

International & Interdenominational

Bible Study Worksheet – November 16, 2025

Theme: Stewardship Topic: Spiritual Vigilance – A Prepared Steward

Main Text: Matthew 25:1-13

Key verse: "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour" Matthew 25:13

INTRODUCTION: Our main text today is part of what is known as Jesus' Olivet Discourse (Matthew) in response to two questions from his disciples about the timing of the destruction of the temple and the sign of the Lord's coming and the end of the Age (Matt 24:1-25:46; Mark 13:1-4). The Lord's response to the second question is essentially to "keep watch and be ready" because no one knows the time (Matt.25:13). The need to be watchful, prepared and faithful is underlined by several parables in the Discourse. Various interpretations have been given to the parable of the ten virgins because what the different elements symbolize is not stated. It is highly allegorical and there can be a temptation to allegorize every detail which can distract from the main messages of individual accountability of believers for their preparedness, the critical importance of an authentic relationship with God through regeneration by the Holy Spirit and not an empty profession of Christianity; and the finality of judgment (being shut out of the feast). The parable features ten virgins (or bridesmaids), five of whom were wise and brought extra oil, and five foolish with no additional oil. In weddings of the time, the bridegroom would return from the house of the bride in a procession leading to his own home where a wedding banquet would be enjoyed. The time of arrival was not known so those who were to join the procession had to be ready. Both the wise and the foolish virgins slept, because the bridegroom was delayed. It was not sleep that differentiated the wise from the foolish; it was what they did before sleep overcame them. The call went out, and everyone woke; the wise had prepared and had oil for their lamps, the foolish were not. Outwardly all the virgins were the same before the crisis (the groom's sudden arrival); the differences emerged when the crisis came. The wise ones were prepared to act immediately when they were unexpectedly awakened. The foolish maidens were not prepared.

1. **Read Mark 13:1-4; Mat 24:3,36; Acts 1:6-8 (a) How does Jesus respond to the disciples' repeated enquiries about the time of His return? b) What should be our focus and our attitude, as believers, while waiting? (see also Matt. 24:45, 25:13) (c) What does the seriousness of the consequences faced by the "foolish virgins" (v 12) teach us about the criticality of being prepared? See also Matt. 7:21-23.**

However one interprets the various elements, the parable as whole is a stark reminder that eternal consequences proceed from one's positional relationship to Christ, individual fellowship with the Holy Spirit, and obedience to His words which repeatedly emphasize vigilance, preparedness and watchfulness until He comes. The parable emphasizes spiritual vigilance and preparedness for Christ's return. The central theme is waiting for Jesus requires constant readiness, not last-minute scrambling. Most Bible teachers agree that the bridegroom represents Christ, the lamps signify faith or profession; oil represents genuine spiritual readiness, often interpreted as the Holy Spirit, obedience, or persevering faith. The parable warns that spiritual preparedness is something we must each take individual responsibility for. Believers must cultivate personal readiness for Christ's return. Faith must be active, vibrant, obedient, and enduring. Spiritual complacency is dangerous, and sanctification, God's will for believers (1 Thes 4:3-7), cannot be transferred or borrowed.

2. **(a) What is the significance of oil in the lamp to the believer? (b) Why could the five wise virgins not share their oil with the foolish virgins? What inference can you draw from that about spiritual life? (c) Why do you think Jesus emphasized the surprise timing of the bridegroom's arrival?**

The foolish virgins were unprepared because they lacked oil for their lamps. In many Biblical passages oil, is an emblem of the Holy Spirit. Without oil the wedding party was not ready for the bridegroom. Without the Holy Spirit, no one is ready for the return of Jesus. The Bible enjoins us to examine ourselves to see whether we are in the faith (2 Cor 13:5). Yet, ultimately, we are to look "unto Jesus" to endure in our faith (Heb 12:2). If we have been born again, we are born of the Spirit and He dwells within us. Yet we must continually be filled with the Holy Spirit maintaining communion with Him that we may be enabled and empowered to obey His commandments daily. We need to *watch and pray* (Matt 26:4), leaning solely on the Holy Spirit to help our weaknesses in managing the challenges of life as we continue to wait. God is faithful and will not suffer us to be tested more than we are able to bear but it is we who must present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable, every day until He comes or we go to meet Him. Are you ready with oil in your lamp?

3. **(a) What are the practical ways we must constantly ensure spiritual readiness for our Lord's arrival?**

Prayer: "Heavenly Father, thank you for your invitation to the wedding feast of the lamb. Thank you for giving us the Holy Spirit to help us prepare. Help us to keep the oil burning until that final day". Amen