

True Disciple #17 – Be a Five Bag Disciple

Welcome to True Disciple #17. This is Rod Nichols and I'm glad that you are continuing on this journey to become a true disciple of Jesus. I'm hoping that you aren't just listening to these messages and then going on with life. Remember that a true disciple is a person who gets out from inside the church walls and does what Jesus commissioned – preach the gospel and make disciples. Jesus didn't give His commission to the pastors, it was directed to His disciples and that means you.

This week we're going to talk about being a five bag disciple. I'm sure you're probably thinking, What? In order to introduce the concept, let's read Matthew 25 verses 14-30. I'm reading out of the New International Version:

¹⁴ “Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. ¹⁵ To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. ¹⁶ The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. ¹⁷ So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. ¹⁸ But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

¹⁹ “After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. ²⁰ The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.’

²¹ “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!’

²² “The man with two bags of gold also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see, I have gained two more.’

²³ “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!’

²⁴ “Then the man who had received one bag of gold 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. ²⁵ So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’

²⁶ “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? ²⁷ 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.

²⁸ “So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. ²⁹ For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. ³⁰ And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’”

I’ve heard all kinds of interpretations of this scripture. Some people believe that it’s a teaching about how we’re to handle money. Others think it has to do with leading people to the Lord. In order to interpret this scripture properly, we need to look at it in context.

This parable, sometimes referred to as the parable of the talents, is sandwiched in between the parable of the ten virgins and the story about the sheep and goats. These are both clearly end time stories, as is the parable of the talents.

The parable of the ten virgins and the parable of the talents are very similar – the master goes away and then comes back suddenly. In the parable of the ten virgins, half the virgins are prepared for the masters (bridegroom) return and half are not. Those who are prepared are allowed into the wedding banquet and those who weren’t prepared were not allowed in. This clearly shows that those who are saved, born-again, have accepted Jesus (the bridegroom) as their Savior, will be admitted into heaven and attend the marriage supper of the lamb (Revelation 19:6-9). Remember that those of us who are saved are considered to be the bride of Christ.

The parable of the talents or in our case the parable of the bags of gold, it's a different story, but still relating to how what we do during our life will affect how things are handled in the next life.

Although this is a story about money, I believe the primary teaching is not only about money, rather it's about what we do with what God has given us.

First, we are given life and God wants us to give that life to Him by accepting His Son Jesus, as our Savior and Lord. I believe that the one bag guy is the person who is given this amazing life, but never gives it to Jesus (not saved or born again) and so at death he/she will be cast into hell to be tormented for all eternity. This is not God's will, as He would prefer that no one perishes (2 Peter 3:9), but He has given all of us free will and the right to decide on heaven or hell. The one bag guy in the parable chooses to bury his bag. In other words, he did nothing. One bag people always do nothing with what God has given them and it's very possible that it's an indication of whether they are saved or not.

Salvation is not just a matter of a short prayer, it's a heart decision. If a person has said a prayer, but have not completely turned their live over to the Lord and are not inclined to do anything with their life to benefit the Kingdom of God, perhaps they're not really saved and will be one of those who in the end Jesus says, "I don't know you. Depart from me."

I'm not one to judge whether people are saved or not, that's between them and God, but I am called to inspire people to become 5 bag people or at least 2 bag people and not like the 1 bag guy. So, let's go back to the parable.

The 5 bag guy was given that much according to his ability. Apparently the master was watching this man and could see that he had a track record of effectively using what was given to him to manage. It was the same with the 2 bag guy. They both put the money to work and doubled what was given to them.

Okay, how does that apply to us? God gives us talents, abilities, experiences, spiritual gifts, money, and time. He expects us to use them to expand the Kingdom of God, while Jesus/the master is away. We should evaluate our talents, abilities, experiences and spiritual gifts to see where we might fit into service within the church or out in the world. We should tithe (10% of our gross income)

to the church and give offerings to the church, ministries, and individuals in need. We should also use more of our time to further the Kingdom than for our own selfish purposes.

Again, back to the parable. When the master suddenly returned the 5 bag and 2 bag guys share that they doubled the amount and in both cases the master says the same thing: "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!"

So, we can see that we are not being graded on how much we produce compared to others, but rather what we produce with what is given to us. Some of us will be given 5 bags, some 2 bags, and some 1 bag. I believe that if the 1 bag guy had done anything that produced an increase, he too would have received exactly the same accolade from the master.

One day, possibly today or tomorrow or in a week or month or year, we don't know when, Jesus, the master, the bridegroom will return. We will all stand before Him and give an account for what we did with the life He gave us. Everything we've done in our life will be presented. Holy fire will burn away the wood, hay and stubble (the things you did that were worldly like making money, getting promotions, building a big house, driving fancy cars, going on fancy vacation) will be burned away. The things you did for the Lord and to further the Kingdom (sending missionaries, supporting church operations, giving to ministries, feeding the hungry, giving clothes to those in need, finding shelter for the homeless, visiting those in jail and prison, and taking care of the widows and orphans) will be the gold, silver and precious stones that will make up the crown that Jesus will give you and that you will cast at his feet in worship (Revelation 4:10).

Now, both the 5 bag and the 2 bag guys were told well done and that they would put in charge of many things. I believe the because the 5 bag guy was given more because of his ability to handle it, he will be given more responsibility in the new heaven on earth. I hate to burst your bubble, but heaven will be here on earth (Rev 21:1) and it appears that we will be doing things and will have responsibilities (as Adam did in Eden). The good news is that there won't be any sin and we will be in the glory of God, so it won't be like the work we do now.

So, let's summarize. God has given you an amazing life, talents, abilities, spiritual gifts, experiences, money, and time and He expects you to use them to expand the Kingdom, while Jesus is away. That's what true disciples do. Suddenly, one of these days, Jesus will return and will ask to see what you've done with your life and all He gave you. The question is will it all be burned away or will you have a beautiful crown full of precious jewels to cast at His feet in worship?

That's it for message #17. Again, I hope you will take this to heart and get busy serving the Lord and expanding the Kingdom. Tell people about Jesus. Tell them what He's done in your life. Volunteer at your church and at local ministries. Tithe and give your money. Use your time to help those in need. In all of it love God and love people.

Thanks for listening. Tune in next week for message #18. I'm praying that the Lord fills your life with abundant blessings.