

Parables of the Talents and the Shrewd Servant

Matthew 25:14-30, Luke 16:1-13

The parable of the Talents is about how we should be good Stewards of the money God gives us. We must use it according to the Master's wishes. The parable of the Shrewd Servant is also about using Money according to the Master's wishes, but notice verse 11 "So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?"

These two parables and their messages should weigh heavily on our minds as we plan to spend huge sums of His money. We must make sure that we are using *His* money for *His* purposes. Please consider these two options very carefully, begging for God's discipline to guide us as we compare the value of a soul to the value of our physical comfort. Striving diligently to eliminate from the decision the pride we might feel from "having a new building."

Conservative Estimate of Additional Monthly cost for the new building

All costs are estimates based on figures from the bank and/or our budget for the old building, and are in even dollars.

Monthly cost of mortgage for our new building (1.5 million at 4.5% Interest rate)8300.00

Insurance. Using the budgeted amount for old building .Yearly 5,000.00 / 12 = 416.00

-- The Insurance for the new building will be more, using this amount for now.

Utilities. The following are the actual costs of all utilities for the old building in 2012. Although the new building is larger, it may be better insulate or more efficient, so I'm using the old building costs. The yearly actual costs (2012)

divided by 12 gives Monthly cost of all utilities8,700.00/12=725.00

Total Additional Monthly cost..... \$9,441.00

Because of these conservative estimates I will be using the round number of \$10,000.00 in this discussion.

In using this conservative figure we must also note the fact that by the time the contract is signed the 4.5 Interest rate will probably be higher and after five years even higher!

For \$10,000.00 you could have \$10,000 / 7 (cost of one Bible) = 1,428 Bibles delivered to Eastern Europe **or** you could have \$10,000 / 4 (cheaper to print in China) = 2,500 Bibles delivered to China every month!

Using the average of these two figures (1428 + 2500/2) we are talking about 1964 Bibles delivered **per month!!** If we Christians believe anything, it is that God keeps His promises. What does God tell us, promise us, about the power of His Word? The following passage is familiar, but please read it here again. It is very pertinent for our discussion:

Isaiah 55:7-11

8 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. 9 "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. 10 As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and

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making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, 11 so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

For example, if we gave 1964 Bibles per month to those who eagerly sought them, would our God be only 10% efficient in fulfilling this promise? **This promise is to have His word "accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it." The purpose of his word is to save souls, Romans 1:16, 16: 25-26.**

16 ¶ I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

25 ¶ Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, 26 but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him—

Our elders, as well as most Christians believe and trust God to use His word to convert much more than just 10% of those who received Bibles. But solely for the purposes of this paper and so that no one can criticize our choice of numbers we use only 10% to show the dramatic comparison.

If our All Powerful God guided only 10% of these 1964 Bibles into the hands of those who will read and obey **His Word**, that would mean = **196 new souls saved EVERY MONTH FOR 30 YEARS** of the mortgage, or

196 X 12 X 30 = 70,560 souls in heaven vs. ?? with the new building!!

Just for talking purposes let us make some very **bold assumptions**: The new seating capacity is 500. Let us figure two services implying a total of 1000 seats available. Assume 300 of these represent the current congregation, leaving 700 new people (**assuming** all the seats at both services are filled regularly). Let us **also assume** that all the new people were converts, that is, **no one** moved here from other congregations. That would mean 700 new souls here in Spring Hill. Then we would have:

196X12 X 30 = 70,560 souls in heaven from delivering Bibles or 700 with the new building!!

Someone might say "That's not a fair comparison, it would only take ten years to convert 700 new souls. That would mean 70 new souls per year (**5.8 baptisms per month or one per week, every week of the year, but 2 per week for 18 of those 52 weeks ... for ten years**). If you believe that, then we would have:

196 X 12 X 10 = 23,520 souls saved from delivering Bibles or 700 with the new building!

But this is incomplete and maybe misleading because you would still be paying the mortgage for 30 years! Also, it **could leave the impression that a new building is necessary to save souls in Spring Hill, it isn't!**

If we look at the last 150 people who were added to our congregation, about 25 were new converts, the rest moved into the community or moved from another local congregation. If we **assume** that in the future the percentage of new converts will double so that of the next 150 additions to our congregation there will be **50** (or one third) new baptisms. That implies that to fill the new building for two services, requiring 700 new people, of which one third (or 700/3= 233) will be new converts. Growing at a rate of 150 every three years (or 50 per

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year), as we have these last 3 years, it would take 14 years to gain the additional 700 people. Assuming this to be true (ignoring the local history of Spring Meadows, Southern Hills, and Thompsons Station) the above calculation would then be:

196X12 X 14 = 32,928 souls from Bible delivery or 233 new converts with the new building!

But we can convert/save more than 233 souls in Spring Hill with the existing building!!

If we are really concerned about saving souls in Spring Hill, if we really want to take the Gospel to the lost souls of Spring Hill then we can save 300 souls here in Spring Hill, *without a new building*, by:

- 1) reserving the additional 300 seats, **made available by our going to two services**, for new converts only! This implies that we must kindly and in Christian love suggest to those Christians wishing to move to our congregation, to consider other local congregations as an alternative, as we are saving the empty seats for our new converts.
- 2) Hiring a fulltime personal worker whose sole job will be to hold Bibles studies, and train us to do the same.

If, maybe, our passion for the lost souls of Spring Hill is not quite strong enough to necessitate those steps but we still encourage other Christians to "come to Spring Hill" so that we can have the funds for a new building sooner, then ...maybe, ... just maybe our motive is not really as pure and as pleasing to God as we like to think. Maybe, ... just maybe, God is *not* with us as we assume He is, every time we quote Romans 8:31. Maybe we should at least consider that God is *not* strengthening us as we assume He is, every time we quote Phil. 4:13 A prudent person should ponder the possibility that God's power is *not* working in us to accomplish more than we can think or imagine as we assume He is, every time we quote Ephesians 3:20.

We must make sure our goal is God's goal, before we assume His assistance in our efforts!

This may be the most serious decision this congregation has made in its history. We must therefore consider all possibilities. The congregation as a whole should have all the information needed to support any decision of this magnitude. We have frequently heard how great it will be to have a new building. We also need to hear all the details so they can count the cost (Luke 14:28), in **dollars** as well as **souls**, before making a decision.

All the mathematical examples listed above are based on our infinitely powerful God being only 10% efficient in fulfilling His promise to empower His word to save souls. What if God in His infinite wisdom, love and power decided to guide 20% of those Bibles into the hands of receptive souls? That would double all the estimates of the number of souls saved!!! You would then have:

**196 per month X 12 months X 30 years X 2 = 141,120 souls in heaven
vs. a maximum of 700 with the new building!!**

or

**196 per month X 12 months X 14 years X 2 = 65,856 souls in heaven
vs. 233 new converts with the new building!**

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But remember, we can convert/save 300 souls with the existing building as described above!!

We could save up to **141,120** souls in Eastern Europe and/or China in addition to **300 souls in Spring Hill with our existing building.**

Can we today at Spring Hill learn anything from what Mordecai said to Esther in chapter 4:12-14?

When Esther's words were reported to Mordecai, he sent back this answer: "Do not think that because you are in the king's house [church] you alone of all the Jews [Christians] will escape. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews [the lost of Eastern Europe/China] will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position [Spring Hill] for such a time as this?"

We, at Spring Hill, have a great decision to make. Maybe we are here today, brought to this place and time just for this purpose! God has chosen us to make this soul saving decision. We can see to it that 141,000+ souls are saved or we can get a new building. Let us encourage each other to use *His* money for *His* purposes.

Are any of these quotations correct?

37 Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. 38 Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field so they **build another church building.**"

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you, **but build a new church building first.**"

"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. **Now is the time to build a \$3,000,000.00 building.**"

What can we, God's church family at Spring Hill, learn today from this parable in Luke 12?

16 And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man [congregation] produced a good crop [grew in numbers]. 17 He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops [or seat all the worshippers].' 18 "Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods [and we will all be seated comfortably]. 19 And I'll say to myself, 'You have plenty of good things laid up for many years [20 or 30 years of the mortgage]. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.'" 20 "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself [or pay off the mortgage]?' 21 "This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich towards God."

Please help me to see the truth more perfectly by showing me the pertinent scripture not used, the scripture misused of the logic that is unreasonable or invalid.

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As of January 15, 2014 I have heard only two objections to this paper: 1) Regarding Isaiah 55:8-11 "The 10% figure you used for the number of saved souls is unsure and skewed." 2) "This information is divisive!"

Thoughts to consider regarding objection number 1.

If we remain alive and Christ does not return we will:

- A) make this decision ignoring Isaiah 55:8-11 as not applying,
- B) make this decision based on our faith that God **WILL** fulfill His promise at least 10% of the time,
- C) make this decision based on our faith that God **will not** fulfill His promise at least 10% of the time.

Which option will be more pleasing to God?

Thoughts to consider regarding objection number 2.

If scripturally based truth shared in love causes division, then that division in the kind Jesus promised to cause in Luke 12:51-53,

51 Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division. 52 From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. 53 They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."

or the kind of division Paul recognized in 1 Corinthians 11:18-19.

18 In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. 19 No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval.

Any other comments and/or criticisms based on scriptures and given in love are eagerly sought.Cliff