

Brought to you by



CITY BIBLE FORUM
Ask the bigger questions

citybibleforum.org

Using your God-given gifts

A cost benefit analysis of following Jesus:

What does Jesus require of me: Is it worth it?

- Session 9

Understanding that God will hold his followers accountable for how they have used their God-given gifts and opportunities in service of His business - from Luke 19:1-17

The words of Jesus

Luke 19:1-27

1 Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. 2 A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. 3 He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. 4 So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

5 When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." 6 So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

7 All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner."

8 But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."

9 Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

11 While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once. 12 He said: "A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. 13 So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas.^(a) 'Put this money to work,' he said, 'until I come back.'

14 "But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, 'We don't want this man to be our king.' 15 "He was made king, however, and returned home. Then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money, in order to find out what they had gained with it.

16 "The first one came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned ten more.' 17 "Well done, my good servant!' his master replied. 'Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.'

18 "The second came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned five more.' 19 "His master answered, 'You take charge of five cities.'

20 "Then another servant came and said, 'Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. 21 I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man. You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow.'

22 "His master replied, 'I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant! You knew, did you, that I am a hard man, taking out what I did not put in, and reaping what I did not sow? 23 Why then didn't you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?' 24 "Then he said to those standing by, 'Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.'

25 "'Sir,' they said, 'he already has ten!'

26 "He replied, 'I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what they have will be taken away. 27 But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them—bring them here and kill them in front of me.'"

Footnote:

(a) Luke 19:13 A mina was about three months' wages.

Jesus tells this parable because he is on his way to Jerusalem (Luke 19:11). People are expecting to see the kingdom of God appear. They thought that Jesus would overthrow the Romans and establish Israel as a nation again. The noble man in the parable goes to another country to have himself appointed as king – not of that country but his own country. It might be helpful to know that in the days of the Roman Empire, the puppet kings established in the area of Palestine had to go to Rome to have their kingship of their area in Palestine approved by the Roman Emperor.

Q1. Why is Jesus telling this parable?

- To explain that the kingdom of God won't appear at once – there will be a delay. The focus of the parable is what the servants do while the king is absent – their behaviour is analysed and then rewarded or condemned.

Q2. A "mina" is a sum of money (about three months wages, so a considerable amount). Do you think Jesus is just talking about how to make good monetary investments?

- No, because the parable has something to do with the kingdom of God. The mina is also something that the king gives his servants. So by implication, what Jesus the king gives his disciples could include money but could also encompass the gifts and opportunities he has given them as well. Like the servants in the parable, there is accountability for Jesus' disciples in terms of how they have used everything that they have.

Q3. If Jesus isn't just talking about how to make good monetary investments, how is good work judged? (Hint: It has something to do with the work of the king. Have a look at Luke 19:10).

- The work of the king is to seek and save the lost. So good work is judged on how Jesus' disciples have used their gifts and opportunities in service of the king's

work/God's business. So for example, God may have given a disciple a warm personality with the ability to connect easily with people. Are they using this gift to become popular and enjoy the praise of others, or are they using it to build relationships so that people can see that following Jesus is the best way to live. Another example: God may not yet have given a disciple a life partner. Are they using the greater flexibility and freedom they have with their time to indulge in holidays and new experiences, or are they using it in ways to serve other people (eg offering to help in ways that cost them time and energy).

Q4. "I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man" (verse 20). Do you think the third servant really believes this?

- No – because if he did, he would have done what the master said, and put the money on deposit (verse 23). The response of the third servant is there to show us that what the servants do is a response to what they believe about the master. The first two servants believe that the noble man is their rightful king and respond in obedience to his command to "put the money to work".

Q5. Are the servants rewarded on the basis of performance? (verse 17)

- The first is rewarded because he has been trustworthy – so it's about faithfulness rather than performance. Also, it doesn't appear that the servants had the expectation they would be rewarded – because the rewards are way out of proportion with the effort made (ten minas becomes ten cities). It's completely the master's choice to so generously reward the servants the way he does.

Q6. What if you're not yet sure you want to be a disciple?

- It's ok to carefully consider the cost of following Jesus. However it's also worth seriously considering what it means to reject Jesus as king. This is what the subjects did (verse 14) and they are condemned for it (verse 27). So if Jesus really is king – if he really did die and rise again – then that is a reality that requires a response. The response of the king to kill the subjects sounds harsh. However, it could also be read that Jesus is making a point – there is only life in Jesus' kingdom. In this way it functioning as a warning to take Jesus' kingship seriously.

- And if one does make the decision to accept Jesus as king, then there is only one way to be a disciple – to be faithful in using God-given gifts and opportunities in the service of God's business. God will hold his disciples accountable.

Published 23 October 2014
Copyright, City Bible Forum¹

¹ COPYRIGHT City Bible Forum (citybibleforum.org) is a ministry of Evangelising Commerce Inc (NSW), 2013. This material may be reproduced free-of-charge for non-profit use only as long as this copyright notice appears, and the content is not modified in any way. For any other use, or to modify the material, please contact us to arrange copyright permission, which may involve a small fee to help finance the production of such resources by the staff of City Bible Forum. Contact info@citybibleforum.org or tel: (02) 9251 1166 or GPO Box 3266, Sydney NSW 2001