

Lifeline

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2009 CALENDAR & GOALS

Planning for the 2009 calendar year has been both exciting and challenging. Currently, there are two mission trips planned, with a possibility of a third. There is the daunting task of raising the funds for not only these trips, but also for the projects involved with the trips. The objective of this brief article is to “write the vision and make it plain” (**Hab. 2: 2**) for 2009 and let all of you know how to pray for us in the venture. I heard it said recently by a visiting evangelist that God’s plans are always bigger than what we can do ourselves. This year’s plan is certainly the case.

Our first trip will return us to Tanzania (April 30 — May 15), where we will be working with a network of young pastors. This trip will focus upon working with the pastors, teaching and building up the saints, and evangelism of the lost.

The second trip will find us back in Burkina Faso (Oct. 30 — Nov. 12). Here, we will be working with Pasteur Paul Kabore, for the eleventh year. Trips to Ouagadougou are always different. We may be holding evangelistic outreaches or individual prayer and deliverance sessions.

The third trip is the possibility of traveling to Haiti with another ministry for 4 days in either late July or early August. This trip will focus on repairs to existing churches during the days,

with ministry in the evening hours. Hold us up in prayer as we listen for God’s voice regarding this trip.

There are so many projects that need our attention. The objective is to determine which projects are the most fundamental and important. I believe that our primary focus is to help pastors and their families develop an income base so that they are able to continue in the work of the Lord. **1 Timothy 5: 18** says; “For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,” and, “The laborer is worthy of his wages.” Most, if not all, of these pastors live on what is donated to them, not receiving a salary from a denomination headquarters. Many of these pastors also have a family. In both Tanzania and Burkina Faso, it is not uncommon for the pastor to live on the equivalent of \$35 US dollars per month. Our vision is to try to raise enough finances to give these pastors \$100 USD per month.

The second project involves helping these same pastors get their church buildings finished. Many are operating in partially finished buildings which means that every piece of equipment used during the service must be brought in and taken away whenever the doors are open. In most cases, \$5,000 USD would complete their buildings and provide for some wooden benches as well.

The third project is in Burkina Faso, where Pasteur Paul Kabore is building a network of Christian schools. Not only are these schools growing at an exponential rate, but have gained the notoriety of being the best schools in Ouagadougou. One school is adding a second floor while another is completely new construction. In 2000, he had one school with 300 students. He now has (not counting this new construction) 4 schools and more than 3,000 students enrolled.

There are many more projects including building an orphanage/maternity center in Burkina Faso and a bible college in Tanzania. Naturally, we will not be able to complete all of these projects in one year. Our goal is to raise a budget of \$40,000 this year. This will cover the costs of ministry travel, pastoral salaries for 4 pastors, and completing 3 church buildings and 2 schools. Your prayers and support will bless so many. Please contact us for more information. God bless you!

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Answering God's Call:

The parables of the Minas and the Talents.

You may or may not be familiar with these two parables. The parable of the minas is found in **Luke 19: 11 – 27**, while the parable of the talents is located in **Matthew 25: 14 – 30**. For years, I thought these two stories were the same. In fact, I have received teaching from pastors and teachers which encouraged this school of thought. Each of these are teachings (red letter words) of Jesus. Each involved a master, or ruler, and servants and each parable ended with the reporting of three servants to the master and their stewardship of the master's goods. However, after a month or more of study and scrutiny of the Scriptures, I have determined that, not only are these two stories not the same as told by two different writers, but they are directives by the Lord regarding two very distinct aspects of every Christian's life.

Jesus, as a master story-teller, employed different types of presentations when He spoke. The first was the use of stories, using actual names and places, such as the story in **Luke 16: 19 – 31** of the rich man and Lazarus (the beggar). I believe stories such as this are actual accounts of history. However, when Jesus spoke in parables, He was revealing truths about spiritual, or Kingdom, principles. In speaking parables, Jesus used a more generic manner, such as: "The Kingdom of heaven is like..." or "Behold, a sower went out to sow." The use of parables had several purposes: to make spiritual truths clearer to the hearer; to make truth more easily remembered; to avoid offense with hostile people who would not receive the truth; and to declare judgment upon those who were willfully

blind. This is supported by the Scriptures in **Matthew 13: 10 – 17**.

First of all, it is probably important to talk about what a talent is and what a mina is. Both are terms that originally referred a measure of weight, then later were used to denote amounts of currency. In these parables, the focus is not on the amount of each measure, but rather how they were used. According to the **New Commentary on the Whole Bible, New Testament, Ed. 3**, the modern day interpretation of either of these terms is a "natural endowment" or "special aptitude", which leads us directly into the application of spiritual/Kingdom principles. Both, the mina and the talent, grown into greater amounts were rewarded, and in both cases, each not grown brought punishment.

So, let's begin with a brief overview of the similarities and difference between these parables. Then we will move into the spiritual applications of the Jesus had to say.

Similarities

1. Both show that the Kingdom of Heaven and the return of the Messiah were not immediate, but rather coming later.
2. Servants were entrusted with the goods of the Master and were expected to use and grow these goods.
3. Servants were made to give an account of their stewardship of the Master's goods.
4. Rewards and punishments were dispensed, based on the stewardship of each servant.

5. In each parable, the lazy servants each received the same punishment; "from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away".

Differences

1. The account in Matthew's Gospel only specifies 3 servants; the account according to Luke identifies that the Master called 10 of His servants.
2. The setting for the parable in the Book of Matthew is on the Mount of Olives, after the "Triumphant Entry", two days prior to the Passover and the arrest of Jesus. In the Book of Luke, the parable is spoken while Jesus was in (or near) Jericho. It is after this when Jesus goes to Bethphage and Bethany, just before the "Triumphant Entry". This timing lines up with the Scripture verses found in **Matt. 20: 29 – 21: 7**.
3. In Matthew, the servants are given different amounts of "talents" according to his own ability. In Luke, each servant was given exactly the same amount – one mina each with no reference to their abilities.
4. In Matthew, the two wise stewards were given the exact same reward, even though they had different amounts of "talents". In Luke, the two wise stewards were given quite different rewards, even though they started with the exact same amount of minas.

Analysis

You might be wondering why I would even be focused in on something like this. First of all, since Jesus spoke these words, it is my belief that we need to heed them. Secondly, Paul the Apostle wrote about eternal rewards and punishments as an elementary principle of Christ in

Answering God's Call; (continued)

Hebrews 6: 1 – 3 (AMP). So, let's make an attempt to unveil what the Lord is saying through these parables. According to the parable found in **Matthew 25**, the Lord gives different amounts of talents to each of us, based upon our abilities. Remember earlier that talents were defined as "natural endowments" or "special aptitudes". Often, people speak of having natural born talent or the ability to do certain things quite well. The Scriptures also speak of the giving of certain "talents"; **Ephesians 4: 11** "And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.", **Romans 12: 4 – 8** "4For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, 5so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. 6Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them:", **1 Corinthians 12: 4 – 11** "But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills."

Talents, then, refer to those giftings and talents (abilities) that we receive from the Lord according to our abilities. It makes sense to me that if we are faithful to use our talents, regardless of how many or how few that we have, that we would receive the same reward. If He rewarded us differently because of our different abilities, that would mean the Lord shows partiality to people, which He does not; (**Acts 10: 34**). Since He has made us all unique, it is our obedience to use the gifts, not the giftings themselves, that He notices and rewards. Thus, we receive the same reward.

Minas refer to the gifting and abilities the Lord has given equally to every one of us. At the time we become "born-again", each of us are: washed,

redeemed, sanctified, justified, given a measure of faith, the Holy Spirit, grace, and the ministry of reconciliation. (I'm sure I've missed some.) Since we are all given the same "minas", we are then considered by the Lord in our growth of these gifts. Because we are all given the same "mina", Therefore, we are all afforded the same opportunity (a level playing field), so it makes sense that the Lord would give different rewards, based on how we decide to use our minas.

At the end of the story of Zacchaeus, in Luke 19, just before the parable of the minas appears, Jesus makes an interesting statement to him. In verse 10 (the verse immediately preceding the parable of the minas), Jesus says; "for the Son of Man has come to seek and save that which was lost." How interesting is it that Jesus is speaking about seeking and saving the lost and then goes immediately into the minas parable. I believe that He was and is preparing

those who have ears to hear what the order of importance is for the Kingdom of Heaven while we are still here on this earth. The reconciliation of man to Jehovah is the most important job any of us has.

It is my belief that the Day of Judgment will be based primarily upon these two parables; how did we use and grow our talents and did we multiply our minas to reach those who are lost and separated from the Lord (**1 Cor. 3: 12 – 15**). These verses also indicate that, in our obedience to build the Kingdom of God and impact the world with our talents and minas, there will be rewards awaiting us. The rewards given in the parable in Luke 19 infer that these rewards might have something to do with our position in heaven during eternity. There is a reference to authority over cities.

Like Jesus, to seek and save the lost should be the goal of every Christian, not just missionaries and pastors.

Jehovah—Jireh The Lord Our Provider!

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Please return this form, with your check, money order or cash **payable to JWF Ministries International, Inc.** Your donation is tax deductible and you will receive a receipt if your name, address, city, state and zip code information is complete.

DVD PROJECT

We are happy to announce that we now have promotional DVDs to send to pastors as introduction to our ministry and a DVD to play when we visit churches. This idea has been on the project list for some time, but now is a reality. We would like to thank our friends for their contributions to this work.

We want to thank Gene Reynolds for

all of the hard work and ideas that went into the creation and production of this project. Also, special thanks goes to WAND TV 17 for the use of their "green screen" and equipment. No DVD would be complete without background music, so our thanks goes to Pastor Israel and Nabwike Popapo for their original work entitled

"The Joy Of Heaven". Special thanks to Pasteur Hamidu Campaore for his testimonial and Pasteur Fulbert Ouedragou for his translation. And finally, we want to say thank you to Audio Adrenaline for the use of their song entitled, "Hands and Feet" from the "Underdog" album on Forefront Records 1999.

We believe these two DVDs will be very useful tools in reaching new partners for the work of this ministry.

WEBSITE UPDATED

After more than two years, the website has taken on a new look. Not only has the logo been updated, but the theme to each page has been changed to reflect our hearts for ministry in the continent of Africa. Also, the website now features more than 25 pages of information and articles,

along with links to "Friends & Acquaintances: and "Topics of Interest". If you haven't visited our website, you can find us at www.JeffFerguson.org. We hope you will enjoy the changes as we grow into the destiny God has called us to.

Contact Us

Website:

www.JeffFerguson.org

E-mail:

jeff@JeffFerguson.org

Mailing address:

P.O. Box 1632 Decatur, IL 62525-1632



International, Inc.

P.O. Box 1632
Decatur, IL 62525-1632

