

# Lesson One Use God's Gifts

## Parable of the Talents

### Memory Verse:

James 1:17

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

### Bible Story:

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

### Song Suggestions:

1,000 Reasons  
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 four 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 necessary materials are prepared for the students' use. The following materials will be required for this class:
  - Student Book
  - Visual Aids made for Lesson One— Cowboy Comedy Poster; Lesson One Memory Verse Poster; Fruit Cards reproducible; Ground Visual; Bag of Talents reproducible
  - Pens or markers (Block Four)
  - beanbag or other soft object to throw (Block Four)
  - Pens, markers, glitter pens, stickers, and other decoration items (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.

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 livestock, protecting the livestock, mending fences so the livestock cannot wander away, etc.
- **What is a cattle roundup?** A roundup is an event in which several ranch hands mounted on horseback gather all the cattle together in one place.
- **What does it mean to be branded?** Branding is the process of permanently marking a symbol on the side of an animal to be able to identify the owner of the animal. Branding can be done by heating a branding iron or using an electric brander or sometimes even freeze branding which makes the hair in the branded area grow in white.
- **Why is it important to brand the cattle?** Branding is important so everyone will know who it belongs to; so that lost cattle can be returned to the owner.
- **Do the cattle belong to the ranch hands who are doing the branding?** Not usually. They are hired hands.
- **Why is the job of a ranch hand important?** The ranch hand has a lot of time and money invested in his job. 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 here on earth are similar to working on a cattle ranch. God has entrusted us with so many blessings. Though God entrusts us with these blessings, in reality everything we have belongs to Him. In a sense, each of us has been branded by God. We are like the ranch hands knowing that it is our responsibility to take care of these blessings. As God's children when we become His we are branded, sealed with the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 1:13). In this VBS, we will discover the importance of using every blessing, every moment, and every opportunity to glorify God.** Introduce the VBS theme verse. "Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" 1 Corinthians 10:31. **Each time God entrusts 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 do before we can take care of God's blessings? We must round them up. If we do not know what our blessings are, how can we take care of them? Each lesson of the VBS will begin with a "blessing roundup" in order to discover many of the wonderful blessings that God gives us each day and the responsibilities that are given with each blessing.**

E. Before VBS begins, place all five of the Cowboy Comedy posters on the wall where your 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 become the good servants He wants us to be.**





# The Parable of the Talents

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

A. **The Bible stories in this VBS will be taken from the parables of Jesus. A parable is a simple story that teaches a lesson. Jesus, the Master Teacher, understood the benefit of telling a simple story when teaching an important lesson. The parables made it easier to understand His message by comparing the people and objects in the parables to the listeners themselves. Often, parables were used to teach Jesus' followers about the responsibilities that accompany God's blessings.** Instruct the students to turn to page 1 in their Ranch Journals where the lesson text has been written. Allow the students to take turns reading from the Bible story. Text is taken from Matthew 25:14-30.

## Inside the Parable

- Although they were used to buy and sell, the *talents* to which Jesus referred were not coins. Neither were they the same as the *talents* we speak of today, meaning a special ability that someone has. They were a weight or a unit of measure and could be used to determine the value of various items. A talent made of gold would be more valuable than a talent made of silver, for example.
- Scripture, especially within parables, often depicts a wealthy man who must leave his home for an extended journey and leave his possessions in the care of others. The travel was difficult and transportation was slow and limited, extended journeys for the elite were common during the first century.
- The comparisons in this parable are fairly obvious: the wealthy man represents God. The servants represent those of us whom God has entrusted with His blessings. The talents represent any of the number of blessings that God gives us. Our money, gifts, or abilities, and our possessions are all blessings that God bestows on each of us. The blessing is, in fact, an opportunity to glorify His name.

B. Retell the parable in your own words or discuss the parable with the students. Be sure to include the background and application information listed above. Ask the students the following questions:

- 1. How many talents did the master trust to each servant?** five, two, and one
- 2. Why do you believe he gave each servant a different amount?** Although we cannot be sure, he probably left each servant with the amount he felt he was capable of managing.
- 3. What did the five talent- and two talent-servants do with their talents?** They began to trade with the talents. They probably went into the marketplace and bought and sold goods with the talents they had been given. In an effort to please the master, they made wise choices and used the talents to gain more wealth for him.
- Why do you believe the one talent-servant did not use his talent to please his master?** Again, we cannot be sure of the servant's motives, but he probably failed to act out of fear or embarrassment. He may have feared he was not capable of managing his talent as the other two had done, or he may have been embarrassed by the fact that his resources did not equal that of his peers.
- What was the result of each servant's action?** The two servants who used their talents wisely were rewarded with a greater level of trust and more resources. The one servant who failed to use his talent wisely was punished, and his only resource was taken away.



# Saddling Up for His Service

- Introduce Memory Verse.
- Apply the parable to their lives.

## A. 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 glorify Him.**

B. Instruct the students to turn to page 2 in their Ranch Journals to the section titled, *Saddling Up for His Service*. There they will find two Bible verses: Romans 12:6 and Luke 12:48, NKJV. Have students locate the first verse in their Bibles, and allow one student to read the verse aloud. Have students fill in the word(s) of the verse that describe(s) \_\_\_\_\_. Discuss the verse with the students and repeat with the second verse.

C. Remind students that each person is blessed with many and varied gifts. What are their gifts? Also on page 2 of the Ranch Journal is a section titled, “An Inventory of My Gifts,” with two columns. In the *Possessions* column, they should list physical possessions. In the *Abilities* column they should list unique talents and attributes (kindness, outgoing nature, patience). Allow the students a few moments to record the gifts that God has given them. Upon completion, divide your class into groups of two to three students each. Allow each group to discuss their gifts and think of some creative ways that they can use their gifts to glorify God and help their fellow man. After they have finished, allow the groups to share one or two of their best answers with the class.



# Activity Stampede!

- Reinforce the lesson.
- Provide a hands-on learning experience that will solidify the lesson in the students’ minds.
- Be fun!

The following activities are designed with the same purpose in mind—to reinforce the lesson. They are not listed in any certain order, there are many 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 one at a time with the entire class or separate your class into small groups and rotate through stations. Obviously, you may even opt 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.



# Known by Our Fruit



**Materials needed:** Fruit Cards reproducible (color version available on Multi-Media CD) pens or markers

Before class, make and cut apart copies of the Fruit Cards reproducible from the Visual Aids package. (A color version is available on the Multi-Media CD.) Make enough for each student to have at least two cards.

Hand out the Fruit Cards and have students write their names across the fruit. SAY: **God blesses us with unique talents and abilities. God wants us to use these blessings to glorify Him. Think of talents or abilities that you have been blessed. Write these abilities on the back of your Fruit, but don't let anyone else see what you are writing.**

Collect the Fruit Cards, and shuffle them. One at a time, read the talent without revealing which card you are holding. Allow the students to discuss and vote on whose card they believe you are holding. Then read the name before moving on to the next card. After all the cards have been read, read Matthew 7:18-20. SAY: **God expects us to produce results by using the abilities with which we have been blessed. If we use our talents to their fullest, others will see the fruit that is produced in our lives. Never bury your talents but use them to produce fruit.**



# Blessing Roundup

**Materials needed:** beanbag or other soft item, chalk

In a large open area of the classroom, have students stand in a circle. SAY: **God gives us many more blessings than just our talents and abilities. For 1 Timothy 6:17-19: Everything we see around us has been given to us for our enjoyment. We are expected, however, to be thankful towards all of these things. Let's create a list of some of the wonderful blessings God gives us.**

Teach the students the following chant:

**God made all that we can see.  
Here are some things God made for me.**

Hand the beanbag to one student and have him toss it from hand-to-hand as he says the chant. He should then name one thing which God has made, such as trees, friends, horses, apples, or chocolate. He will then throw the beanbag to any other student in the circle. When a student catches the beanbag, she must immediately begin saying the chant. After the chant, she should repeat the item of the first student named and add her own item. For example, if the first student said "flowers" after the chant, then the next student might say "flowers and birds." The game continues 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.

# 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 servant who buried his talent. SAY: **The talents that Jesus talked about were a kind of money. They looked similar to coins but were actually 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, all the bags should be spread out on 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 talent 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. She should try to guess which student has buried his talent (or money bag). "It" should continue to guess which student has buried his talent until she guesses correctly. Choose another student to be "it" and play again. Continue 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."**



## Ranch Journal

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