

righteousness

stewardship
heart
future
beautiful

reward

willingly

freedom

abundance

SweetSmellingSacrifice

attachments

kindness

give

blessing

humility

planning

offering

treasure

honest

Master

pray

thankful

cheerful

talents

WellDone

money

service

wisdom

love

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trustworthy

riches

God'sKingdom

resources

joy

wealth

OPEN

faithfulness

generous

October 2

1 Chronicles 29:1-5. King David spoke to all the Israelites who were gathered. He said, “God chose my son Solomon. Solomon is young and hasn’t yet learned what he needs to know. But the work is important. This palace is not for people. It is for the Lord God. I have done my best to prepare for building the Temple of God. I have given gold for the things made of gold. I have given silver for the things made of silver. I have given bronze for the things made of bronze. I have given iron for the things made of iron. I have given wood for the things made of wood. I have given onyx for the settings and turquoise. I have given gems of many different colors. I have given valuable stones and white marble. I have given much of all these things. I have already given this for the Temple. But now I am also giving my own treasures of gold and silver. I am doing this because I really want the Temple of my God to be built. I have given about 220,000 pounds of pure gold from Ophir. And have given about 520,000 pounds of pure silver. They will be used to cover the walls of the buildings. They will also be used for all the gold and silver work. Skilled men may use the gold and silver to make things for the Temple. Now, who is ready to give himself to the service of the Lord today?”

King David is preparing the Israelites to build a beautiful worship center for God. What building materials are needed to build the worship center (verse 2)? What gift is King David giving (verses 3-4)? What gift could you give to Nova’s Open Campaign?

Dear God, thank you for my wonderful church family. Please help our church family as we prepare to build through the Open Campaign. Amen.

--Dean Mayeda

October 3

1 Chronicles 29:6-9. Then the family leaders, the leaders of the tribes of Israel, the generals and captains of the army, and the king's administrative officers all gave willingly. For the construction of the Temple of God, they gave about 188 tons of gold, 10,000 gold coins, 375 tons of silver, 675 tons of bronze, and 3,750 tons of iron. They also contributed numerous precious stones, which were deposited in the treasury of the house of the LORD under the care of Jehiel, a descendant of Gershon. The people rejoiced over the offerings, for they had given freely and wholeheartedly to the LORD, and King David was filled with joy.

The Bible tells me in II Corinthians 9:7 that "You must each make up your own mind as to how much you should give. Don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. For God loves the person who gives cheerfully." You get to decide how much you will give in the offering plate at church or somewhere else that is doing God's work; not because you have to, but because you want to--you do it with a happy heart. How much should you give? There is a guiding principle in the Bible we call a tithe. A tithe is 10%. That means if you get a \$1.00 a week allowance, you give at least 10 cents to God; \$5.00, you give 50 cents, and so on. You are happy about it because your attitude is that everything you have is a gift from God. Giving a tithe is your way of saying thank you to Him.

Dear Lord, You've been so good to me. I just want to say thank You by giving back to You a part of what You have given to me. Thank You for loving me so much. Help me to never forget to return to You that love by giving my tithe and doing it with a right attitude. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

--Ron Graff

October 4

1 Chronicles 29:9-13. The people rejoiced over the offerings, for they had given freely and wholeheartedly to the Lord, and King David was filled with joy. Then David praised the Lord in the presence of the whole assembly: "O Lord, the God of our ancestor Israel, may you be praised forever and ever! Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty. Everything in the heavens and on earth is yours, O Lord, and this is your kingdom. We adore you as the one who is over all things. Wealth and honor come from you alone, for you rule over everything. Power and might are in your hand, and at your discretion people are made great and given strength. O our God, we thank you and praise your glorious name!"

King David and the people of Israel had given so generously to help build the temple. They gave because they know how amazing their God is!

God created everything in the world--every mountain, valley, tree, and animal. Even the sun, moon, and stars! He has given life to every person on earth: mom, dad, brother, sister, all your friends, and everyone you know! We could never thank God enough for what he has given us!

We are so thankful for what he has given us, so we sing songs of praise and give of our time and money to accomplish what God wants. What has God given you? Your family, friends, health, and home. Think about how amazing our God is!

Lord, thank you for everything! What you have given to us makes us want to give, just like the people of Israel.

--Thomas Whiteside

October 5

1 Chronicles 29:14-18. “But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand. We are foreigners and strangers in your sight, as were all our ancestors. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope. Lord our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy Name comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you. I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity. All these things I have given willingly and with honest intent. And now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you. Lord, the God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Israel, keep these desires and thoughts in the hearts of your people forever, and keep their hearts loyal to you.

Have you ever given a gift to someone else? How did it make you feel? Maybe it made you feel happy because you got to make someone else feel happy, and that is awesome! God tells us we should be happy when we give to other people.

But in this story David gives us a small warning. He says while it is good to be happy that we give to other people, we shouldn't be prideful about it. Pride makes everything all about me when it's actually not. David tells us that everything is all about God and that everything we have is actually a gift from God. So rather than being proud of ourselves when we give to other people, David says we should just be even more thankful to God for what He has given us because if He didn't give to us what we have then we wouldn't be able to give to others.

God, thank you for everything that you have given me. And because you gave me everything I have, I want to share and give to others as well. When I do give to others, help me not to be proud of myself, but to thank you even more. Amen.

--Garrett Koch

October 6

Philippians 4:15-20. As you know, you Philippians were the only ones who gave me financial help when I first brought you the Good News and then traveled on from Macedonia. No other church did this. Even when I was in Thessalonica you sent help more than once. I don't say this because I want a gift from you. Rather, I want you to receive a reward for your kindness. At the moment I have all I need—and more! I am generously supplied with the gifts you sent me with Epaphroditus. They are a sweet-smelling sacrifice that is acceptable and pleasing to God. And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus.

As Paul states, the Philippians were the only church that offered him money and aid. Paul is so grateful for the way the Philippians saw his need and provided. Do you ever see others in need? Maybe it is a friend at school that is having a hard day or it is a parent that could use some extra help around the house. Do you freely give to those in need? Giving is not always about giving financially through money. It can be as simple as smiling and talking to someone at your school that is sitting at lunch alone. It is inviting someone over that looks like they could use a friend. It is offering to help your parents in whatever way they need. It is through this way of giving that we can demonstrate our love for Jesus. Just as Paul states, these gifts and sacrifices we offer are “acceptable and pleasing to God.” Reaching out to those in need greatly pleases our Lord, and we have the hope and trust in knowing that this same Lord will always provide and take care of us.

Dear God, we thank you for the fact that you always provide and take care of our needs. We pray that you can give us greater boldness to reach out to those around us and demonstrate the love of Jesus. Amen.

--Kelli Capel

October 9

2 Corinthians 9:6. Remember this—a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop.

Imagine you are a farmer of a pumpkin patch. You need to start planting your seeds in Spring so that by Fall you will start seeing your pumpkins growing out from the ground. As a farmer, you have two choices to make, and this will determine what type of crop you will produce. You can do a quick and easy job and plant only 10 seeds; or you can plant 1,000 seeds, which will take more time and effort. Now it is October, and it is time to see your field. Will you be the farmer who will show his family and friends only 10 pumpkins, or will they be surprised and amazed at seeing 1,000 pumpkins that you planted yourself? God not only gives us enough for ourselves, but He gives us plenty to give to others. Those who give generously to God's church, like planting generously, will be generously provided for by God. Just like a generous crop! Will you have enough "pumpkins" to give to all your family and friends? What kind of "farmer" will you be?

Dear Jesus, help me to be a hardworking and generous "farmer". Help me not to be selfish with all that you have blessed me with. I know that you will always provide and take care of me! In Jesus' name, Amen.

--Lauri Chipeco

October 10

2 Corinthians 9:7. You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. "For God loves a person who gives cheerfully."

Have you ever tried to give someone your leftover food? They don't want your leftovers. Why? They want food you just prepared not the one you already took a bite out of. The same goes for God. God wants the best of us; he doesn't want what is leftover. I know this isn't always easy. It can be a daily struggle. God isn't concerned with our outside appearance, but He is concerned with our heart. God loves us and wants to be in relationship with us. He wants us to put him in the center of everything we do. If we are doing all that we do for him. All of our intentions are based on him and what he desires for our lives. Then as we are serving, giving, and loving one another, it's all being done with a cheerful and grateful heart honoring our Lord and Savior. If you are struggling or just want to thank God, He is always listening and waiting for us to reach out to him.

Dear Heavenly Father, You know my heart's desires. If you find that my heart is hardened, please soften it so I know your will for me. I want to give you my all, cheerfully and with a grateful heart. In Jesus' precious name I pray, Amen.

--Rebecca Hester

October 11

2 Corinthians 9:8. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

What are some of the blessings that God has given you? Perhaps it is your family, your home, your friends, your Christian faith, or any other resource that you have. God has given us every good thing that is in our lives. How often do you take the time to think about how these blessings are gifts from God? If we do not take time to recognize that all we have been given are given by God, it will be difficult for us to want to give to others. God has not only given you these blessings because he loves you, but he also wants to equip you to be a blessing to others. The word “abound” means “to be rich or well supplied”. God has supplied you with all that you need to accomplish the good works he hopes you will do.

What are some of the good things Jesus is doing in your life? Do you have any friend you can talk about this good thing with? What is one good thing you can do for another person?

Father God, give me eyes to see the good works that you are doing in my life. Please give me boldness to share what I'm learning with others so that they may also experience your blessings. Amen.

--Coral Taluban

October 12

2 Corinthians 9:10-11. For God is the one who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, he will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you. Yes, you will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous. And when we take your gifts to those who need them, they will thank God.

Think about the things that you have. Which of them are really important to you? How about your skills? Maybe you are a great soccer player or writer or leader. Maybe you really understand money and always seem to have a lot of it saved up. All of it came from God. If we commit those things to God, offering them as a gift to serve and bless others, God promises to make them grow. If God has gifted you as a great athlete, He wants to make you an even better athlete so that he can bless others through you. So work hard at being a great athlete for God! If he has given you an ability to make money, then do your best to get as much money as you can and ask God how you can wisely give it to those in need. If you are a great leader, then try to become an even better leader, because God wants to use wise and diligent leaders who will care for others and lead according to his rules. If you don't know what you are good at yet, start paying attention. The first gift God gave you is your life, and he promises to make it a blessing to others if you allow him to.

God, thank you for the special way you have made me. Thank you especially for my ability to _____. Help me to continue to grow in this gift so that I can share it with others as a blessing from you.

--Amy Martin

October 13

2 Corinthians 9:12-15. So two good things will result from this ministry of giving—the needs of the believers in Jerusalem will be met, and they will joyfully express their thanks to God. As a result of your ministry, they will give glory to God. For your generosity to them and to all believers will prove that you are obedient to the Good News of Christ. And they will pray for you with deep affection because of the overflowing grace God has given to you. Thank God for this gift too wonderful for words!

Giving goes against our sinful desires. As humans, we want to get more things, not share them or give things away! What are the things in your life that you could never bear to lose? Which of those things would you be willing to give up if Jesus asked you to? Jesus loves to see what is most important to us. He sometimes even asks us to give up things that we really like so we can serve Him better. Sometimes God asks us to give something of ours to someone else so that they can see it as a gift from God and thank him. He loves when you cheerfully give and share with others.

Maybe this week you can practice giving to your parents. Instead of playing with your toy or video game, take a few minutes to help them with a chore around the house. God loves it when you give up your fun time to serve others. It is also really nice because you make God and others happy when you help serve their needs.

Lord, help me to be a good giver. I want to be a good servant and do whatever it is you call me to do. Give me the ability to see how I can help others around me and glorify you.

--Lance Capel

October 16

Luke 6:38. Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back.

Here's what happens when God tells me to give *my* money: I pick up either **earplugs**, a **teaspoon**, or a **shovel**. The **earplugs** help me ignore His voice. I can drown out His voice by making excuses - giving nothing but reasons to keep a grip on my money. But by closing my fists in fear, I stop God from pouring His blessings into my hands. My fear and selfishness show there's no trust, no love, and no joy in my heart!

That **teaspoon** comes in handy for 'guilt-giving'. If I just can't get out of giving *something*, I carefully scoop up a teaspoon of help for others. So, God responds in the same fashion! He reaches into His vast storehouse of blessing, scoops up a *teaspoonful*, and sprinkles it over me! What about trust, love, and joy? . . . They barely fill a teaspoon!

Now, the **shovel** is God's tool for giving! I am free to give generously, knowing that our God has given everything - even His life - for me! My life and all I have was given to me by God. If He wants me to give it away, I know that He will out-give me, heaping on more blessings than I can imagine! That's what our God does! That's who He is! And, that's how He wants me to live! Let's trust Him fully, give fearlessly, and share the joy of our Master!

*What a joy it is to give cheerfully,
To bless His servants doing His will!
We give from the bounty the King has given,
Fearless and free - by His Spirit driven,
He smiles, and His joy overflows from heaven,
When we empty the cup, He delights to refill!*

-- Rick D'Amico

October 17

Luke 16:9-12. Here's the lesson: Use your worldly resources to benefit others and make friends. Then, when your possessions are gone, they will welcome you to an eternal home. If you are faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones. But if you are dishonest in little things, you won't be honest with greater responsibilities. And if you are untrustworthy about worldly wealth, who will trust you with the true riches of heaven? And if you are not faithful with other people's things, why should you be trusted with things of your own?

What is the absolutely best thing that you own? Have you ever thought about how you could use your toys or other things to help you make friends? The people around us might try to say that our toys belong to us, and that we need to keep them safe from others. But Jesus has given you the things that you love so that you can show your friends and family that Jesus' love is good. In fact, Jesus seems to believe that if we give our stuff away--even better!

When Jesus asks us to share our things with others, it doesn't mean that he doesn't want us to enjoy those nice things too. But Jesus wants us to think of our things in a different way. He wants us to see that these things can bring us joy, *and* they can bring other kids joy too. Even if we don't have the best and the newest toys or other things, Jesus wants us to share what we actually do have. This is one way that we can show Jesus' love in a clear way.

What is something that you Jesus has blessed you with? Who can you share it with this week?

*Father God, help me to be willing to share with others the things that I love. Teach me how to be a blessing to my friends and my siblings.
Amen.*

--Coral Taluban

October 18

Luke 16:13-15. "No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other, you cannot serve both God and Money." The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus. He said to them, "You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight."

So many advertisements. Have you ever thought or said that when you watch some TV show? I know I have. Why do companies spend millions of dollars advertising and advertise so often? It is to persuade you that you absolutely must have what they are selling. It can trap you into thinking that having the things that money can buy is to live the happy life. To put it simply: it is to get you to love money because money can buy the things you want--though not necessarily the things you need.

Bad kind of love, says Jesus. If you say you love Jesus but in everyday life your love of money and things occupies your attention and drives your life, then Jesus says *not good*. He puts it this way, "You cannot serve God and money. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight." To "highly value" money means it is most important in your life. Jesus also said in Luke 12:34 that "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." God wants the position of being highly valued in our lives. According to Jesus, we can't have it both ways.

Dear Jesus, every day I am bombarded from everywhere with messages that I need to do this or that or have this or that if I want to be happy. It works on my mind and heart. I need Your strength and guidance not to fall into the trap of having money and things drive my life. That kind of life is bad news according to Your Word. Help me. I want my love for You to be the most important thing in my life. In Your Name I pray. Amen.

---Ron Graff

October 19

Luke 19:12-19. Jesus said: “A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then return. So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. ‘Put this money to work,’ he said, ‘until I come back.’ But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, ‘We don’t want this man to be our king.’ 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. The first one came and said, ‘Sir, your mina has earned ten more.’ ‘Well done, my good servant!’ his master replied. ‘Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.’ The second came and said, ‘Sir your mina has earned five more.’ His master answered, ‘You take charge of five cities.’

This parable is actually based on a true story. When Herod the Great died, his son, Herod Archalous traveled to Rome in order to be made the puppet king of Israel. The Jews hated him, so they sent a delegation to Rome to oppose his nomination. (He was eventually made ruler, though with the title “Tetrarch” rather than “King” as a small compromise to the Jews.) In the meantime, Archalous left his servants in Palestine to increase his wealth by buying businesses and farms and managing them to generate income. It was a very difficult situation for them to be in. The general population was antagonistic toward anyone who was loyal to Archalous. If he failed to be made king it was very possible that his property would be taken and his servants killed or left destitute. Only those servants with faith that he would return as king had the courage to publicly invest and work on his behalf. How we use money is a clear indication of our level of faith. If we believe that Jesus is the King of the world who will someday return to judge and rule, and if we believe that we are his servants who have been entrusted with money for the expansion of his kingdom, it will greatly affect how we use our finances.

Lord, grant me the grace to remember that you are the King of the world and you are returning soon. Remind me that I can't take earthly treasures with me when I die, but I can invest them in eternal treasures that will last forever.

--Dave Martin

October 20

Luke 19:20-26. But the third servant brought back only the original amount of money and said, 'Master, I hid your money and kept it safe. I was afraid because you are a hard man to deal with, taking what isn't yours and harvesting crops you didn't plant.' 'You wicked servant!' the king roared. 'Your own words condemn you. If you knew that I'm a hard man who takes what isn't mine and harvests crops I didn't plant, why didn't you deposit my money in the bank? At least I could have gotten some interest on it.' Then, turning to the others standing nearby, the king ordered, 'Take the money from this servant, and give it to the one who has ten pounds.' 'But, master,' they said, 'he already has ten pounds!' 'Yes,' the king replied, 'and to those who use well what they are given, even more will be given. But from those who do nothing, even what little they have will be taken away.'

Yesterday, we saw that the servants of Archalous were in a difficult spot while he was gone seeking the kingship. The Jews hated him, therefore, if he failed to be made king it was very possible that his property would be taken and his servants killed or left destitute. Only those servants with faith that he would return as king had the courage to publicly invest and work on his behalf. It's clear that the third servant in this parable did not have faith that his master would return, otherwise he would have tried to obey him. Instead, he figured that since his master was not coming back, it would be foolish to work hard for him. He simply buried the money on the off chance that if his master did return, he could not be accused of stealing. When his master returned and asked why he had not obeyed his instructions, the servant made things worse for himself by saying that he didn't trust that his master would let him keep a portion of whatever profits he generated. In other words, he didn't trust that his master would reward him for being faithful. It's easy to view this third servant as incredibly foolish, but this is the attitude that professing Christians are demonstrating toward Jesus when we refuse to invest the money he gave us into his kingdom. We either don't think it's likely that he is actually the King of the world who will hold us accountable for how we spend money, or, we doubt that he will reward us in a way that makes financial obedience and

sacrifice in this life worth it. We must take his warning at the end of this passage very seriously. Those who demonstrated the reality of their faith in Jesus by investing in his kingdom will be given much, while those who demonstrated their lack of faith in Jesus by not investing in his kingdom will lose everything.

Lord, help me to take your warning in this passage seriously. I want to have genuine faith in you that is demonstrated by my actions. Help me to invest in your kingdom and live for you as your servant, not for myself. I know that those who try to save their lives will lose them, but those who lose their lives for you will save them.

--Dave Martin

October 23

1 Timothy 6:17-19. Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

Paul is saying: 'Don't be proud! Put all of your trust in God, not in earthly possessions.' Most people want to get rich; but having riches can be a trap that makes us fall into pride. Instead, we should follow Jesus' example; we need to act with humility--the opposite of pride. "Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it's thinking of yourself less." (C.S. Lewis) Simply put, humility is complete dependence on God. Here are some ways to show God we're depending on Him: 1) use the blessings God has given us to do good, 2) be rich in good works, and 3) trust God will provide for us.

Kids often think that they will be able to do more for God when they are adults. They'll have their own money; people will listen to them; they won't be so shy. Actually, adults have the same problem. 'I'll give money when I get a better job.' 'I'll serve others after I retire.' 'No one ever listens to me, so why even bother.' But God has already given you all you need to bless others, and he's put you in a position to bless those around you. God wants you to know that those who give richly will be able to experience true life. NOW is the time!

Jesus, I want to hear you say to me "...well done, good and faithful servant." Show me how to use my money, my possessions, my time, and even myself to glorify you by humbly serving others.

--Butch Paredes

October 24

Proverbs 11:24-25. Give freely and become more wealthy; be stingy and lose everything. The generous will prosper; those who refresh others will themselves be refreshed.

When we understand what God has done for us, we can't help but want to give to others. The early Christian Church was known for its great generosity. In Acts 2, Luke tells us that the church shared with one another and "sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need." Years later, Christians sacrificed their own lives to help their sick and dying neighbors in the city of Rome.

Proverbs 11:14-15 teaches us about how God designed us to be generous. What was the last time you gave someone a gift, or did something kind for someone? How did you feel when they received your gift? When we are younger, Christmas is all about receiving gifts! But as we grow older, we learn we can receive great joy and blessing when we give.

When God tells us to be generous, it's not to take something away from us, but to make us more like Him! And as we give, God, the greatest giver of all, continues to fill us and provide for us, often in ways that we could never have imagined.

God, thank you for being a generous Father who provides me with all that I need. Help me to show your love by giving generously to others. Keep me from being selfish so that I can know your blessings and share them with others.

--Andrew Pitman

October 25

Proverbs 11:4, 28. Wealth is worthless in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death. Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will thrive like a green leaf.

Money is a good thing. Having money allows us to buy things we need such as food, clothing, and the homes that we are living in. Money also allows families to do fun things. It would seem that it is good to have as much money as possible so that we can have more things we want!

I Timothy 6:10 says, "The love of money is the root of all evil." We cannot take our money with us when we die. We cannot take our favorite toy, stuffed animal, or video game with us when we die. Our earthly possessions remain on earth.

God wants us to not only focus on ourselves, but also use what we have to bless others. Think of ways you can make others happy with what you have. Delight in the joy you receive from giving.

Dear Jesus, please give me wisdom to use what I have to bless others. Amen.

--Wilkin Lee

October 26

Proverbs 17:16. Of what use is money in the hands of a fool, since he has no desire to get wisdom?

Have you ever dreamed of winning a million dollars? What would you do with it? If you are like most people who get a lot of money quickly, you'll probably spend it all and once again have no money! Proverbs 13:11 says, "Wealth gained quickly will dwindle away, but the one who gathers it little by little will become rich." This is because when we work hard for our money, we learn a lot about its value. We learn how to make wise purchases and how to use it to bless others. As you get older and observe more of life, you will begin to notice two types of people: those who have control over their money, and those whose money has control over them. Start now becoming the first type of person by asking God for wisdom and asking your parents and other wise adults for advice about how to give, save, and spend your money.

God, help me to be wise in how I use money.

--Amy Martin

October 27

Matthew 25:1-10. God's kingdom is like ten young girls who lit oil lamps and went out at sunset to greet the bridegroom. Five were silly and five were wise. The silly girls took lamps, but no extra oil. The wise girls took jars of oil to feed their lamps. The bridegroom didn't show up when they expected him, and after a few hours they all fell asleep. In the middle of the night someone yelled out, "He's coming! The bridegroom is almost here! Go out and greet him!" The five wise girls got up and got their lamps ready. The silly girls said to the wise ones, "Give us some of your oil! Our lamps are going out!" They answered, "There's not enough to go around! Run and buy your own!" That's what they did. But while they were out buying oil, the bridegroom arrived! The wise girls ran to greet him with their lamps shining brightly and went in with him to the wedding feast! Much later, the others returned, but the door was locked, and they were not allowed to enter.

In this story Jesus describes a traditional village wedding, but He's really talking about His return to earth. That means the Bridegroom in the story is Jesus! We don't know when, but Jesus will return for all His followers someday. We think the five foolish and five wise young girls stand for people who follow Jesus - people just like you and me. So, why does Jesus tell this story? For one thing, I don't think He wants us to be like the foolish girls! They weren't ready for the Bridegroom's delay. When he didn't come right away, they got tired of waiting and let their lamps almost burn out. When we get tired of praying, reading His Word, and living for Jesus, we are acting just like those foolish girls!

What can we learn from the wise ones? Jesus wants to come back to people that live for Him, using everything they have for God's glory. Jesus wants to come back to people that are looking to the future and thinking about what they need to be doing NEXT. And Jesus wants to come back to people that make plans and live their lives knowing He will return.

Are you living for the future of God's kingdom?

Lord, take my heart and form it; take my mind - transform it; take my will - conform it to Yours.

--Rick D'Amico