

The Unfolding of Daniel's 70th Week – Part 3

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Matthew 25:1-46

I. Introduction

1. Just to bring us current, in answering the disciples questions found in **Matthew 24:3** Jesus has brought us through much of the tribulation period including: *the church having been raptured, the ministry and death of the two witnesses, the Antichrist has taken the throne, much of Israel has fled to safety in the wilderness areas of Edom, Moab, and part of Ammon, the 144,000 have been sealed becoming the evangelist of their day, and all else that has transpired in the end-times chronology leading up to this moment, His second coming.*
2. There are at least 7 things connecting the three stories here in Matthew 25. *They include (1) Jesus is coming back, (2) His actual return will be sudden and unexpected, (3) some will be ready for His return with many not (4) Jesus uses groups to present a clear contrast, (5) people should be ready for His return, (6) they are to be serving for His name's sake, and (7) they are to be loving.*

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Matthew 25:1-13: Found Ready

1. Both the first and second of our stories today are parables. *Remember, that parables use illustrations to emphasize one overarching point.* This does not mean there are not additional points (as there certainly are in this parable), but it does serve as a great caution to not read into the passage what is not indicated.
2. The overarching point found in this parable, the first of two today, is to be ready. *In the Parable of the Ten Virgins, being ready is broken into a series of component parts, including:*

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- A. Hospitable (v1)
- B. Prepared (v4, 13)
- C. Wise (v4, 9); and

D. Watchful (v13).

3. While I believe that Jesus' illustration is referencing His marriage to His church found in **Revelation 19:7-9**, it's not necessary to hold this view for the parable's meaning to be understood. It was common in that day for the bride to spend months or even a year or more of getting/being ready for the announcement that her betrothed was coming to consummate their relationship.
4. The opening line of this parable suggests that all 10 virgins looked forward with some anticipation to the coming of the groom. This suggests all 10 had a measure of faith.
5. In verses 2-4, we note a clear division of two groups with one foolish and one wise. While it's made clear that the first group is destined for the "kingdom of heaven", we are not told what will happen to the other group other than they have missed the opportunity to join the others in heaven.
6. Beginning in verse 3 and again in verses 8-10, we see oil as being foundational to their being ready. Some have suggested that the oil is a measure of faith while others equate the oil with representing the Holy Spirit with 5 of the virgins indwelt and 5 not. Whether one of these two or holding some other meaning, don't get lost in chasing the oil as it is enough to know that the oil represented the choice each makes in purposing to be ready or not.
 - A. Another important point we can draw out of verses 8-10 is that each virgin had to do the work of being/getting ready. Simply put, they could not rely on others faith or others efforts to get them into the kingdom of heaven. Salvation is inescapably personal.
7. In verse 11, a great caution for them AND for us is revealed. Specifically, the 5 foolish virgins had somehow been deceived into thinking they were ready – which is why they went to meet Him

and subsequently slumbered. Not only were they not ready, but the Lord did NOT even know them.

8. Looping back up verse 5, it is easy to relate the bridegrooms delay to the prophetic timeline between Jesus 1st and 2nd comings. Yet again, this is not of particular importance in understanding the parable. The He is delayed has nothing to do with their preparedness in that moment. Likewise that they slumbered is not in and of itself important. What is important from an application perspective is that the 5 foolish virgins knew what they needed (as evidenced by their request of the 5 wise to give them oil), yet even when given extended time, they chose to slumber and sleep away their window to get ready.
9. In v10, we are told that the door to the wedding hall was shut. But notice in vs11-12, it was not the shut door that kept the foolish out, but that Jesus “did not know them. In this we are shown that lost opportunities are lost and there are NO guarantees of more opportunities being offered.
10. Finally, in verse 13, Jesus exhorts His audience that having been made ready they are to be watchful lest they miss His 2nd coming. This begs the questions of how to be ready and how can one know he/she is ready? John answered this question in 1 John 2:28:

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And now, little children, **abide in Him**, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. - 1 John 2:28

11. While it is a great study to see all that Jesus has in mind with Him abiding in us and us in Him, some common ideas in this area have the “wise”:

believing, following, loving, obeying, serving, and testifying of Jesus as Lord of your life. It means the wise look to Him personally and expectantly to change the pattern of one’s life from one filled with self-focus at war with Him to one exhibiting Biblical fruit in loving and serving Him and others.

III. Matthew 25:14-30: Found Serving

1. Entering into the kingdom of heaven is again in view in this parable as we see a master calling his own servants to serve Him in being stewards of the resources AND responsibilities he gives them. Most interpreters agree that being servants here is akin to being saved.
2. In verses 15-19, the servants receive pieces of money called talents (that in a spiritual sense can be equated with spiritual gifts) to invest on behalf of their master in his absence. So, they had a responsibility to fulfill and means to fulfill it (taking what was the masters and multiplying it). In v19, the master has returned, requiring an account of the servants on his behalf.
3. As we read through verses 20-23, we see the Lord both rejoicing with and rewarding the first two servants for their faithfulness. They were already His, so salvation was not their reward. However, Scripture tells us that we can lay up treasure in heaven...treasure the believer will one day, in worship, lay at the feet of the One making this victorious celebration possible.
4. In contrast, verses 24-30 speak of the Lord's rejection of the third servant in His judgment of the servant being wicked and lazy. In great contrast with the shared celebration with the first 2 servants, this servant was "cast into outer darkness". This judgment is the very judgment seat of Christ we read about in **Romans 14:10-12 and 2 Corinthians 5:10**, when we are called to give an account for ourselves.
5. The passage also offers a great assurance of God's finishing what He starts, as we note the wicked and lazy servant's talent is given to the first servant to be invested and stewarded for the kingdom.

6. If we had to point to the one primary thing in view in this parable, it would be we are to serve our Lord and Master. [Look at Ephesians 2:10 and then Titus 2:12-14 with me:](#)

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For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. - Ephesians 2:10

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¹¹ For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, ¹² teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, ¹³ looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself *His* own special people, zealous for good works.
- Titus 2:11–14

It is God that gives us good works to do AND calls us to fulfill our duties and responsibilities therein with zealousness.

Other passages, like **Colossians 3:23-24**, **1 Corinthians 15:58**, **and 1 Peter 4:10**, echo more of the same. [And so while works decidedly do NOT save us, they do serve a great purpose in honoring and glorifying our Lord through our obedience and faithfulness.](#) Nowhere is this more clear in **Revelation chapters 2-3** where **SEVEN** times Jesus tells the church “I know your works”.

7. I also want to point us to a truth Jesus masterfully wove into this parable. [It's found in verses 24 & 5. Let me warn you that unless you are spiritually dead to the things of the Lord, this truth lands right on our doorstep.](#)

A. The wicked servant had placed limitations on his master and therein was afraid of the consequences. [That the servant was lazy is seen that he could of scattered seed and reaped what he had sown in His masters name.](#) You see, the duty and responsibility the Lord had given all the servants was the Great Commission. [The third servants failure was not in not having a harvest, but in not being faithful in scattering the seed and being available to reap or harvest.](#)

B. The Lord trusted them (and each of us) with being about His business of restoring souls to the kingdom of heaven. *Imagine, for whatever the reason, being in the place of overtly or subtly telling Him “no” to the shared purpose of sharing the Gospel in making disciples He has given us, His church.*

C. Of course when this landed on my doorstep, I was convicted to again invite all you to be a part of God’s Great Commission work through our church family. *Throughout the year, we have a number of Great Commission activities for you to plug into so I picked a few to highlight:*

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Children’s Ministry	Awaken Coffee
Youth Ministry	Neighborhood Outreaches
Prayer Booths	Fireworks
Conferences	

8. The last point in this parable for today is found in verse 30. *This verse has held much difficulty for the interpreter over the years because to this point in the passage it seems clear that all three servants were saved.* So, we are confronted with Scripture’s assurances of once-saved-always-saved and God’s unchanging gift of free will.

A. Some argue that this servant must never have been saved, which seems to contradict the text. *Others have gone so far as to propose a sort-of-purgatory where the person would go, but the Bible does not speak of this and the description here certainly lends to the conclusion that it is hell which is in view.* Still others would suggest that of his free will and having failed the masters trust and his own responsibility, he went on to insult the Lord by making excuses as to why he did NOT invest in the kingdom of heaven as the Lord charged him to do. In so doing, he walked away from his faith.

B. I share all this NOT because we are going to solve the dilemma posed between election and free will (*because we are not and*

both are in the Bible so we trust that God has already worked it out), but to say the following. Scripture clearly teaches:

- i. Everyone is saved by faith alone; and
- ii. God calls us to do the works He has prepared for us as an outpouring of our faith. An absence of works should lead us to a deeper evaluation of our position in Christ as we work out our faith with fear and trembling.
- iii. We can know that we are saved. And you don't ever need to wonder...have faith and purpose to live your life unto Him. Abide in Him and watch the pattern and projection of your life make you look increasingly like Him.

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IV. Matthew 25:31-46: Found Loving

1. This is a time spoken of in Joel 3:1-3 when the Lord will judge all the nations in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. Keep in mind that here in Matthew 25 Jesus is prophesying that about the end of the Tribulation period and the gentiles being judged at that time. The entire world has followed the lead of the Antichrist in persecuting and destroying Israel. The Jews have cried out to their Messiah and He, the Son of Man, has come in His glory to rescue His chosen people.

[READ PASSAGE HERE]

2. The King of kings separates all the people into two groups:
 - A. The first group are called His sheep and are made up of believing Jews and what few believing Gentiles remain. They are given the kingdom of heaven because they believe. What's more, their deeds matched their beliefs as they poured out God's love on those desperate for the healing only He offers.
 - B. While I think the thrust of this passage is clear, verse 40 will clear up any doubts: "...Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as

you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me". This is **Genesis 12:3** alive and well...God will bless those that bless Israel and curse those that curse her.

For you see the Jews are His brethren and the Gentiles (aka, the goats in this story) that have warred against her are being sentenced to everlasting punishment in the everlasting fire. The Gentiles did not feed them, give them water to drink, did not offer them protection, nor help them to heal, and they did not visit them in their distress...simply put, they neither loved the Lord nor His people, but only had a heart for themselves.

- C. For those thinking that this won't be possible because the world already learned its lesson when Hitler sought to annihilate the Jews. We need not look any further than October 27, 2023 when Hamas attacked Israel and the ensuing months as we watched much of the world, including many here in the United States, become enemies of Israel.

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V. Closing: Be Found Ready, Serving, and Loving

During his 1960 presidential campaign, John F. Kennedy often closed his speeches with the story of Colonel Davenport, the Speaker of the Connecticut House of Representatives: On May 19th, 1780 the sky of Hartford darkened ominously, and some of the representatives, glancing out the windows, feared the end was at hand. Quelling a clamor for immediate adjournment, Davenport rose and said, "The Day of Judgment is either approaching or it is not. If it is not, there is no cause for adjournment. If it is, I choose to be found doing my duty. Therefore, I wish that candles be brought." Rather than fearing what is to come, we are to be faithful till Christ returns. Instead of fearing the dark, we're to be lights as we watch and wait.¹

¹ Harry Heintz, https://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/s/second_coming.htm

Matthew 25:1-46

The Unfolding of Daniel's 70th Week – Part 3

I. Introduction: Judgment, Restoration, & Reunion

II. Matthew 25:1-13: Found Ready

- The 4 things of being ready in this parable are _____.
- What kept the virgins out of the wedding hall?

Additional Scripture References: 1 Jn 2:28

III. Matthew 25:14-30: Found Service

- In the parable, talents can be equated with _____?
- Purpose to fulfill your God-given duties and responsibilities.

Additional Scripture References: Ro 14:10-12; 2 Co 5:10; Eph 2:10; Ti 2:11-14; Col 3:23-24; 1 Co 15:58; 1 Pe 4:10; Re 2-3

IV. Matthew 25:31-46: Found Loving

Additional Scripture References: Jo 3:1-3; GE 12:3

V. Closing: Found Ready, Serving, and Loving

5-Day Devotional

Matthew 25:1-46

The Unfolding of Daniel's 70th Week – Part 3

Day 1: Being Ready for Christ's Return

Reading: Mt 25:1-13

Devotional: The Parable of the Ten Virgins reminds us of the importance of spiritual preparedness. Just as the wise virgins had enough oil for their lamps, we too must cultivate a deep, genuine faith that sustains us through life's challenges. This preparedness isn't about perfection, but about consistently nurturing our relationship with God through prayer, studying His Word, and living out our faith daily.

Reflect on your own spiritual "oil reserves." Are you actively growing in your faith, or have you become complacent? Consider practical steps you can take to deepen your connection with God, such as setting aside dedicated prayer time or joining a Bible study group. Remember, we don't know when Christ will return, but we can choose to live each day in joyful anticipation of His coming.

Day 2: Faithful Stewardship

Reading: Mt 25:14-30

Devotional: The Parable of the Talents challenges us to consider how we're using the gifts God has entrusted to us. Each servant received different amounts, but what mattered was their faithfulness in using what they were given. God has uniquely gifted each of us, not for our own glory, but to serve Him and others.

Take time to identify your God-given talents and abilities. How are you currently using them to further God's kingdom? Are there areas where fear or complacency is holding you back from fully investing your "talents"? Remember, God doesn't expect us to all achieve the same results, but He does call us to faithfully steward what He's given us. Pray for courage and wisdom to use your gifts boldly for His purposes.

Day 3: Loving Others as Christ Loves Us

Reading: Mt 25:31-46

Devotional: Jesus' teaching about the sheep and the goats presents a powerful picture of how our faith should manifest in tangible acts of love and service. The righteous in this passage didn't serve others to earn salvation, but their actions flowed naturally from their love for Christ. When we truly grasp God's love for us, it transforms how we see and treat others, especially those society often overlooks.

Consider the "least of these" in your community. How can you show Christ's love in practical ways to those who are hungry, thirsty, lonely, or marginalized? Challenge yourself to perform one specific act of kindness this week for someone in need. As you do, remember that in serving others, you're serving Christ Himself.

Day 4: Persevering in Faith

Reading: He 12:1-3

Devotional: The Christian life is often likened to a race, requiring endurance and focus. Like the wise virgins who were prepared for the bridegroom's delayed arrival, we must cultivate perseverance in our faith journey. This passage encourages us to "fix our eyes on Jesus," the ultimate example of endurance through suffering.

Reflect on the "cloud of witnesses" in your own life – those who have modeled faithful perseverance. What can you learn from their example? Identify any "weights" or distractions that may be hindering your spiritual growth. Ask God for the strength to lay these aside and to run with perseverance the race marked out for you, keeping your focus on Christ.

Day 5: Living in Light of Eternity

Reading: 2 Pe 3:8-14

Devotional: Peter's words remind us that God's timeline is different from ours, and what seems like a delay to us is part of His perfect plan. Just as the servants in the Parable of the Talents were accountable for how they used their master's resources during his absence, we too will give an account for how we've lived in light of Christ's promised return.

How does the reality of Christ's return and the coming judgment shape your daily choices and priorities? Peter encourages us to live holy and godly lives as we look forward to the day of God. Pray for an eternal perspective that motivates you to live each day with purpose, eagerly anticipating the fulfillment of God's promises. Let this hope inspire you to be found spotless, blameless, and at peace with Him.

Small Group Guide

Matthew 25:1-46

The Unfolding of Daniel's 70th Week – Part 3

Opening Prayer: Pray that God would build a steadfast heart in each of us to be found as ready, as servants, and as loving no matter the time or day of His return.

Key Takeaways: *Query the group for takeaways first; you may stay with one or more of those:*

1. Jesus' return will be sudden and unexpected; we must be ready at all times.
2. Being ready involves being hospitable, prepared, wise, and watchful.
3. Salvation is personal; we can't rely on others' faith or efforts.
4. God expects us to faithfully serve Him with the gifts and responsibilities He's given us.
5. Our treatment of others, especially the vulnerable, reflects our relationship with God

Discussion Questions: *Start with any questions prompted by the Holy Spirit. Then consider the following:*

1. What are the seven common elements connecting the three stories in Matthew 25? Which one stands out to you most and why?
2. In the Parable of the Ten Virgins, what does it mean to be "ready" for Christ's return? How can we apply this to our lives today?
3. Discuss the concept of personal responsibility in salvation as illustrated in the parable. Why couldn't the foolish virgins borrow oil from the wise ones?
4. In the Parable of the Talents, how does the master's response differ between the faithful and unfaithful servants? What does this teach us about God's expectations?
5. How does the parable of the talents relate to the Great Commission? What are some ways we can be faithful in "scattering seed" and "reaping the harvest"?
6. In the final judgment scene, what criteria does Jesus use to separate the sheep from the goats? How does this relate to loving God and loving others?

7. How do these parables challenge our understanding of faith, works, and salvation?

Practical Applications: *Query the group for personal applications first; then explore one or more of the following:*

1. Conduct a personal spiritual inventory: Are you "ready" for Christ's return? What areas need attention?
2. Identify your spiritual gifts and how you can use them to serve God and others more effectively.
3. Choose one way to get involved in the church's Great Commission activities (e.g., Children's Ministry, Youth Ministry, Neighborhood Outreaches).
4. Practice intentional acts of kindness and service, especially towards those who are often overlooked or marginalized.
5. Develop a habit of regular self-examination, asking God to reveal any areas where you may be making excuses or placing limitations on your service to Him.

Closing Prayer: Thank God for His grace and the opportunity to serve Him. Ask for wisdom and strength to be found ready, serving, and loving when Christ returns.

Discussion Questions
Matthew 25:1-46
The Unfolding of Daniel's 70th Week – Part 3

1. How can we actively prepare ourselves for Christ's return, as illustrated by the parable of the Ten Virgins? What does it mean to be 'ready' in a spiritual sense?
2. In what ways might we be deceived into thinking we are spiritually prepared when we are not? How can we guard against this self-deception?
3. How does the parable of the talents challenge our understanding of stewardship and using our God-given gifts? What might be the modern-day equivalents of 'burying our talent'?
4. What does it mean to 'abide in Christ', and how can this concept shape our daily lives and spiritual growth?
5. How do we balance the biblical teachings that salvation is by faith alone with the clear call to good works and service? What role should works play in the life of a believer?
6. In light of the judgment scenes described, how should we approach evangelism and the Great Commission? What barriers might we need to overcome to be more faithful in this area?
7. How does the parable of the sheep and goats challenge our understanding of how we treat 'the least of these'? Who might be considered 'the least of these' in our current context?
8. What does it mean to love both God and His people, particularly in light of the judgment of the nation's regarding their treatment of Israel? How can we apply this principle today?
9. How do these parables and teachings affect our understanding of judgment, eternal life, and eternal punishment? What questions or tensions do they raise for you?
10. In what ways can we cultivate a spirit of watchfulness and readiness for Christ's return without falling into fear or complacency?

Dinner Conversation Starters

Matthew 25:1-46

The Unfolding of Daniel's 70th Week – Part 3

1. Being Ready for Jesus' Return

The sermon emphasizes the importance of being ready for Jesus' return, as illustrated in the Parable of the Ten Virgins. What are some practical ways we can prepare ourselves spiritually in our everyday lives?

2. Personal Responsibility and Faith

The parable from the sermon suggests that each person must make their own choice to be ready for God's kingdom. How can we encourage each other in our faith journeys and support one another in making those choices?

3. Serving as a Family

In the parable of the talents, the sermon talks about serving God with the gifts and responsibilities we are given. What are some ways our family can serve together, either in our community or church, to fulfill our role as servants of God?

4. The Importance of Love and Compassion

The final part of the sermon highlights loving and caring for others, reflecting God's love. Can we share some examples of how we have shown or can show love to others, especially in difficult times?

5. Learning from Current Events

The sermon reflects on historical and recent events related to Israel. How can we use current events to reflect on our own beliefs and actions regarding faith, and what do they teach us about the importance of standing up for our values?

Family Conversation Guide for Children & Early Teens

Matthew 25:1-46

The Unfolding of Daniel's 70th Week – Part 3

AGES 5-7: BEING READY BY HELPING OTHERS

Application Point: Teach children about kindness and readiness through simple actions like sharing toys or helping set the table.

Scenario: Imagine your friend forgot their snack at school. What can you do to be ready to help them?

Discussion Questions:

1. When someone is sad or needs help, how can you be ready to show kindness?
2. Can you think of a time you helped someone and how it made you feel?

AGES 8-12: USING TALENTS TO SERVE

Application point: Encourage kids to recognize their talents and think about how they can use them to help at home or at school.

Scenario: Your class is putting on a play, and you have a talent for drawing or organizing. How can you use your talent to help the play be better?

Discussion Questions:

1. What's one thing you're good at, and how can you use it to help someone else?
2. How does it feel when someone appreciates what you did for them?

AGES 11-15: SHOWING LOVE AND COMPASSION IN DIGITAL SPACES

Application Point: Discuss the importance of showing kindness online and being a positive influence.

Scenario: You see a mean comment on a friend's social media post. What can you do to make sure your actions online reflect love and support?

Discussion Questions:

1. How can we show love and support to our friends online?
2. Have you ever seen someone being unkind online? What did you do, or what could you do differently next time?

Tips for Parents

- Be patient and listen: Give your child time to think and respond.
- Relate to everyday life: Use real-life examples and stories familiar to your child to make abstract concepts more tangible.
- Encourage questions: Let your son or daughter know it's okay to ask questions, even if things don't make sense right away.
- Share personal insights: Tell a personal story about a time you experienced these themes, adapting as needed for age appropriateness.

Family Conversation Guide for GenZ

Matthew 25:1-46

The Unfolding of Daniel's 70th Week – Part 3

Apply the lessons learned from this teaching to the prominent relationships in your life.

1. GROUP SETTINGS: READINESS AND PREPARATION

Application: In study groups or project teams, always come prepared. Ensure you have done your part of the work and are ready to contribute. Just as the wise virgins prepared their oil, make sure you're equipped with the knowledge and skills needed.

Scenario: Before a class presentation, take time to anticipate potential questions or challenges. If Jesus returned during a school project, would He find you diligently contributing or relying on others?

2. RELATIONSHIPS: SERVING WITH PURPOSE

Application: In your friendships and family relationships, look for ways to serve others selflessly. Don't wait for others to make the first move in acts of kindness and support. Being an active listener demonstrates care and compassion as you communicate that person has real value.

Scenario: If a friend is going through a tough time, actively reach out to them rather than waiting for them to ask for help. Invest time and effort as the good servants did with their talents.

3. DIGITAL SPACES: WATCHFULNESS AND INTENTIONAL SHARING OF FAITH

Application: Be watchful of the content you post and consume on social media. Use your digital platforms to share encouraging, faith-filled messages.

Scenario: Before sharing a post or comment, consider if it aligns with your faith and if it serves God's greater purpose. Since you are to be His ambassador, would your digital presence be something Jesus recognizes and supports as His work?

4. PEER INTERACTIONS: AUTHENTIC FAITH

Application: Ensure that your faith is authentic, not just a borrowed belief from those around you. Engage in discussions that challenge your beliefs and seek to grow a personal relationship with God.

Scenario: In discussions about faith with friends, don't just repeat what you've heard. Dive deep into Scripture to find personal convictions and be ready to explain why you believe what you believe.

5. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT: PURSUING GOD'S MISSION

Application: Actively participate in community service or outreach programs that align with the Great Commission, serving others as an expression of your faith.

Scenario: Volunteer for local outreach events or missions trips. Just as the third servant was supposed to invest his talents, invest your time and energy in spreading God's transforming love and the Good News of Jesus.

6. Confronting Challenges: Overcoming Fear with Faith

Application: When faced with uncertainty or fear, such as future career or societal issues, remember God's command to be faithful rather than fearful.

Scenario: If anxiety about future studies or career paths arises, remember Colonel Davenport's principle: choose to do your duty. Continue to develop your skills and trust in God's plan.

7. Online Engagement: Demonstrating Love and Grace

Application: Approach online disagreements with grace, reflecting the love of Christ rather than engaging in divisive arguments.

Scenario: When encountering a negative or hostile comment online, respond with kindness and understanding, representing Christ's love, as He separates the sheep from the goats based on their actions.

These application points aim to help Gen Z navigate their daily environments while faithfully following Jesus' teachings with Biblical integrity and living out the gospel.