



NG Study Guide: Matt. 25:14-30 “The King’s Workers” [7.23.17]

Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. **Leader note:** *Please review the brief instructions for leaders at the bottom.*

The Study

What does it mean to serve God? We serve and glorify God by sacrificially serving others. We are called to serve our spouse, children and parents, our fellow-workers or students, our neighbors, and in a local church or ministry. Through the years that I’ve been a follower of Jesus, I’ve discovered many reasons why we should serve the Lord. Today I want to share a few with you ...

A. Five reasons why we choose to serve the Lord [14-30]

Jesus answered the disciples’ questions about when He would return, and what would be the sign of His Coming. After sharing several signs [Matt.24], Jesus shared parables to encourage us to be ready and remain faithful. This is the Parable of the Talents. The main idea is that God has entrusted you with resources (time, talents, and treasure) not only for your pleasure but to advance His kingdom by serving others.

1. Our resources are a gift from God entrusted to us for His good pleasure and ours [15-16]

God’s kingdom is like a man who entrusts his workers to advance his interests while he is away [14]. During the church age, from Pentecost - the beginning of the church until His Second Coming, Jesus’ followers have the privilege and responsibility to advance His kingdom. The term “servant” refers to a steward [14]. A steward is entrusted with resources and is expected to responsibly use them to advance the master’s interests. All resources – time, talent, and treasure are entrusted to man by God. Your

family and friends are a gift from God. The gifts, abilities, and strengths that you manifest at work or school are from God. Recognizing God as the source, helps you to understand the responsibility to sacrificially serve family, at work or school, your community and church with the purpose of glorifying God. These resources are not solely for your pleasure and comfort, but also intended to advance God's kingdom. A "talent" [15] was the heaviest measure of dry weight in the Roman world (about 70 pounds). Because of this parable, we use the term to describe a gift, skill, or ability. Each received various resources (5,2,1) [15], and there were no specific instructions what to do. Why *don't* people serve the Lord with their time, talents, and treasure? Perhaps, they don't know how to get started, or aren't sure of what they want to do. Maybe, it relates to a fear of failure or commitment. Unfortunately, it may be due to apathy, selfishness, and a lack of love for God and others. Ultimately, it is a failure to recognize that your resources are a gift from God entrusted to you for His good pleasure as well as your own. To whom much is given, much is required [Lu. 12:48].

2. We yearn to hear Jesus say, "Well done good and faithful ..." [17-23]

Two of the three stewards used the entrusted resources for the master's gain, and the third did not [16-18]. The master ultimately returns and settles accounts with the stewards. Those who used their entrusted resources for the Lord were equally blessed and praised even though the gain was different (one gained five and the other two) [20-23]. They are both called *good*, and commended for a job well done. They are approved as *faithful*. I know that one day I will stand before Jesus and will have to give an account of how I used the time, talents, and treasure God entrusted to me [2Cor. 5:10, 1Cor. 3:12-15, Rev.22:12]. I want to hear the God of the Universe commend me that I did not selfishly waste my life and neglect God and my responsibility to Him, His kingdom, and others. I yearn to hear Him say, "Well done good and faithful." Each of us, will give an account for our lives. What will you hear?

3. Our service to God brings us and Him joy [21,23]

Kingdom workers *enter into the joy of the Lord* in one sense that they spend eternity in Christ's presence. But there is also the sense that kingdom workers get to experience the joy of serving God today. You might be thinking that you'll be really happy serving yourself, or by being served by others. But the pursuit of personal pleasure, without serving Jesus and others, doesn't satisfy. Serving God is not the obstacle to joy, but is where you'll discover joy. We serve Christ by serving people made in God's image, and that blesses Him and brings Jesus joy. We are encouraged to, "Serve the Lord with gladness" [Ps. 100:2]. Undoubtedly, serving God will be challenging, but there is nothing that can bring greater joy. Because nothing else that you can do will impact eternity like service to God. Don't you want to bring joy to Christ, and experience His joy?

4. Our faithful service yields greater kingdom roles [21,23]

Twice the master declares, "You were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things" [21,23]. The kingdom workers discover that their part ("a few things") was just a relatively small part of the greater work of God. It is comforting to know that my part, no matter what it is, is just a relatively small part compared to God's work. Their faithful service results in greater kingdom roles eternally and today. I've discovered that God often allows greater kingdom opportunities for those who have proven themselves faithful [28-29]. Those opportunities generally cause people to grow in Christ as

He equips them for new challenges. Learn to be faithful to serve in what God has called you to in this season, and try to avoid comparing your calling with someone else's.

5. We don't want to be characterized as wicked and discover that we aren't saved [24-30]

The third steward did not use the resources for his master and blames the master. He justifies himself by accusing his master of being harsh and exploiting [24-25]. The master indicates that at the very least the steward could have done something conservative to bring some gain for the master [26-27]. The master gives a harsh rebuke and calls the servant "wicked and lazy" [26]. We would tend to think of people who don't serve God and others as selfish, apathetic or unmotivated, but we generally wouldn't consider them wicked. The failure to use resources for the master reveals their lack of love for the master. The talent was taken and given to others who were faithful [28-29]. The Greek term translated "unprofitable" refers to useless or good for nothing. The lack of desire to serve God and use the resources entrusted to advance God's kingdom revealed that person wasn't saved. Thus, they experience the judgment of God [30]. This is such a sobering warning. Therefore, it is wise for you to humbly examine your life.

We are not saved by serving, but we are saved by grace through faith in Christ [Eph. 2:8]. All who are truly saved will seek to be like Jesus who came to serve not to be served [Mk. 10:45]. Jesus served to advance God's kingdom and bring glory to the Father [Jn. 17:4]. Are you using your time, talents, and treasure to glorify God and advance His kingdom? Do you serve God and glorify Him by serving others in every realm: your marriage, family, career, community and church?

Today, we've considered five reasons to serve the Lord, but the underlying reason is God's love for you displayed at the cross and the gospel. We serve Jesus, because He restored us to God by His perfect sacrifice. Our sacrificial service to God of our time, talents, and treasure is simply a reasonable response to all that He has done for us.

Study Guide Qs

Q1. How have you served the Lord in your local church (or para-church ministry) in the past? How did the experience impact your relationship with Christ and others?

Q2. What advice would you give to someone who wants to get started serving, but isn't sure how or what to do?

Q3. How are you planning to serve God in the various realms of your life: marriage, family, career, community and church?

Q4. What are some of the burdens of not serving God for the individual and the community of faith?

Love your neighbor *outside* the group better:

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors where they live, work, study, or play this past week?
2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor outside the group?
3. Here is a neighboring idea(s) for us to consider for the week(s) ahead:

Discover a need in your community or neighborhood that God has called you to serve and volunteer there. Seek to serve in such a way that it glorifies God.

Love your neighbor *inside* the group better:

1. Are there some needs in our group that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor within the group?
2. What might we do about that need to help?

Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

Leader Notes:

1. Seek to involve as many group participants as possible. A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.

2. Feel free to pre-select the discussion questions that you want to focus on in case there isn't enough time to answer them all.

3. Feel free to use an icebreaker question or activity to get to know one another better.

4. Every time you meet consider asking:

a. What about this passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing? If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.