Making Your Life Count for the Kingdom (MYLICK)  
Unit 4 – March 27, 2011  
The Tragedy of the Unopened Gift?

1) Today’s focus

   a. **God has given each of us a great.** That gift is immensely valuable and unique to each of us. We must choose how we view our gift: Is it too precious to use, or is it too precious not to use?

   b. **God, the Lord of the Gift, intends for us to use our gift in his service.** As the Lord of the Settled Account and the Lord of the Reward, he will hold us accountable for what we do with our gift and will reward us accordingly.

   c. **It is a tragedy to refuse to step out of the boat and use our gift to the best of our ability.**

2) Questions to Think About

   a. Identify the most valuable, irreplaceable gifts you have received in your life.
      i. Consider whether these gifts seemed so precious to you that you were afraid to use them. Explain your response.
      ii. Evaluate the risks of using such special gifts compared with not using them.

   b. 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 to be most valuable?

3) DVD

4) Highlights

   a. 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?

   b. What encouragement, caution, or hope for using your gifts do you gain by recognizing God as the Lord of the Gift, the Lord of the Settled Account, and the Lord of Reward?

5) Large Group Exploration - The Opportunity of a Lifetime

As we saw in the DVD, Jesus shared a powerful parable about a CEO who gave each of three employees a great opportunity. He "entrusted his property to them,"
generously giving each of them a staggering amount 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.

a. How much money did the three servants receive, and what criteria did the CEO use in distributing it? (See Matthew 25: 14-15.)

Note: A talent was worth about fifteen years' wages. This is an astounding amount of money, particularly because it was given at a time when most people barely earned enough to survive from one day to the next.

b. 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.)

c. How did the CEO respond to what his servants had done with his money when he returned home? (See Matthew 25:19-30.)

d. What insight does Matthew 25:25 reveal about why the wicked, lazy servant buried his talent?

e. When the CEO returned, he settled accounts with the three employees (Matthew 25:19).

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 of behavior 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 shriveled soul,
And forgotten dreams, and you realize there was a world of desperate need,
And a great God calling you to be 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

6) **Small Group Exploration** - (same for each group) Each of us has God-given
gifts. Some of us are gifted in prominent ways that are celebrated; others of us
have gifts that are ever looked or remain unseen. What matters is that each of
us seeks to be a wise steward of the gifts we've been given.

a. What kinds of gifts does the Bible say God gives us? Romans 2:6;
   Ephesians 4:11-13

b. God doesn’t give us gifts simply for our personal benefit. First Peter 4:10-11
   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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Our Gift</th>
<th>How We Are to Use It</th>
<th>Scripture</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| Our Minds  | Think about the things of God and the things of the Spirit, not our earthly, sinful nature | Romans 12:2; Philippians 4:8;
|            |                                                                                      | Colossians 3:2                     |
| Our Bodies | Offer them as a living sacrifice to God, use them to honor God, view them as a temple of God’s Spirit | Romans 6:12-13; 12:1;
|            |                                                                                      | 1 Corinthians 6:19-20              |
| Our Money  | Recognize it is a gift, honor God with it, commit our financial plans to God, avoid becoming greedy, share with needy people | Proverbs 3:9; Luke 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?
GodMultipliesourGifts

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.

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

7) Small groups sharing

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 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?

8) Group Wrap up

9) Personal Journey – Go to the class web site

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