

Lesson One Use God's Gifts

Parable of the Talents

Memory Verse

James 1:5

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above."

Parable Story:

Parable of the Talents
(Matthew 25:14-30)

Scripture Suggestions:

100 Reasons
A Beautiful Life
Count Your Blessings
Be Thou My Vision
Great Is Thy Faithfulness
Make Me a Servant

Preparatory Considerations

1. This class is divided into several "blocks" of instruction. To ensure that all the material is covered, you will want to consider carefully each block of instruction in preparation for class.
2. Read all the Scripture references in the lesson.
3. Make sure that all materials are prepared for the students' use. The following materials will be required for this class:
 - Student Book
 - Visual Aids—See The Bible Book
 - Visual Aids marked Lesson One— Cowboy Comedy Poster; Lesson One Memory Verse Poster; Ground Visual; Bag of Talents reproducible
 - colored markers, glitter pens, stickers, and other decoration items (Block Four)
 - scraps (1" x 1") of multi-colored construction paper (Block Four)
 - pens or markers (Block Four)
 - tape or stapler (Block Four)



Saddle Up

- Welcome students.
- Introduce the theme.
- Introduce the lesson topic, *Use God's Gifts*. To be good stewards, we must use the gifts God gives us.
- Introduce Memory Verse.

A. Begin by welcoming the students to class. Be sure to introduce yourself and each of your co-teachers as ranch foremen. If time permits, allow each student to introduce himself to the class and tell something special about himself such as his favorite color, hobby, sport, etc.

B. Explain the theme of the VBS. **In this VBS, we are all going to be ranch hands working on a cattle ranch.** Have some fun with the students teaching them to talk like a ranch hand:

- **Does anyone know how a ranch hand says, "Hello?" They say, "Howdy!"** Allow the students to greet each other and you by saying, "Howdy!"
- **Does anyone know what ranch hands say when they are excited? They shout, "Yee-Haw!"** Ask the students to shout "Yee-Haw!"

Ask if any of the students have ever been to a working ranch. Allow them to share their experiences. Ask the following questions:

- **What are some of the duties of a ranch hand?** feeding the animals, protecting the animals, mending fences so the animals cannot wander away, etc.
- **Does anyone know what a round-up is?** It was an event in which several ranch hands gathered on horseback to gather the cattle together in one place.
- **Why is the job of a ranch hand important?** The rancher has a lot of time and money invested in his cattle. It is the duty of the hired ranch hand to take good care of all that belongs to the rancher.

C. **In many ways, our lives are similar to working on a cattle ranch. God has given us so many blessings. As a ranch hand, we are expected to take good care of all the animals, God expects us to take good care of all His blessings. Everything we have belongs to God, and we are expected to care for every blessing He gives us. Not only do we receive blessings from God, we also belong to Him. We are like working ranch hands on a big ranch, and everything we do should be done for Him.** Introduce the Memory Verse. Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. 1 Corinthians 10:31. **Each time God blesses us with a blessing, He also gives us a responsibility. The responsibility is to use that blessing to glorify Him.**

D. Introduce the topic for Lesson One. **What must we do before we can take full advantage of God's blessings? We must round them up! If we do not know what our blessings are, how can we use them? This VBS will begin with a "blessing round-up" in which you will discover many of the wonderful blessings that God gives us each day and the responsibilities that are given with each blessing.** Before VBS begins, place five of the Cowboy Comedy posters on the wall where the students can see them. At this time, direct the students' attention to the Cowboy Comedy poster marked Lesson One. Ask: **What is the cowboy doing? What is he doing wrong? What might make his job easier? How is he failing to act responsibly with what has been given to him?** The cowboy in the poster is failing to do his job well because he is not using the tools that have been given to him. **We often act in the same way. God has given us many wonderful gifts to help us glorify Him in everything we do. When we fail to use the gifts that are given to us, we fail to be the good servants He wants us to be.**

Introduce the memory verse for Lesson One. **"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above," James 1:17.**

Ask the following questions to help the students better understand the verse:

- **What does it mean that our gifts come "from above?"** Our gifts come from God. He has blessed us all with gifts that can be used to glorify Him.
- **What is meant by "Every good gift and every perfect gift?"** Every gift God gives us is meant to do good. Each gift is perfectly chosen for each person.
- **How do we minister our gifts to one another?** We can use the gifts God gives us to both glorify Him and help our fellow man.

Don't become like the cowboy in the Cowboy Comedy poster. When God gives us a gift, we should use it to serve Him.





Bible Story Time

- Explore the Parable of the Talents
- Discover the importance of using the gifts God gives us for His glory.

The Bible stories in this VBS will be taken from the parables of Jesus. A parable is a story that teaches a lesson by comparing the people or objects in the story to the people who are listening. Jesus was a wonderful teacher and He told many parables. The parables He told would often make it easier for His listeners to understand His message. Many times, these parables were used to teach Jesus' followers the importance of taking good care of God's blessings.

The Parable of the Talents

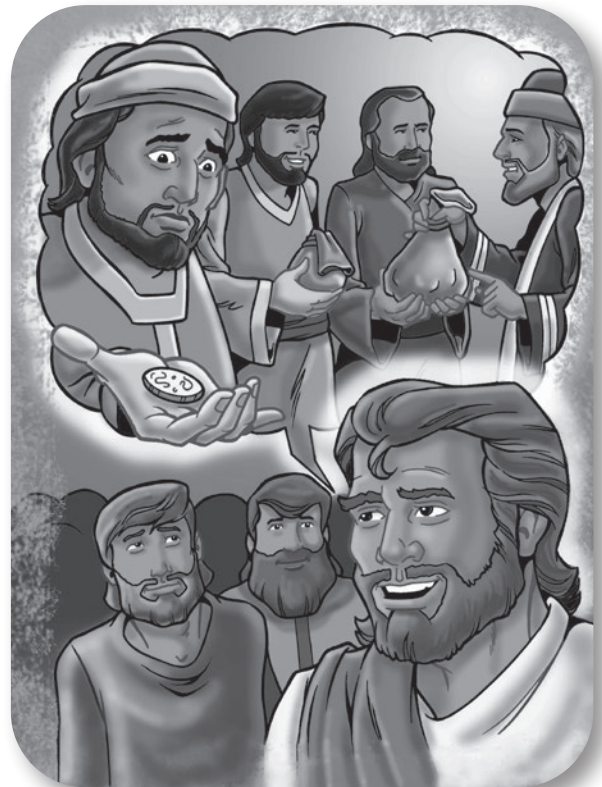
Remove the Story Time Bible Book from the Visual Aid Packet. Turn to the first group of pictures, and show the corresponding pictures as you read the following story. Scripture reference: Matthew 25:14-30

PICTURE ONE

When Jesus came to live on this earth, He did many wonderful things. He also taught many wonderful lessons. Jesus is sometimes called the master teacher because He was so good at teaching others. Wherever He went, people would follow Him so they could learn from Him. Jesus liked to teach the people by telling stories called parables. A parable is a story that teaches a lesson. We can learn from parables by comparing the lessons taught in the parables to the lessons we can learn. Jesus told many parables to the people who followed Him.

One day, Jesus told His followers a parable about talents. The word *talent* means a different thing during the time that Jesus lived than it does today. The talents that Jesus told about were a kind of money. They looked similar to coins but were actually weights that were used to measure something you might want to buy. Talents could be made of copper, silver, or even gold.

In the beginning of the parable, Jesus told His disciples about a man who had many servants. This man had to leave his home to go on a journey, so he called his servants together and told them to take care of his things while he was gone. He even wanted his servants to take care of his talents, his money. To one servant, he gave five talents to take care of. He gave two talents to the second servant. And then he gave one talent to the third servant. Then the man left on a journey.



PICTURE TWO

While the man was away on his journey, the first servant who was given five talents took good care of the talents he was given. He went out and used his talents by buying, selling, and trading with them to make more talents. After much work, he made five more talents, giving him ten talents in all.

The second servant, who was given two talents, also took good care of the talents that were given to him. Like the first servant, he also used his talents to make more talents. When he had finished his work, he had earned two more talents, giving him four talents in all. These two servants did just what they were supposed to do. They worked hard, took good care of their master's talents, and earned more talents for him.

But the third servant did not use his talent wisely. Instead of using his one talent to earn more talents for his master, he dug a hole in the ground and buried the talent where no one could find it. We do not know exactly why he would

act so foolishly. He may have been afraid of losing his talent. He may have felt he was not able to make more talents like the first two servants. He even may have been embarrassed because he had not been given as many talents as the first two servants.

After the journey was over, the man returned home and called his servants together. He wanted to see if they had taken good care of the things he had given them. The first servant showed his master his talents and told him that he had taken the five talents he had been given and earned five more. The master was very happy with the servant. "You have done very well with them. Because you have taken such good care of the things, I will trust you with even more from now on." The second servant also showed his master what he had done with his talents. "I took the two talents you gave me and made two more talents!" he said. "You have also done very well!" the master told the second servant. "Because you have been so faithful in a few things, I will trust you with many things."

PICTURE THREE

Then it was the third servant's turn to show his master what he had done with his talent. "I was afraid," the servant said. "I did not use the talent you gave me at all. I took it and buried it in the ground. Here! You can have it back."

The master was very angry with the third servant. He had not taken good care of the talent that was given to him. The master had wanted all his servants to use their talents wisely. "You wicked and lazy servant! You should have used my money and made more money for me," the master said. "You could have done something with the talent I gave you. At least you could have put it in the bank so that it would have earned interest by the time I returned!" The

master took the one talent from the servant and gave it to the first servant who had been so faithful with the talents that were given. Then he punished the lazy servant.

The master wanted his servants to take good care of the things they had been given. The reason Jesus told this parable is because He wants us to learn that it is very important for us to take good care of the things we have been given. The master in the parable can be compared to God and we are the servants. God gives us many blessings. If we want to please Him, we must use the blessings He has given us to do good things for Him.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How many talents did the man give to each of his servants? five, two, and one
2. What did the first two servants do with their talents? They used them to make more talents.
3. What did the third servant do with his talent? He buried it.
4. When the man returned from his journey, with which of his servants was he pleased? the first two
5. Why was the man not pleased with the third servant? He felt the third servant had been lazy and had not been wise in using the talent that was given to him.
6. What can we learn from this parable? We can learn that God expects us to use the gifts He has given us.



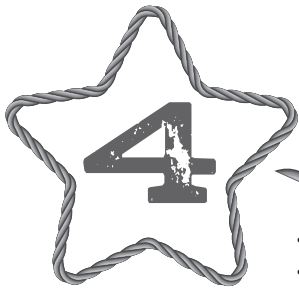
Saddling Up for His Service

- Apply the parable to their lives.

Instruct the students to turn to page 2 in their Ranch Journals to the section titled, *Saddling Up for His Service*. Remind the students of what they have already learned, that each person is blessed with many and various gifts. What are their gifts? On page 2 of their Ranch Journal, students will find several coin bags. (You may choose to explain to your students that the term *talent* was not the same as a coin. It was used to identify the weight of the item and not the item itself.) **Think of some blessings that God has given you. These blessings could include personal possessions, family, unique abilities, skills** (playing soccer, science, writing) **or attributes** (kindness, outgoing nature, patience).

Allow the students some moments to record their special blessings inside the bags. Depending on the age and ability of your students, some students may need help writing their answers. Upon completion, allow the students to share their blessings with the class, discuss these blessings and think of some creative ways that the students can use them to glorify God and help their fellow man. (Students of this age may arrive at a variety of answers. That is okay. For example, if a student gives such answers as a cat or dog, you can still discuss that we can glorify God by treating our pets in the proper way and learn how to help other animals.)





Activity Stamped!

- Reinforce the lesson.
- Create a hands-on learning experience that will solidify the lesson in the students' minds.
- Have fun!

The following activities are all designed with the same purpose in mind—to reinforce the lesson. They are not listed in any certain order; there are a number of ways you can choose to coordinate them. Depending on the number of students, the number of teachers available, the size of your classroom, and the time allotment, you may decide to perform these activities all at a time with the entire class or separate your class into small groups and rotate through stations. Obviously, you may elect to pick which activities work best for you and only perform those activities. However, it is important for this age group that each group of students has adult supervision.

Who Buried the Talent?

Materials needed: Visual Aid marked Lesson One—Ground, Bag of Talents reproducible (several copies) crayons, markers, glitter pens, stickers and other decoration items

Before class begins, make several copies of the Bag of Talents reproducible, one bag for each student. Cut out the bags and bring them to class. Give each student one Bag of Talents. Have them decorate their bags in any way they wish. As they work, give a review of the Parable of the Talents, focusing on the man who buried his talent. **SAY: The talents that Jesus told about were a kind of money. They looked similar to coins. Talents were weights that were used to measure something one might want to buy. Talents could be made of copper, silver, or even gold.**

Once students have finished decorating their bags, the bags should be spread across the table where they can be seen along with the Ground Visual Aid. Choose one student to be "it." This student should close her eyes. While "it" has her eyes closed, tap another student on the shoulder. This student should quietly "bury" his bag by placing it under the Ground Visual Aid. Instruct "it" to open her eyes and look at the bags that are remaining on the table. "It" should try to guess which student has buried his talent (or money bag). "It" should tap the student which student has buried his talent until she guesses correctly. Choose another student to be "it" and play again. Continue to play until all students have had a chance to be "it." Upon conclusion, **SAY: The talents represent all the wonderful blessings God gives us. God does not want us to bury our talents by failing to use them. Even if no one else knows we are not using our blessings, God knows when we have "buried our talents."**



The Blessing Rope

Materials needed: strips (1" x 9") of multi-colored construction paper
pens or markers
tape or stapler

Before class, cut different colored construction paper into 1"x 9" strips. Make sure you have several strips per student. Lay the strips of paper on the table along with pens or markers. SAY: **Every ranch hand needs a Blessing Rope. You are going to be working together to make a Blessing Rope with these strips of construction paper. Let's see how long your Blessing Rope can grow.** Have your students write the blessings God has given them on the strips of paper, one blessing per strip, and hand them to you. As they complete their strips, use them to make a paper chain, taping the links together. Upon completion, hang the Blessing Rope around the room. (Option: You may want to make extra strips so that students can add to the Blessing Rope throughout the week.)

The Blessing Roundup

For this activity students should be seated together at a table or on the floor in a circle. Teach the students this chant:

**Yee-Haw! It's roundup time! God is so good to me.
He has made so many good things like (insert blessing) you see**

Choose a student to go first. When the student reaches the phrase, "insert blessing," the student should state one thing that God has made. He can name anything he chooses such as trees, friends, horses, apples, or chocolate. The next student in the circle should immediately begin the chant. She must repeat the item that the first student stated and add her own item. For example, if the first student said "He has made so many good things like sunshine you see," then the next student should say, "He has made so many good things like sunshine and flowers you see." Continue with each student adding another item to the list. If a student is unable to name the items in the correct order, he is eliminated from the game. (You may decide to give each student two misses before being eliminated.) Continue until one player, the winner, is left.



Ranch Journal

Allow the students to complete the activities from Lesson One in their Student Books.