



COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

Measure Up / Week 3

PRELUDE

SOCIAL

WORSHIP

STORY

GROUPS

HOME

BOTTOM LINE

What you have matters less than what you do with it.

GOAL OF SMALL GROUP

To help students understand that God gave them their talents and abilities, and to encourage them to use their talents in a God-honoring way.

SCRIPTURE

“Again, [the kingdom of heaven] will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money. After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.’ His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’ The man with two bags of gold also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see, I have gained two more.’ His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’ Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out

and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’ His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. 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. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth’” (Matthew 25:14-30 NIV).

CONTEXT OF SCRIPTURE

In this parable, the master was just as happy for the servant who gained two more bags of gold as the servant who gained five more bags of gold. In other words, the master is more interested in how his servants used (invested) what they were given, rather than the actual amount they returned to the master. The same is true for us today. God isn’t comparing us—what we do and what we have—to the people around us. Rather, God is interested in what we’re doing with what we’ve been given.



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TEACHING OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

The past couple of weeks, we've been talking about a habit we all share of trying to measure up to everyone around us—whether it's our friends, classmates, celebrities, or just what we see on TV.

TENSION & TRUTH

Today as we wrap up this series, we're going to build on what we said before and talk about a parable Jesus taught in Matthew 25.

In this parable, Jesus makes up a story to teach us something that will help us get out of the trap of trying to measure up.

This particular story is called *The Parable of the Talents*. At that time, "talent" didn't refer to someone's piano-playing skill. A talent was just an amount of money.

Now, this man didn't give the servants all of his wealth. He allowed his servants to manage his money while he was gone.

And here's one of the key phrases in this parable: *each according to his ability*.

In other words, the master gave each servant different amounts and he wanted to see what they would do with what he gave them.

When the master returned from his journey, he saw what his servants had been able to do. To the servants who had been

faithful, he did what any good boss would do. He said, "You were faithful and trustworthy with the little bit I allowed you to manage, so I'm giving you more to manage."

The last servant hadn't done anything with the money the master had left him. But before the master even had a chance to ask him about it, the third servant said, "Before I tell you anything, you need to know that this is kind of your fault."

The master didn't like what the third servant had done. So he took his bag of gold and gave it to the first servant because he knew the first servant would manage it well. And then, the manager basically said to the third servant, "Get this guy out of my inner circle."

And here's what I think we can all take away from Jesus' parable: What you have matters less than what you do with it.

This is a big deal. Because Jesus says the kingdom of God operates under this idea.

God has given you a wonderfully unique combination of gifts and talents. Nobody's bookshelf looks exactly like yours.

And here's what Jesus is saying: What's on your shelf is not nearly as important as what you do with what's on your shelf.

The absolute best-case scenario for your life has so little to do with what abilities you have and so much to do with how you use gifts and abilities that God gave you.



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TEACHING OUTLINE

APPLICATION

So what should you do? Two things:

1. Celebrate what others have.
2. Use what God has given you.

LANDING

Ask God to help you be absolutely committed to using everything He has put on your shelf for His glory.

INTERACTIVE

The Interactive for this message happens during the Application. Before this week's message, place a small bookshelf on stage with a stock photo of a family, a photo of friends, a phone, some books, and various objects that represent hobbies—basketball, paint, pompom, video game controller, and guitar. You could also include a clock and a piggy bank.

This bookshelf represents a student's life—it's a unique combination of things, talents, friends, family, and personality. This illustration is designed to reinforce this week's bottom line: What is on your shelf isn't as important as what you do with what's on your shelf.



TEACHING SCRIPT

Measure Up / Week 3

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BOTTOM LINE

WHAT YOU HAVE MATTERS LESS THAN WHAT YOU DO WITH IT.

INTRODUCTION

1 MINUTE

The past couple of weeks we've been talking about a habit we all share of trying to measure up to everyone around us—whether it's our friends, classmates, celebrities, or just the stuff we see in TV ads.

The bottom line for this whole series is this: **Trying to measure UP only brings us down.** As soon as I look over there and see your car, girlfriend, house, or grades, I'm miserable. There's no win. It's a trap.

When you're tempted to look to the left and the right and figure out what she has and what he has, God is saying, "I want you to get your sense of worth from Me. Because what I have to say about you matters more than anything anyone else has to say about you. And if you would just look to Me, you'll find peace that who you are is enough, and you don't have to try to measure up to anybody else."

TENSION & TRUTH

10 MINUTES

[Communicator Note: We know this combined Tension and Truth section is a little different. In this session, Andy Stanley handles a lot of Scripture and does a great job of letting the TRUTH draw out TENSION along the way.]

Today as we wrap up this series, we're going to build on what we said before and talk about a parable Jesus taught in Matthew 25. A parable is a story that Jesus made up, generally to make one simple point. Afterward, Jesus would often say, "Let Me explain to you what the parable meant." Parables were a way of helping the audience understand the way God views the world and people.

TEACHING SCRIPT

In this parable, Jesus makes up a story to teach us something that will help us get out of the trap of trying to measure up.

This particular story is called *The Parable of the Talents*. At that time, “talent” didn’t refer to someone’s piano-playing skill. A talent was just an amount of money. The story begins:

“Again, [the kingdom of heaven] will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them” (Matthew 25:14 NIV).

Now, this man didn’t give the servants all of his wealth. He allowed his servants to manage his money while he was gone. He basically said, “I expect you to do with my money what I would do with my money.”

“To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability” (Matthew 25:15a NIV).

And here’s one of the key phrases in this parable: *each according to his ability.*

So like any boss or manager, he looked at these different people and thought: *You’ve got a lot of skills, so I’m going to give you a lot to manage—five bags. You’ve got a good bit of experience, so I’m going to give you two bags. And then you . . . I’m going to give you one bag.* Jesus continues:

“Then he went on his journey. The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more” (Matthew 25:15b-16 NIV).

So the first servant went out, invested the money, and over time he was able to double his master’s money.

“So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money” (Matthew 25:17-18 NIV).

When Jesus said that, His audience probably went, “Oh, that’s bad. This isn’t going to end well for the third servant.” We don’t know why this guy did this. Maybe he said, “What can I possibly do with one bag of money? If you gave me five bags or two bags, maybe. But one bag of money?” Jesus goes on:

“After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them” (Matthew 25:19 NIV).

In other words, he wanted to know what they had done with what they had been given.

“The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.’ His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’” (Matthew 25:20-21 NIV).

TEACHING SCRIPT



In other words, this master did what any good boss would do—he said, “You were faithful and trustworthy with the little bit I allowed you to manage, so I’m giving you more to manage.”

“The man with two bags of gold also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see, I have gained two more.’ His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’” (Matthew 25:22-23 NIV).

If this were a movie, here is where the soundtrack would have changed:

“Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed’” (Matthew 25:24 NIV).

Notice that before this guy even started talking about the money, he pointed at the master and ultimately said, “Before I tell you anything, you need to know this is kind of your fault.” The story continues:

“So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you”” (Matthew 25:25 NIV).

Basically he said, “I know you’re a winner-takes-all kind of guy. So I was afraid. And anybody in my situation would’ve done what I did because of the way you are.”

“His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? [In other words, you know I’m a hard driving businessman.] Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest’” (Matthew 25:26-27 NIV).

Then the master continues:

“So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags’” (Matthew 25:28 NIV).

Which doesn’t sound fair, but the master knew this first servant was a great manager and would be able to get the most out of it. And then we get to the point of the parable:

“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. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth’” (Matthew 25:29-30 NIV).

Basically the manager said, “Get this guy out of my inner circle.” And what is weeping and gnashing of teeth? It’s frustration.

Haven’t you ever gritted your teeth and said, “Ugh, I shouldn’t have said that”? It’s frustration and sadness that you mishandled an opportunity.

And here's what I think we can all take away from Jesus' parable:

What you have matters less than what you do with it.

Jesus said the point of this parable is this: Regardless of what you believe, what are you going to do with what you have?

This is a big deal. Because Jesus says the kingdom of God operates under this idea.

Let me illustrate this for you.



INTERACTIVE

The Interactive for this message happens right here in the script. Check out the Communicator Guide that precedes this script to find out what to do here.

This is you. For the next few minutes, pretend you're a bookshelf. You have a certain amount of time. You have friends and a family. You have time in school, and maybe some dreams for the future. You have some talent, some skill, and some amount of health and energy.

All of this put together is what makes you, you. An absolutely unique combination of these things makes up your life and your story. **Nobody's bookshelf looks exactly like yours.**

In a sense, this is what has been entrusted to you. You like some of it, and you don't like some of it. Maybe you wish you could change some things about your family. Or maybe you wish you had as much talent or as many friends as somebody else. It doesn't matter. This is who you are. And here's what Jesus is saying: **What's on this shelf is not nearly as important as what you do with what's on this shelf.**

When Jesus told this story, here's what He implied: If you believe that everything on your shelf came through the filter of God's love, grace, and plan for your life, then it's a waste of your time to complain about what's there and what's not. Because what you have on your shelf is exactly what you need to do something spectacular.

Throughout Scripture, we see this idea of giving an account of our lives to God.

Now imagine if instead of saying, "God if You had given me more . . ." we could say, "God, here's what You put on my shelf—I was born into a family that doesn't have much money, and here's what I did with it. I was born with almost no athletic ability, or I was born with tons of athletic ability, and here's what I did with it. Here's what belongs to You that You placed in my hands."

The absolute best-case scenario for your life has so little to do with what abilities you have and so much to do with how you used the gifts and abilities that God gave you.



TEACHING SCRIPT

Every day I'm tempted to look at what everybody else has on their shelf and think: *If only I had more money, looked like that, lived there. Then I'd measure up.* When I do that, I'm actually saying, like the guy in the parable, "God, it's Your fault. You stuck me in that family. You could've given me more money. You could've allowed me to develop more skills. You could've given me a better body. If You had entrusted me with what You entrusted him with or her with, I would've done better."

But Jesus is basically saying, "In the kingdom of God, that's not a story you want to tell." You don't want to be the guy or girl who crosses your arms and refuses to do anything because you didn't have as much as anybody else. The issue isn't what's on your shelf. The issue is what you do with what's on your shelf.

APPLICATION

1 MINUTE

So what should you do? Two things:

1. **Celebrate what others have.**
2. **Use what God has given you.**

Celebrate: "God, I'm glad my friend looks that way or that my buddy got into that school. I'm glad he gets to drive that or that she made the team. I want to celebrate what You have entrusted to them. You didn't entrust that to me. I'm going to spend the rest of my life using what You have placed in my hands."

Take whatever God has given you and USE it, MAXIMIZE it, and MULTIPLY it. Every single person in the room can do this!

So what are YOU going to do with what you have?

The alternative is spending the rest of your life looking to your left and right and wondering if you measure up. But there is so much more fun and adventure in being exactly who God's created you to be, and doing exactly what God has called you uniquely to do.

LANDING

1 MINUTE

Can you imagine what would happen in your schools if YOU acted on this idea? Can you imagine what it would do in your family? With your friends?

Let's get out of the "do I measure up?" trap and instead wake up every day being who God has called us to be. That will give Him maximum glory and it will make you such a happier person.



TEACHING SCRIPT

As soon as you walk out of here and see what somebody else is wearing, who they're dating, or who they're hanging out with, what you heard here could evaporate. Hang on tight to what we talked about today so that you can be free to celebrate others' success.

Ask God to help you be absolutely committed to using everything He has put on your shelf for His glory. It's the only way to avoid waking up every day and trying to be something you were never designed to be. It's the way to peace! Because what you have matters far less than what you do with it.



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS
