

# KEEPING THE END IN MIND

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“For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps.”  
(Matthew 25:4)

I was reared in Toledo, Ohio, where my father had a hardware distribution company. From time to time he would take me to his warehouse. I was always curious about how he would ship the tools and various products to the stores, and he was always happy to explain the process to me.

Then one day I was in store with my father and saw a fan that I wanted to buy. It was offered for twelve dollars, and he was surprised. After I bought it, I asked him why he was so surprised.

He informed me that his company had sold the fan to them for seventeen dollars. The store had lost at least five dollars in the transaction. I was confused. Why would they do that? My father explained: “They must have bought too many. To keep it stored in their warehouse over the winter would cost them more than it would to unload it at a cheap price. Timing is everything.”

The Parable of the Talents is preceded by another story about ten virgins. There are many parallels between these parables, and both address the management of time and resources.

The wise virgins in the parable were thinking ahead, and they understood how they needed to measure their time as well as their resources. Thus, they thought ahead in bringing full flasks of oil to have ready when they needed them.

This parable suggests that we need to have our end in mind as we plan and measure our resources. As children of God, we anticipate the ultimate reign of God, and we measure things carefully in light of the future. What can we do to prepare for the arrival of the Kingdom of Heaven?

We do not want to be caught like the manager of that store I visited with unused fans that nobody wants. Likewise, we do not want the gifts and talents which God has given us to go unused or be wasted. Now is the time to ask ourselves how we can use those gifts to create an opportunity for the Kingdom to be established on earth as it is in heaven. We want to be wise and have our flasks of oil ready to be used when our Lord calls us forth.

## ILLUSTRATION:

For most of us, when we receive a wedding invitation it comes printed on a card in the mail. In parts of India and Pakistan today, the invitation is done quite differently, and may be closer to what happened in Jesus' time. During a traditional Baraat ceremony, friends and relatives of the groom are invited to follow the groom on a procession. Those who see the groom, hear the music, and are appropriately dressed will join the procession and follow the groom as he rides through town on a mare to the bride's home.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

Has God given you any gifts or talents which you rarely use or that may be sitting on the shelf?

What can you do to prepare for the arrival of God's Kingdom?

How ready are you to join the procession?

## PRAYER:

Giver of all good gifts, inspire us to look forward to your coming, and to use the resources you have bestowed upon us to the building up of Your Kingdom, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

