Why had the master sent for all three of them? They were the three most senior servants in the household, but it was unusual for the master to send for all three at the same time. Something was up.

Jotham and Korazin stood speculating about what the master had in mind when suddenly Lamech caught a glimpse of the master striding toward the house. “Here he comes,” he whispered to the others.

“There you all are,” said the master with a smile. All three felt much better. The master was fair, but when he was not happy about something, he let you know.

“I have had an unexpected message today, and I have to go away on business. I will be away for some time. I have been watching each of you closely and feel that you are ready for some more responsibility. So I am going to give each of you some money to use while I am away. When I come back, I shall expect you to account for it.”

Jotham, Korazin, and Lamech looked at the master not knowing what to say. The master continued, “Jotham, here are five talents of gold. You have the most experience, so I am giving you most.”

“Korazin, I am giving you two talents of gold. Use them wisely and well.”

“Lamech, I know you are young, but this is your chance to prove what you can do. Here is one talent of gold. Now, gentlemen, I look forward to seeing you in a few months and hearing a good report.”

The three men left and went their separate ways. Each one was wondering what was the best thing to do with the money.

Jotham invested his in a new housing project. Korazin bought some land and planted a good cash crop. Lamech did not know what to do. He saw what the others had done and shook his head.

What will the master say if the houses don’t sell? What will the master say if the crops fail and there is no profit? What should I do with my talent? At last he hit on a fail-proof plan.

Late one night he went out into his garden and dug a big hole. He buried the talent and planted a small bush to mark the spot.

Time went by. Lamech felt a bit uneasy when all Jotham’s houses sold for good prices. Korazin had an excellent crop and doubled his money. Lamech wondered if he should have done something more. Then he shrugged. At least he would not have to face the master’s wrath for having lost his money.

Then the news came. The master had come home and wanted to see all three again. They all arrived at the appointed time. Jotham and Korazin looked relaxed and pleased. Lamech looked just a little nervous.

“Wicked, lazy servant!” shouted the master. “You should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.”

Next the master ordered that Lamech’s money be given to Jotham, saying: “For whoever has will be given..."
more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them.” Then he had Lamech removed from his position. (See Matthew 25:21-29)

Now Lamech understood that the master was not interested in what happened to the talent. All he was interested to see was how each servant would improve his skills by using his talent. But it was too late.

After Lamech left, the master turned to Jotham and Korazin and said, “Well done. Let’s have a meal, and you can tell me more about what you have been doing.”

**POWER TEXT**

“We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith” (Romans 12:6).

**SABBATH**

- **Do** Do the activity on page 61.
- **Learn** Begin learning the power text.

**SUNDAY**

- **Read** Read Matthew 25:14, 15 and this week's story, “Talents: Use Them or Lose Them.”
- **Write** Draw a gift box and write on it the power text.
- **Review** Review the power text.
- **Pray** Ask God to reveal to you the gifts or talents He has given you.

**MONDAY**

- **Read** Read Matthew 25:16-18.
- **Reflect** What are your talents and how are you helping them grow?
- **List** List your talents in your Bible study journal.
- **Review** Review the power text.
- **Pray** Ask God to impress you with His plan for your growth.

**TUESDAY**

- **Read** Read Matthew 25:19-25.
- **Exercise** Run or do some hard physical exercise.
- **Compare** Compare the need for physical exercise and the need to exercise your talents.
- **Review** Review the power text.
- **Pray** Pray that God will show you a good “exercise routine” for the abilities He has given you.

**WEDNESDAY**

- **Think** Reflect on the talents God has given you.
- **Do** Use your talents to help someone today (i.e., cook, cut the grass, look after a sibling).
- **Review** Review the power text.
- **Pray** Ask God to reveal other talents you may have.

**THURSDAY**

- **Research** Research Bible stories about people multiplying their abilities by using them as they could.
- **Ask** Interview your friends and family to find out how they keep their talents in top condition.
- **Review** Review the power text.
- **Pray** Pray for opportunities to use your talents.

**FRIDAY**

- **Share** Share what talents you appreciate in each other.
- **Do** Use your talents to plan a surprise for your family.
- **Revise** Repeat from memory the power text.
- **Pray** Pray that each person in the family will make the most of their talents.