

I'll do my best

Welcome back to Walking with Purpose! Queen Mary made it her practice to visit Scotland every year. She was so loved by the people there that she often mingled with them freely without a protective escort. While walking with some children one afternoon, she went farther than she had planned. Dark clouds came up unexpectedly, so she stopped at a nearby house to borrow an umbrella. "If you will lend me one," she said to the lady who answered the door, "I will send it back to you tomorrow." The woman didn't recognize the Queen and was reluctant to give this stranger her best umbrella. So she handed her one that she intended to throw away. The fabric was torn in several places and one of the ribs was broken. The next day another knock was heard at the door. When the woman opened it, she was greeted by a royal guard, who was holding her old, tattered umbrella. "The Queen sent me," he said. "She asked me to thank you for loaning her this." For a moment the woman was stunned, then she burst into tears. "Oh, what an opportunity I missed," she cried. "I didn't give the Queen my very best!"



Fellowship

1. Describe a time you gave a project your all and felt proud of the results. When did you rush through something and feel regret?



Discipleship

When I was a young, poor college student I was invited to preach at a church without a pastor. I would give the message and my wife would sing in both the morning and evening worship services, about eighty miles from our home. After the first service, all of the congregation thanked me, yet I'll never forget a young, single mother. She approached us and said: "You'll need to eat and to rest before tonight. I don't have much, but please come to my apartment for the afternoon." When she searched her cupboards, all that she could find to feed us was about one half pound of cheese slices and some macaroni. She went to work, making a small pan of macaroni and cheese, which she served with glasses of ice water to her son, my wife, me, and then to herself. I'll tell you, that was one of the best meals I have ever eaten! She had little more than love to give, but she shared the best she had. My wife and I understood. A short time before, we invited some unemployed and newly-wed college friends, who had been living on tomato

soup and crackers, over to our apartment several times for dinner. We did not have much, but God blessed them *and us* as we cared enough to love and share.

You see, God doesn't demand *the* best, but He does want *our* best. In fact, when we give our best, He evaluates the gift with His divine measuring standard...and it becomes "*the best*."

Let's see what both the Old and New Testaments have to say about our offerings to God, whether they be in the form of money, time, care for others...in other words, living our lives for the purpose He created us.

Turn with me to Mark 12, verses 41 through 44 and let's read it together. "Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, 'I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything – all she had to live on.'"

This widow's best was more valuable to Jesus than the larger amounts given out of surplus. You see, we have a tendency to think that if we can't give something amazing or really significant, we might as well not offer it! If I can't invite someone over to my house for steak, I just won't bother. After all, what will they think? If all I have to give them to drink is water, I'd better not offer anything. Yet Jesus' formula to determine what's valuable is the heart with which a sacrifice is given. In Matthew 10:42 He says, "...If anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward." Jesus is the true recipient of any sacrifice, and each act of kindness is really being offered to Him!

There is a legend about an ancient village in Spain. The villagers learned that the king would pay a visit. In a thousand years, a king had never come to that village. Excitement grew. "We must throw a big celebration!" The villagers all agreed. But, it was a poor village, and there weren't many resources.

Someone came up with a great idea. Since many of the villagers made their own wines, everyone in the village was to bring a large cup of their choicest wine to the town square. They said, "We'll pour it into a large vat and offer it to the king for his pleasure! When the king draws wine to drink, it will be the very best he's ever tasted!"

The day before the king's arrival, hundreds of people lined up to make their offering to the honored guest. They climbed a small stairway, and poured their gift through a small opening at the top. Finally, the vat was full! The King arrived, was escorted to the square, was given a silver cup and was told to draw some wine, which represented the best the villagers had.

He placed the cup under the spigot, turned the handle, and then drank the wine...but it

was nothing more than water. You see, every villager reasoned, "I'll withhold my best wine and substitute water. With *so many* cups of wine in the vat, the king will never know the difference!" The problem was, everyone thought the same thing, and the king was greatly dishonored.

Turn with me to Matthew 25:14-29 and let's read it together.

“Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.’ His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!’ The man with the two talents also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.’ His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!’ Then the man who had received the one talent came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’ His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.’”

Notice how the Master judged each servant on an individual basis. God won't hold us responsible for our lack of talent, or what we *don't* have...rather for not offering Him what we *do* have. What do you have at your disposal? Have you given Him your best? When the Holy Spirit speaks to your heart to encourage someone who's depressed, do you make excuses and think, “It probably won't make that much of a difference.” When you have an opportunity to offer hospitality, are you more conscious of your cracked walls in need of paint than what God has given you to use? Do you offer Him the best hours of your day, or squeeze in your quiet time with whatever is left over after your to-do list is completed?

Imagine this scene: You enter your favorite restaurant and order the special of the day...grilled chicken with the restaurant's secret sauce. When your order arrives, you immediately detect a problem. Someone has eaten half of your food! What would be your response? You would probably demand a complete new order...or a complete

refund of your money. It is unacceptable that anything less than the best be served. After all, no one wants to eat second class food. Now consider God. He's the same yesterday, today and forever, so let's see what He had to say to the Israelites about their sacrifices in Leviticus 22, verses 20-22. "Do not bring anything with a defect, because it will not be accepted on your behalf. When anyone brings from the herd or flock a fellowship offering to the Lord to fulfill a special vow or as a freewill offering, it must be without defect or blemish to be acceptable. Do not offer to the Lord the blind, the injured or the maimed, or anything with warts or festering or running sores. Do not place any of these on the altar as an offering made to the Lord by fire."

Now skip to verses 31-33. "Keep my commands and follow them. I am the Lord. Do not profane my holy name. I must be acknowledged as holy by the Israelites. I am the Lord, who makes you holy and who brought you out of Egypt to be your God. I am the Lord." How do your sacrifices to God rate according to His standards? Do they represent the best you have to offer? His majesty far surpasses that of Queen Mary of Scotland, and one day He will come for *us* in all of His glory! May we live lives for Him that will not leave us ashamed.

2. How does your life or priorities need to change in order to offer God the best that you have? Give specifics.
3. Re-read Matthew 25:14-29. What are some modern-day talents people receive from the Master? How can they be multiplied?
4. Based on verse 24, what are some modern day *excuses* for not putting those talents to good use?
5. What are the consequences for second-rate or lazy investments?



Ministry

6. Sometimes we have talents we don't even realize! What strengths do you see in your fellow group members that can be offered to God?
7. How can *your* gifts be used within this small group? Do you need the services of a fellow group member's gift?



Evangelism

8. Those around us are watching and taking note of the quality of our sacrifices. Who can you bless this week with what you have at your disposal?



Worship

9. Spend 5 minutes in silent prayer offering your lives, talents and best to God.

Spend the remainder of your time publicly thanking God for your resources, and for upcoming challenges.