

# *The Wasted Life*

by

Rocky Fleming

*“For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money.” Matthew 25:14-18 (ESV)*

If you haven't done so, I would invite you to read the entire story of the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25:14-30. You need to see that it doesn't go well for the man who wasted his master's money by not reinvesting it. But you also need to understand that Jesus was not talking about money in this parable. The truth is, He was talking about the life God has given to each of us. Here's the big question: Do we consider Jesus' admonition in this parable personally, as if He were speaking directly to you and me individually. More pointedly, are you reinvesting your life into your Master's cause by helping others know Him in the deepest way possible and serving others at their point of need, or have you dug a hole called “self-centeredness,” and crawled into it? It is important to know whether you are being a faithful steward with your life or not, for you will not experience the fullness Jesus wants to give you unless your life becomes less about you and more about His purpose for your life.

When “steward” is mentioned in the bible and “stewardship” is used, it is referencing a responsibility as an *overseer and guardian* of someone else's property or concerns, which includes a lot of things. Too often we use “stewardship” as a means to simply raise donors and financial support for our ministries, and we give a limited and mixed message on stewardship. Because of this, people become confused and do not look at the big picture and how being a steward of what God has entrusted to us for our guardianship, is viewed by Him. We can miss the blessing and can become legalistic about what is God's “things” and what is our own “things.” So let me clear up the confusion. Being a “good steward” of God's things that He has entrusted to us as Christians is everything we have in and around our life. It is everything. It is our life, and all that we have as part of it that is our responsibility to steward. Pretty big, huh?

This sounds like a big order, but some would say that they have very few responsibilities to oversee, and would dismiss themselves from responsibility thinking their life is menial. This is a narrow and an incorrect view and is challenged by the scripture above. So let's begin by correcting this perspective, for Jesus points out some serious consequences if we neglect any opportunity, even if what He gives us to oversee is perceived as a lesser responsibility.

Jesus pointed out in His parable that each of the servants was given responsibilities according to each man's ability. This is a key, for He will not load us up with more than we can handle, provided it is about taking care of his purposes and not our own. Because of this, we need to look less at what we are capable of, or not capable of, and more with how our life is lived with Christ and for Him, regardless of what He asks us to

oversee. Our motivation to reinvest our life for His purposes comes from our love for Him rather than obligation or fear of Him. The unwise servant buried his master's money because he feared him. He feared him because he didn't really know his master. He was interested only in himself. His self-centered purpose was to protect himself. He couldn't get beyond his own interests. The other servants invested their master's money wisely, for their life purpose was about their master's interests, and because of this they brought him delight by their life and what they had done.

Like I said, in this parable Jesus was not talking about money but rather used it as an illustration for life and greater things. The amount of responsibility that we oversee is of less concern to Jesus than with how we live our life for Him. To live our life rightly requires that we become a steward of our life first. What are we given in the way of physical health, mental capacity, financial capabilities, and favor with the people around us, all comes into play with being a good steward? If we neglect the stewardship of our soul, then we cannot steward God's things. Therefore it begins at that place ... the soul. So the big question is, how healthy is your soul, for the stewardship of your life begins with keeping your soul healthy?

Never say that you have nothing of God's to steward, so you can minimize your responsibility. We have more responsibility and opportunity than we realize. For instance, I have found that when a man is respected simply because of his integrity and the man he is rather than his financial capabilities, this man is most often given great favor with the people who truly know what makes him tick. Therefore, for those of you like this man who would think you have little to offer as a steward other than your personal integrity, you must consider that in some way your life touches other lives, and when this occurs, you become God's steward of those lives. We can do a lot of good with certain people simply by bringing the love of Christ to them through our life. This seems like nothing big to us, but it is very important to the people we touch. This is how we reinvest the hope and love that Jesus has given to us, and we become faithful stewards. This is what Jesus was communicating with the hidden truths of His parable. We must not bury our influence. We must reinvest it in others.

No one sets out with a desire to waste his or her life. A life become wasted because of personal neglect and because we chase mirages or illusions of the way life is *"supposed to be."* We bury our life under a load of self-centeredness and pursue things for our sake alone, and we wonder why things didn't turn out as we had hoped, and we feel so alone. The reason is because our pursuits were flawed from the start. We pursued self-interests rather than the interests of our King. We buried His treasure rather than reinvesting it. Jesus was clear with His life message that we can never understand the freedom that God will give us until we can be free from our own self-interests. *"Self"* becomes our idol, and God will allow no idols to come before Him.

The parable of the faithful and unfaithful servants is a story of a well invested or a wasted life. If Jesus was speaking to you right now and asked you this question, how would you answer Him?

*"Which of these servants represents your life?"*