

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR THE WEEK OF AUGUST 14-20

Series Title:           GAME CHANGERS

Message Title: RISK

## INTRODUCTION

This week we are beginning a new series entitled "Game Changers". Over the next 4 weeks will not only be taking a journey down memory lane remembering the board games we loved to play as kids but asking ourselves the following question...How can I be a game changer? For so many of us the fall is the beginning of a new year. No, not a calendar year but the beginning of a new season...the school year. We want this to be a game changing year for you so over the next several weeks we will be challenging you in ways you can be a game changer.

Before Your Small Group Meeting:

- Watch Pastor Mark's Message
- Read Matthew 25:14-30

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Icebreaker Question: What was your favorite board game growing up and why?

1. What is one thing that challenged you from Pastor Mark's message this week?
2. What would you do if you knew you wouldn't fail? What would you do if you knew you would fail, but a greater victory would come from it? Discuss
3. In this parable, what mistake did the third servant (the one who took one talent) make?
4. Whom do you identify most with in this parable; the successful investors or the do-nothing servant? Explain

## RESPOND IN PRAYER

Spend time in prayer reflecting on how God has blessed you with unique gifts and how you can best use those gifts for His glory.

## FOR FURTHER STUDY

Commentary on Matthew 25:14-30

The preceding parable emphasized that we must always be ready, but it did not reveal anything about the specific ways to live. In this parable, and in the final account of the judgment (25:31–46), Jesus gave his disciples some practical direction about how to live in readiness for his return.

This parable demonstrates how saving faith in the Messiah will manifest itself in practical terms. This parable seems to go beyond the first three in that it takes the watchfulness to new levels of practical obedience and, therefore, to reward. The true disciples' readiness will involve careful stewardship of assets during the king's absence in anticipation of reward.

25:14–15. This parable begins immediately with the word *again* (*hosper*, meaning "just as, even as," an abbreviated version of the introductory formula in 25:1). This is another parable teaching something about the kingdom of heaven. A man (representing Jesus) was about to set out on a journey (representing the time before Jesus' return; cf. 21:33). While he was gone, he needed to be sure that his property was well cared for, so he called his servants and entrusted (*paradidomi*, "hand over") his possessions to them before leaving.

Every Christian is entrusted with some responsibility for the kingdom. Some will take this seriously and invest their lives wisely, and others will squander this responsibility. The part of the kingdom entrusted to each of us is precious to the Lord. He is hurt by the mishandling of a lifetime of opportunity; but he rejoices over a lifetime well spent. He has placed in our hands what is his own. This is a sobering thought—to be stewards of kingdom resources.

One unique element in this parable is the different property entrusted to each servant—five talents to one, two talents to the second, and one talent to the third, each according to his ability. The Lord knows us, and he knows the full potential of each person for serving the kingdom. He designed that potential into each of us when he created us. No one is entrusted with more than he can handle, but neither is he entrusted with less than he can handle.

The person entrusted with little will be required to do all he can with the little he has been given. All of us are to live up to our full potential, by God's strength, with his wisdom, for his kingdom. This stewardship is comprehensive. It includes time, talents, spiritual gifts, energies, personality, experiences, attitudes, and material resources.

25:16–18. The phrase *At once* implied prompt obedience on the part of the first servant (as well as the second; note so also in 25:17). These two servants did not miss a single opportunity to bring their master a return on his investment. They put his money to work, meaning they invested for a profit. Each doubled the amount entrusted to him during his master's absence. There was no doubt that the first two servants worked hard for the master.

Investing resources (e.g., money, energy, abilities) has always been a risky business. Even the wisest investor risks losing increases if something happens at the wrong time (e.g., a famine, a war). Implied in the two faithful servants' actions here was a certain amount of risk. But it was obedient risk. They were expected to do what was prudent—what would normally turn a profit, based on their wisdom drawn from life experience.

Believers also are required to obey Jesus in all things, even when risk is involved, even when we do not see the end results. This is not the same as foolish extravagance or taking risks to test the Lord, without the likelihood of a return on the investment. It does not mean taking chances without thinking ahead. But it implies a life lived on the edge of faith. Such a consistently obedient, faith-filled life pleases the Lord and accomplishes his kingdom purposes.

In contrast, the third servant—who had received one talent—played it safe by burying his talent and waiting for his master’s return. His life failed to realize any impact or gain for his master. He demonstrated an appalling lack of understanding of his master. He clearly did not know him very well. Too many so-called “believers” fail to believe the Lord enough to obey him, revealing a lack of faith through passive spirituality and failure to step out in “risky” obedience.

25:19–23. The phrase after a long time was Jesus’ acknowledgment that there would be quite a time gap before his final coming. It also implied significant opportunity for kingdom gain by those he has entrusted with kingdom resources. Now it was time to settle their accounts, and the servants brought the master’s property to him.

Jesus used the threefold pattern of story telling, which was so common in that age. The first two repetitions established a pattern, and the third became a contrasting departure from this pattern. The first two servants brought the original quantity he had given them, plus a 100 percent profit. Between the two of them, they had turned seven talents into fourteen. The master gave the identical response to each of the first two servants. Even though the second servant had earned only two talents, in contrast to the five of the first, each had lived up to 100 percent of his potential.

The master’s well done was the greatest reward a loyal servant could have hoped for. He called each of them a good and faithful servant. The two adjectives together describe a person who is reliable because of his loyalty and good character, as evidenced by the investment of his ability. In addition to verbal praise, the master rewarded each of the first two servants with even greater responsibility (cf. 24:47). They had been faithful with a few things, so he would entrust them with even more (many things). And finally, he invited them both to share your master’s happiness.

The point is clear. When the king returns, he will require an accounting from all of us. Those who have consistently invested their lives obediently and wisely, according to heaven’s priorities will have a return to offer the king. This return may include personal growth and maturity, souls brought into the kingdom, spiritual infants who have been raised to maturity, needs compassionately ministered to, wounds healed, conflicts reconciled, truth lovingly told. The investment we will have made for this return will be all we have been entrusted with in this life: our time, wealth, opportunities, relationships, natural talents and spiritual gifts, a mind and a conscience, as well as God’s Word, God’s Spirit, and God’s church.

The well done awaiting such a servant is the music of eternity—full reward for the person who has been truly loyal to the master. But much more awaits the good and faithful servant of the Messiah. The faithful servant will have even more privilege and responsibility as well as a share in the master’s happiness. By living their lives fully vested in kingdom interests and growth, they had gained an entrance into the kingdom (cf. 2 Pet. 1:5–11).

25:24–25. Finally, the third servant came to answer to the master for the opportunity he had received. Presenting the master’s one talent to him—no more, no less—the servant explained that he kept the talent safe out of fear—fear of the master’s hardness, expecting return where he had made no investment (harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed). The servant feared the master’s wrath if he should lose the master’s talent, so he buried it safely to return what was his. He toiled to “keep his nose clean,” so to speak. This servant did not know the heart of his king. He did not contribute to the kingdom’s advancement.

The first two servants acted out of loving loyalty, but the third acted out of selfish fear. The first two were motivated by the hope of pleasing the master; the third by fear of displeasing him. The two motives sound the same, but the end result is quite different. A certain “fear of the Lord” is critical to holy, faithful living (Prov. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:17). But this is not paralyzing fear. Healthy fear is accompanied by a knowledge of the love of God, while paralyzing fear knows nothing of God’s love. This man wasted his investment and failed to advance the kingdom.

25:26–28. The master’s response to the third servant revealed that the servant’s motive was actually evil, disloyal, and unloving. You wicked, lazy servant stands in dramatic contrast to “good and faithful servant” (25:21, 23), implying that the servant’s laziness was not because of a lack of

ability or opportunity. The servant's "safe" behavior and apparent desire not to displease the master were smokescreens for his self-serving and disobedient heart. In reality, he refused to take any risks or do any work. He did not spend himself in the kingdom's interest. He was selfish, lazy, and arrogant.

The master used this servant's own words against him. He explained that his demanding character should have challenged the servant all the more to invest the talent. This was obviously the master's will—to gain some return. Even a small return from interest would show some degree of loyal obedience.

The master commanded that the third servant's small amount of responsibility be taken from him and given to the first servant, who had shown great responsibility. Our God is a God of high standards, demanding much from his servants. But he never demands more than we can produce because we are empowered by his love, wisdom, and power.

This servant's limited knowledge of his master—he knew only the man's stern side but not his love—was his excuse to handle his master's wealth irresponsibly. Many believers today know only a God of rules and wrath, so they float passively and attempt to excuse their sins of omission. God has given them ample opportunity to learn of his love (11:29), but their own undisciplined hearts make them blindly foolish, and they squander their lifetimes. They call themselves Christians, but they are biding their time, trying to "stay out of trouble," awaiting glory in heaven. Perhaps Jesus sensed this behind the disciples' question (24:3).

In our lifestyle of comfort in Western culture, we are too easily lulled to sleep. We fail to live the life of obedient, faith-filled "risk," and so we fail to bear kingdom fruit, displeasing our Master. Such action will come back to haunt us at the judgment seat of Christ.

25:29–30. Before proclaiming the evil servant's recompense, Jesus put into the master's mouth the central point of the parable. Everyone who has implies faithfulness with what has been entrusted to them. This will be rewarded with even greater trust—privileged responsibility and reward—from God. Such faithful servants will have an abundance. Every need and desire will be met, and more.

But whoever does not have implies self-centered unfaithfulness with what was entrusted. This will be recompensed with the removal of all that has been entrusted to him, since he had proven untrustworthy. It is clear that this servant will not share in the rewards of the king (8:12; 22:13). He had squandered his lifetime of opportunity.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Weber, S. K. (2000). [Matthew](#) (Vol. 1, pp. 419–423). Broadman & Holman Publishers.