

**IF YOU WANT TO
WALK ON WATER
YOU'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF THE
BOAT**

Session Two:
The Tragedy of the
Unopened Gift

The Tragedy of the Unopened Gift

Whether I'm a five-talent, two-talent, or one-talent person is not what counts in the long run... I must come to identify, cultivate, invest, prize, and enjoy the gifts that have been given to me.

John Ortberg

Questions to Think About

1. Identify the most valuable, irreplaceable gifts you have received in your life.
 - a. Consider whether those gifts seem so precious to you that you were afraid to use them. Explain your response.
 - b. Evaluate the risk of using such special gifts compared with not using them.

2. Which gifts do we tend to value most highly? In what ways do we minimize the value of other gifts in light of those we consider most valuable?

Sunday's Sermon

Two ways to look at a gift, talent, or ability

Jesus tells a story of three servants

The Lord of the Gift

The Lord of the Settled Account

The Lord of the Reward

Consider...

1. How strongly do you believe that God has given each of us a gift, talent, or ability of immeasurable worth? What have you chosen to do with it?
2. What parallels do you see between Jesus' parable of the choices made by the three servants and how we choose to use our God-given gifts today?
3. What encouragement, caution, or hope for using your gifts do you recognize God as the Lord of the Gift, the Lord of the Settled Account, and the Lord of Reward?

Large Group Exploration

The Opportunity of a Lifetime

Jesus shared a powerful parable about a CEO who gave each of the three employees a great opportunity. He “entrusted his property to them,” generously giving each of them a staggering sum of money to manage for him while he went on a trip. It was the opportunity of a lifetime – vocationally, organizationally, and financially! Let’s see what the parable reveals about God and the opportunities he offers to us today.

1. How much money did the three servants receive, and what criteria did the CEO use in distributing it? [see Matthew 25:14-15]
2. Given this opportunity to exercise initiative, test their marketplace skills and judgment, and perhaps gain more responsibility in the future, what did each of the servants do with the money? [see Matthew 25:16-18]
3. How did the CEO respond to what his servants had done with his money when he returned home? [see Matthew 25:19-30]
4. What insight does Matthew 25:25 reveal about why the wicked, lazy servant buried his talent?
 - a. What does the Bible reveal about what will happen when Jesus returns? [see Matthew 25:31-34]
 - b. What do the following verses reveal about God’s rewards, the wonderful things he has in store for Christians who are good stewards of whatever gifts, large or small, he has given them? [see Matthew 16:27; Ephesians 6:7-8]

The Tragedy of the Unopened Gift

To sinful patterns that never get confronted and changed,
Abilities and gifts that never get cultivated and deployed –
Until weeks become months and months turn into years,
And one day you're looking back on a life of
deep, intimate,
gut-wrenchingly honest conversations you never had;
Great bold prayers you never prayed,
Exhilarating risks you never took,
Sacrificial gifts you never offered,
Lives you never touched,
And you're sitting in a recliner with a shrivelled soul,
And forgotten dreams, and you realise there was a world of
desperate need,
And a great God calling you to be a part of something bigger than
yourself –
You see the person you could have become but did not;
You never followed your calling.
You never got out of the boat.

Gregg Levoy

2. God doesn't give us gifts simply for our personal benefit. First Peter 4:19-11 indicates that we are to use our gifts and abilities to serve and bring glory to God. Note what each of the following Scripture passages says about how we are to use God's gifts to us.

Our Gift	How We Are to Use It	Scripture
Our Minds		Romans 12:2; Philippians 4:8; Colossians 3:2
Our Bodies		Romans 6:12-13; 12-1 1 Corinthians 6:19-20
Our Money		Proverbs 3:9; Luke 12:12:15; 14:28 James 2:14-18

3. What does John 15:3-8 reveal about God's partnership with us as we seek to use our gifts for him?

God Multiplies Our Gifts

The Bible is full of examples of how the Lord of the Gift uses even the smallest gifts of talents, resources, or love to make a huge difference. Consider the following examples.

The Giver of the Gift	The Gift	How God Used the Gift
The disciples Matthew 14:13-21	Five Loaves, two fish	Fed five thousand men, plus women & children
Widow Mark 12:41-44	Two small coins	Used it to illustrate faithfulness in service
The disciples Matthew 4:18:22; 9:9	Themselves – simple fishermen, a tax collector, etc.	Used the disciples to spread the love & truth of Jesus worldwide
Esther Esther 4:12-16; 5:1-3; 8:1-2,10-13	Herself – willing to risk death by going before the king	Used Esther to save the Jews from destruction
Samuel's parents 1 Samuel 1:20-28	Dedicated their son, Samuel, to the Lord	Used Samuel as a prophet, priest, and judge to influence the Israelites to follow God

Personal Journey: To Do Now

1. How do you feel about the gifts God has given you? Do you prize and appreciate what God has given you? Why or why not?

2. In what ways have you used the gifts God has given you?
How do you feel about your stewardship of those gifts?

3. What are some of the reasons you have not used a gift God has given you?

4. If Jesus were to ask you, "What are you doing today with what I've given you?" how would you answer?
 - a. In what areas of your life are you not realizing your potential?
Why?
 - b. In what areas of your life might God want you to respond to him in a different way?
 - c. In what areas of your life might God want to take action?

5. If you have a regret regarding what you have done with your gifts, what is it? What steps could you start taking today to turn things around, to step out of the boat and start using your gifts?

Personal Journey: To Do On Your Own

During this session, we've started to explore the gifts God has given us and why we need to use them wisely. But our motivation to use our gifts should be more than a sense of obligation. God wants us to experience the adventure of stepping out of our boats and partnering with him to use our gifts for his glory. Set aside some time to do the following.

1. John Ortberg points out three reasons why people bury their gift: fear, comparison, and sloth. Consider your gift and what you have [or have not] done with it in light of each reason. How has each contributed to your current status as a boat potato or water-walker?

My Gift	Fear	Comparison	Sloth

2. In *If You Want to Walk on Water, You've Got to Get Out of the Boat*, John Ortberg asks his readers to imagine the following scenario. Take some time to imagine yourself in this scenario, then consider the questions that follow. Imagine that your life is over, and you are led to a small room. There are two chairs in the room, one for you and one for God. [who gets the very large chair?], and there's a VCR. God puts a tape into the machine. It has your name on it and is labelled *What Might Have Been*.

Imagine watching all that God might have done with your life if you had let him. Imagine seeing what he might have done with your financial resources if you had trusted him to be generous. Imagine seeing what he might have done with your giftedness if you had trusted him enough to be daring. Imagine what he might have done in your relationships if you had trusted him enough to be fully truthful and fully loving. Imagine what he might have done with your character, if you had dared to confess sin, acknowledge temptation, and pursue growth.

- a. If you had to name the "one true thing" that you believe you were sent on earth to do, what would it be?
- b. On a scale of one to ten, with ten being the most growth, how much are you presently growing in the following areas: Vocationally? Relationally? Intellectually? Spiritually? What do your answers reveal?
- c. If you were to die tomorrow, what would you want your epitaph to say?
- d. Which gift have you left unopened that you would like to give God to redeem and use for his glory?
- e. What do you want to begin doing today in order to come as close as you can to realizing the full potential of what God intends for your life?
- f. Ask God to reveal to you what gifts he wants you to use, and then step out in faith knowing that when God commands us to do something, he enables us to do it, just as he enabled Peter on the water.