

Question: "What does it mean that 'to whom much is given, much will be required' (Luke 12:48)? "

Answer: "From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked" (Luke 12:48). This statement of Jesus has become somewhat of an idiom in Western culture and is found, paraphrased, in Uncle Ben's words of wisdom to Peter Parker in *Spider-man*: "With great power comes great responsibility."

The idea of "to whom much is given, much will be required" is that we are held responsible for what we have. If we are blessed with talents, wealth, knowledge, time, and the like, it is expected that we use these well to glorify God and benefit others.

In context, Jesus had just told a parable about being ready for His return. His disciple Peter asked if the parable was for just them or for everyone. Jesus replied with another parable in which He defines the "faithful and wise manager" as one who gives out food and other allowances "at the proper time." When the master returns and finds the faithful servant managing his resources well, he "put him in charge of all his possessions" (Luke 12:42–44). We have been entrusted with certain things, and faithfulness requires that we manage those things wisely and unselfishly.

Jesus continued the parable with a contrast: "Suppose the servant says to himself, 'My master is taking a long time in coming,' and he then begins to beat the other servants, both men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk. The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers. The servant who knows the master's will and does not get ready or does not do what the master wants will be beaten with many blows" (Luke 12:44–47). The unfaithful servant mismanages the master's resources to satiate his own greed, and Jesus warns that judgment is certain for that servant. The Lord then summarizes the point of the parable with these words: "Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more" (verse 48, ESV). A related parable that also deals with stewardship is the Parable of the Talents (or the Parable of the Bags of Gold) in Matthew 25:14–30.

It is easy to assume that only wealthy people have been "given much," but, in truth, we have all been given much (1 Corinthians 4:7). We have been granted the abundant grace of God (Ephesians 1:3–10; 3:16–21; Romans 5:8–11; 8:14–17), the Word of God, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit (John 14:16–21; 16:13; Romans 12:6). "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms" (1 Peter 4:10).

We should also not assume that the less we know about God and His gifts, the less we'll have to do. As evident in Jesus' parable, we are held responsible to know our master's will. God has plainly shown us what He requires (Micah 6:8).

God gives us resources such as finances and time, talents such as culinary skills or musical ability, and spiritual gifts such as encouragement or teaching. We should ask God for wisdom on how to use those resources and commit ourselves to expending them according to His will so that He may be glorified. In regards to spiritual gifts, Paul said, "We have different gifts, according to the grace

given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully” (Romans 12:6–8). This is simply responsible stewardship.

We have been given much, and God desires us to use what He has given to further His Kingdom and proclaim His glory. It’s what we were created to do. “Then Jesus said to his disciples, ‘Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. . . . For the Son of Man . . . will reward each person according to what they have done’” (Matthew 16:24–25, 27). We are living sacrifices (Romans 12:1), giving the things God has given us in service to others, and in that we actually find life. God, the giver of all good things (James 1:17), gives us everything we need to fulfill His will. “Freely you have received; freely give” (Matthew 10:8).

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