

Principle #5

Teacher Notes

Victory Beyond Competition

God Requires Total Investment Today for Eternal Return Tomorrow

Does it Matter How I Live Today?

PRINCIPLE #5:

VICTORY BEYOND COMPETITION

God requires total investment today for eternal return tomorrow

Ask: How do I live for God's kingdom instead of my kingdom?

Read: Matthew 25:14-30 "The Parable of the Talents"

Theme: God requires total investment today for eternal return tomorrow

Live It: Investing your sport and life in God's kingdom aligns you with God's mission in the world

Teachers note: Recap first four Principles and the question we asked for each

- #1 Who or what do I worship?
- #2 What motivates me?
- #3 How do I grow?
- #4 How do I deal with suffering?

The question we are asking for Principle #5 is "How do I live for God's kingdom instead of my kingdom?"

This last principle is about investing our lives in a way that would count for eternity. What you believe about the future will affect the way you live today, but it's important to understand that our culture tells us to live for the moment and get all we can today without worrying about tomorrow.

But Jesus asks this piercing question: "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? (Matt 16:26; Mark 8:36; Luke 9:25)

Jesus' question helps us to see the tragedy if we simply "win" temporarily in this life while at the same time losing what really matters eternally.

Transition: Before we dive into the scripture today, we need to give some context to the passage we'll be looking at in Matthew 25:14-30.

Matthew 25:14-30

Jesus is preparing to die. It's within a few days of him being crucified, and his disciples are quizzing Him about what will happen. While preparing Himself for death, He is actually preparing His disciples for how to LIVE—extending to life after death. He explains that the coming days will be full of wars, tribulation, and all sorts of evil but at the proper time, He will come back as the ruler of the universe (Matthew 24:29-31). So be alert, wake up and live as one expecting the return of the King!

Read Matthew 25:14-15 aloud.

In this story we're introduced to four main characters: an owner and three servants. The owner is leaving on a journey for an undisclosed period of time. He's expected to return even though the servants don't know when. He gives each of them responsibility over a portion of his "talents." What are "talents"?

"Talent" then: A sum of money equal to 20 years wages--millions in today's currency

But the point of a talent today isn't limited to money, but has to do with the entirety of your life.

"Talent" now: Refers to a broader group of things including your money, abilities, opportunities, personality, passions, etc.

This acrostic—SHAPE—may help you to think about all the things that make up the shape of your life. We're just going to do a flyby, but hopefully it will help you to think about what you have been given

Spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 28-30; Romans 12:6-8)

When you come to Christ, His Spirit indwells you and equips you with special gifts to serve His people. Things like teaching, serving, evangelism, mercy, discerning, healing, administration, etc. They are more than just skills, they are divinely empowered gifts for service.

Heart

What are you passionate about besides sports medicine? What does your heart beat for? What makes you angry? What bugs you? What fills up your mental time when not competing? What makes you laugh/cry?

Abilities

Skills: athletic, intellectual, artistic, musical, fixing things, administrative, thinking through processes, good with people, good with numbers, communication

Personality

The way you think, act, feel about things. Are you the life of the party or more laid back/introspective? Cup half empty/half full? Extroverted/introverted? Impulsive/plodder?

Experiences

God gives you a story, a narrative context...nothing happens by accident, nothing has to be wasted, nothing is wasted by God; where you were born, family, race, your story, things that have marked you, access to resources, money, etc. even your sin. All of these combined not only to make you uniquely YOU, but become a resource for you to potentially bless others

Notice that in the story:

- 1. All are given different amounts (5, 2, 1) but none is given priority or is set apart from the others as leader*
- 2. The master gave them HIS possessions*

When you think about it each of us has been given a lot, including possessions, opportunities, time, resources. The question is: What will you do with the treasures you are being entrusted with?

Let's look back in the text and investigate what the servants did with their master's money and what happened to them as a result

Read 25:16-18

I. God gives His servants a choice: Invest His talents or Bury His talents (Matthew 25:16-18)

First, he's given these three people responsibility over his possessions for a time—he's made them "stewards" of his property. "Stewardship" is an important word to understand in this context and in the context of thinking about our own lives. What is a "stewardship"?

Stewardship: *To be entrusted with the possessions of another person to watch over or use for a time*

Let's review what the servants did with their "stewardship" of his property:

- 1. The one with 5 talents went and traded and gained five more*
- 2. The one with 2 talents went and somehow acquired two more*
- 3. The one with 1 talent buried his so he could give it back to the master*

Teacher note: Contrast the actions displayed by the 3 servants – Investing vs. Burying

4 min

3 min

By "invest" I mean to use your "talents" in a way that brings honor to God and serves other people or to put time into growing in that area of "talent," so that you can use it in a greater capacity.

Like the servants in the story, you have the choice to invest or bury what God has entrusted to you.

As part of the right choice to invest instead of bury, we should also be sure to...

A. Invest His talents immediately

Servants in the story had no idea when the master would come back and they would have to give an account of their stewardship. In the same way, it's a huge mistake to presume how long you will live (a mistake easy to make as a college student). If you die in three years, you are already an old man/woman according to your own life line. This is why we are repeatedly exhorted in the Bible to take each day seriously, to live as though the "master" may come back at any time.

Teacher note: Ask them to share names of athletes or anybody who "died early" in the last few years. What do you think matters to them now?

You don't know how long you have on this earth. So you invest by taking your education seriously. Train for your career seriously. Start feeding your soul good food now. Today. Don't wait until life slows down for you or for that day in the future when it will be "time" to pay attention to that part of your life. Your future has a limited number of days associated with it, and since you don't know how many you have left, it's best to invest well NOW...today!

Not only should we choose to invest immediately, but we should...

B. Invest His talents completely

"God wants all of you. God doesn't want a part of your life. He asks for ALL your heart, ALL your soul, ALL your mind, and ALL your strength. God is not interested in halfhearted commitment, partial obedience, and the leftovers of your time and money. He desires your full devotion, not little bits of your life." (Purpose Driven Life, Rick Warren)

Easy to try and get compartmentalized with God. "You can have this piece of my life, and this one, and this one...but not these. This one stays with me." This seems crazy but we all do it. Wise person reminds themselves constantly that God owns everything and He has created every area of your life and given it to you as a stewardship.

So don't try to hijack your talents for your own glory and don't get lazy and waste any of it either. God has shaped you for a purpose, given you responsibility, and you don't know how long you have....you can confidently and courageously invest all that He has entrusted to you. Everything that you have has come from Him. All your talents belong to Him. God wants all of you!!!

"You only have one life to live and it will soon be past, only what is done for Christ will last." (C.T. Studd)

C. Invest His talents selflessly

The first 2 guys invested in a way that would bring a better return for their master, willing to take the risk to serve their master instead of their own interests. The one who buried the talent because of fear was mostly concerned with his own well-being. While we might understand and empathize with his behavior, it's important to note that he failed in what the master gave him to do!

It's worth remembering in all of this: It's not about you! God gives you your SHAPE to bring Himself glory and so that others will be blessed.

Crazy thing: when you are more concerned with the glory of God and good of others, somehow the one who benefits the most winds up being you! When you try to serve only yourself, your life becomes small and ultimately unsatisfying.

II. God evaluates your investments: gain rewards or suffer consequences (Matthew 25:19-30)

Read Matthew 25:19-30

5 talent guy heard “well done good and faithful servant” from master

2 talent guy heard same thing

1 talent guy said he was afraid and hid it; he was called “wicked” and “lazy” and had talent taken away

A. There are rewards to be gained (v19-23)

5 and 2 talent guys received:

“Well done good and faithful servant” response

More talents to steward

Invitation to share the master’s happiness

On the other hand...

B. There are consequences to be suffered (v24-30)

Jesus made it real clear through the third servant that there are consequences for our laziness.

Not only did the master say he was wicked and lazy, but he took away the only talent he was given and had him thrown into darkness with weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The lazy servant experiences just what he feared...the master’s wrath and loss!

God is loving but He is also just and He expects us to take seriously the stewardship of each breath he gives us.

C. You have responsibility for what He entrusts to YOU.

No room for a comparison game. Notice each was given different amounts of talents without explanation for why or distinction as though having more or less was better. The point isn’t comparing who has what—the point is to be responsible for living well with what you’ve been given.

Responsibility implies intentionality; thinking purposely about how to use what He’s given you.

Ask at least these questions:

First questions: What are the talents? What do I have? What is God asking me to steward?

Second question: How do I use them, exercise them, exploit them?

Third question: How do I get better at them?

III. God gives us perspective on His kingdom priorities: Invest in His kingdom or my kingdom

When I think about my kingdom, it’s all about my advancement, how I look, what’s best for me...when I think about God’s kingdom, it’s all about his advancement, how he looks, what’s best for him. What will promote me and the things I care about vs. what will promote Him and the things He cares about? God doesn’t leave us in the dark about what needs to be invested or where it should be invested. Let’s remind ourselves what we have been given by God and finish by talking about what it looks like to invest that stuff for God’s purposes.

A. Understand the SHAPE of your life

Think intentionally about all that has been entrusted to you like we talked about at the beginning of this talk. Do an inventory and be aware of what God gave you and how He made you. When you wake up every day you ask God, “What do you want to do with me and all that you have entrusted to me on this day?” Remember: God’s kingdom is more important than your kingdom!

B. Invest your SHAPE in God's priorities

Romans 12:1,2 talks about being "transformed by the renewing of your mind." A significant part of that renewing takes place as you begin to see the world through God's eyes, as you understand what He values as compared to what the world values. What are some of those categories?

His Word/Himself: *You can never go wrong investing time in His Word, deepening your relationship with Him by studying, memorizing, meditating on the things He has said*

People:

His Church/Believers: *You have been gifted spiritually for the edification of others who follow him. Ephesians 4...*

Non-believers: *Part of the reason God leaves us here rather than taking us to be with Him immediately upon conversion is so we can point others to Him with our words and lives.*

Issues of justice: *The entire Bible overflows with God's heart and concern for the poor and downtrodden, for those who don't have a voice, for people oppressed by the powerful. Seeking justice on behalf of the marginalized in society reflects God's heart for justice throughout the universe. (We need God to give us eyes to see those in need all around us...the unbeautiful, un-famous, uncool, the least of these).*

There are other things God values as well: work/job, creation, family, etc.

1 Corinthians 10:31 "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do for the glory of God." What we have is really not ours to begin with. Everything we have is a gift from God to be used not buried.

Teacher's note: Especially when talking with high school/college students, one application in the "Invest your SHAPE in God's priorities" section should be to consider what it would take to become a movement maker/builder on their campus. How do they multiply their lives so that another generation of Christ followers is produced as a result of their faith and intentional Spirit-led initiative? What group of people has God given them particular favor with (team/frat/sorority/club/dorm mates/etc.) that should become their mission field for ministry?

Conclusion

It is hard to walk with Christ faithfully for a lifetime.

It is easy to be selfish.

It is easy to call yourself a Christian and not to live like one.

It is hard to live for Christ every day for the rest of your life. But that is what we are called to.

Living any other way is a waste of time. Don't waste your life!

It will take courage, trust, obedience, a willingness to act even when you don't know the end result.

You will deal with setbacks in your attempts to be faithful with your talents. Satan wants you to give up.

But don't quit.

Transition to Live it Page:

Give the group 3-4 minutes to fill out the Live it questions and then close the time with a moment that illustrated behavior that transcends the typical worldly sport value system.

For example, Michigan quarterback Devin Gardner running in from the sidelines to hold the hand of Ohio State quarterback J.T. Barrett as Barrett realizes he's broken his ankle.

<http://www.detroitnews.com/story/sports/college/university-michigan/2014/11/29/devin-gardner-comforts-injured-ohio-state-qb/19678289/>

Another example: Softball players from Eastern Oregon carrying Sara Tucholsky around the bases after she tripped and blew out her knee at first base. If she can't make it to home plate on her own, the home run is negated. Instead, players from the opposition carry her home, losing the game in the process.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xVIKtl7yds>

In both these cases, their behavior transcended the normal, expected behavior of players in that situation. These types of behaviors should characterize the player who is concerned more with God's priorities than his/her own.

Transition to Lab time

PRINCIPLE #5

VICTORY BEYOND COMPETITION

God Requires Total Investment Today for Eternal Return Tomorrow

LIVE IT

1. As you listened to this Principle being taught, did you become aware of any hidden or forgotten talents that God has given you? List them out.

2. What would stop you from investing your talents immediately, completely, and faithfully?

3. If you knew you only had one year left, who would you invest your life in and what would you do to leave a legacy?



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Principle #5: Victory Beyond Competition

What is the question we are asking for this Principle?

- *Does it Matter How I live today?*

What is the main point(s) of this Principle?

- *Living/serving with an eternal perspective*

Discussion Questions

1. What gifts and abilities do you feel you've been entrusted with by God?
2. What hurts your perseverance in trying to be a good and faithful servant with those gifts?
What builds your perseverance for the same?
3. What are some ways you could "invest" your talents to bring joy to the Master?
 - a. Are you faithfully doing that?
 - b. If not, what do you need to do in order to better use your talents to honor God?
4. How could you implement one or more of these Principles into your career?
5. If you only had one month left to live and make an impact, what do you want your legacy to be?

“Your career is short, your life is short. Focus on what really matters (God, people).”

Principle Breakdown Grid #5-Victory Beyond Competition

What is the question we are asking for this Principle?

How do I live for God's kingdom instead of my kingdom?

What is the main point(s) of this Principle?

- God requires total investment today for eternal return tomorrow
- Investing your service and life in God's kingdom aligns you with God's mission in the world
- Living/serving with an eternal perspective changes our outlook on everything and brings the most important things into focus.

If the audience only gets one thing out of this principle what should that be?

Your career is short, your life is short. Focus on what really matters (God, people).

Why is this the Biblical text for this principle? How does it illustrate the point?

It's about stewardship and making choices based on future realities.

What should be some of your first words to your audience as you introduce this Principle?

- Quick review of the first 4 Principles.
- "How do I live for God's kingdom instead of my kingdom?"
- A story, movie clip, example of an athlete/person who lived with a short sighted perspective and how that didn't turn out good for them.

What are we asking the audience to consider changing about the way they do service?

Put a higher value on the things that last forever and don't get so focused on just the immediate victory. Be fully present in the moments of their profession, while also having eternal perspective. This hopefully helps you realize the significance of each moment, allowing you to be more fully present, because you have a more balanced perspective on temporal victory verses eternal victory.

What is the most challenging thing about teaching this Principle?

- Getting people to engage when talking about forever/eternal things.
- For some people it is too big picture and too abstract of a topic.
- Getting them to see the eternal significance of their service

How do you go about picking examples to use for this Principle?

- Pick stories of how what we think is so important on earth, is really so temporary...championships, awards, recognition, etc.
- Stories about how sports medicine careers can be short and how earthly glory fades quickly.

Who is your audience and how can you connect the material with them?

- This may be the first time a new believer has ever thought about how this life connects with the next life. - Most "seasoned" believers may not even think about this much either.
- Share with them how you stay focused on eternity, or admit that you struggle to do that