



TOP HAND

Little Wranglers

Series of Four Lessons

Taking Care of Business

Good Ground

Well Done or Wasted Time

Top Hand Life



Top Hand: Taking Care of Business

Little Wranglers/Lesson 1

Luke 2:41-52

Introduction:

What did Jesus mean *"I must be about my Father's business"*?

Jesus was only 12 years old, yet he understood exactly what he was to do here on earth. Do you know what God wants you to do with your life? You are not too young to be thinking and praying about it. What business does God have planned for you?

You can imagine what you "think" God has in mind for you to do or you may already know something about what God would have you preparing for already.

You may be able to speak two or more languages or dialects from an early age because your household speaks more than one language.

You may be born into a family with a cattle ranch or with horses. If so, then you are learning in your youth to care for or train animals.

You may be born into a family that must be extremely careful with money because of circumstances that are beyond your control. You do not realize it, but you can be learning compassion for people in ways that children that have families that get "everything that they want" may not learn as easily as you.

Whatever situation you find yourself in, instead of being proud or being resentful, think about the skill sets you are uniquely positioned to learn so that you will be able to "be about the Father's business."

What exactly was the Father's Business?

Is it clear to you why Jesus left Heaven to come to earth?

[Ask several students to tell what "business" it was that Jesus came to do.]

Most people do not really know why Jesus came. People misunderstand the ministry of Jesus.

When Jesus was 12 years old, his parents did not understand.

Think about it: Mary and Joseph both had been visited by an angel! Not just any angel, but by Gabriel, the archangel. He had told them that the Messiah, the Savior of the world, was to be their son.

Gabriel said that He would be the “Son of the Highest” and the “Son of God.”

You would think that since Gabriel had told them personally, that they would “get it.”

Now they had raised Him for 12 years. Jesus was sinless, never talked back, never got angry, never told a lie, and never smarted off at the mouth. He never had to be put in TIME OUT! You would think his parents would notice that something was different about this Son.

But they still had much to learn. He had come to “be about my Father’s business.”

Understanding the Father’s Business

Luke 2:41-52 Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover.

And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast.

And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it.

But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance.

And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him.

And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.

And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.

And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.

And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?

And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.

And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.

And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

Jesus was born on earth with a purpose! He had a mission! He had a job to accomplish. He had to be about His Father's business.

Jesus had the unique perspective of knowing about Heaven first hand; after all, He is God in the flesh, He is the Creator along with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. So even though, he is a child of 12 years old in this Bible passage, He also is God.

From his earthly parents' perspective it would have been easy to see Him day after day and lose sight of Who was living in their house. It is easy to look back at Luke 2:41-52 and think, why didn't they treat Him like Who He was, God the Son, when they "misplaced" Jesus coming home from Jerusalem? But do we not do the same thing today?

Joseph and Mary left Jerusalem without checking to see if Jesus was with them. Since He was never a problem, they got used to having things work smoothly. He was "expected" to be with them.

We "expect" a lot of things out of God! But do we even know how He thinks? We "assume" a lot of things about God. But many times we assume wrongly. We don't really know how He thinks unless we are listening to His Word!

The Word of God, the Bible, is true. We cannot go wrong with claiming the promises of God that are given to us in the Word.

God is not "out to get us" when we are mistaken, but rather He is "out to save us." He will never force us to accept Him, but will give us the choice. One day you will understand and experience the Lord knocking on your heart's door to choose Him forever. Then you will have to make a choice to accept Him or not to accept Him.

Setting up the Father's Business

Joseph and Mary checked with their kinfolk and found no Jesus!

They did what most parents would do: Panic! Just imagine; the parents that God trusted to take care of the young Messiah have lost Him!

They had to travel all the next day back to Jerusalem to find Him. This must have been one of the most traumatic longest days of their lives.

Once they realized they did not have Jesus, then having to travel back to find the last place they had Him, and then on top of that they searched several days in Jerusalem looking for Him.

He did not just "pop up" with a vision for them to tell them where He was. God did not send them an audible voice mail or a text to tell them where to search either. How very upset these two people must have been.

As earthly parents they are understandably upset with Jesus; they do not understand His actions! When they do find Him, they scold Him.

As people on this earth, we will NOT always understand God's actions! Get used to it; accept it; and **learn to TRUST HIM.**

Imagine, Joseph and Mary scold the God of the universe Who had come down in the flesh to secure eternal salvation. If they had truly understood, they would never have scolded Him at all.

Jesus immediately calms them both down and then He does something very God-like: He asks them a question. He asks them why they do not understand that He would be about God, His Father's business.

Now instead of taking on the position of King of Kings, He instead subjects Himself to the earthly parents and goes with them. You do not see Him step out of that roll as a submissive child. **If any of you feel that your parents don't deserve your respect and obedience, you could learn from young Jesus! GOD BECAME OBEDIENT TO IMPERFECT, SINFUL PARENTS!**

Mary made note of this incident. Later on you hear Jesus' mother telling others "whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." She had a better understanding by the time He was an adult when she said these words at a wedding feast they both were attending. She could see the power and perfection of God in Him.

Taking Care of the Father's Business

Just what was the Father's Business anyway? What was Jesus doing here on earth?

People throw all kinds of answers at that question. Most say He was here to live a good example for us. Many say He was here to change the world view. The Jews thought He had come to overthrow the Roman government. The Pharisees [established religious group of that time in history] were afraid that He had come to take away their power as a "religion." So what was His Father's Business?

In fact, Mary, His earthly mom, probably did not fully understand until after she saw Him willingly suffer and die on the cross, then rise from the dead on the third day.

Jesus' plan from before the foundation of the world was to provide a perfect sacrifice to free us from the result of our sin. **He came to provide our ONLY way to Heaven, our ONLY way of payment for our sins.**

Activity:

Use a point from today's lesson:

- Jesus came to take care of the Father's Business----He is the Lamb of God Who paid for our sin debt.
- Even Jesus the PERFECT One, obeyed imperfect parents....He was sinless.

Help the students to work the attached worksheet and teach/talk about the principle of obedience to parents.

Circle Ways you can Respect or Help your Parents.

Put an X over things that are not good behavior.

Little Wranglers/Lesson 1 Workshop / Taking Care of Business/ Top Hand Series





Top Hand: Good Ground

Little Wranglers/Lesson 2

Matthew 13: 3-8

Introduction:

Frequently Jesus used parables to illustrate a spiritual principle. He would use an ordinary event or simple illustration to get a point across.

When Jesus was telling His disciples or others about Heaven He was very careful in how he was using these illustrated stories. Heaven is so different from what the Jews had imagined. In fact, Heaven is very different from what movies or books say about it as well. We have a lot of wrong ideas about Heaven.

[Ask a few students to describe Heaven.]

Let's see what the Bible has to say about some of these ideas. You can't go wrong with reading the Word of God as the reliable resource for what Heaven is like. However, traditions can lead you into all kinds of ideas that are nothing at all like the real thing.

Heaven as described in the Bible is BETTER than what we THINK we know about Heaven.

Matthew 13:3-8

And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.

The seed that Jesus is talking about in these verses fell on four different kinds of ground.

Have you ever helped plant a garden? Or planted seeds in a flower bed?

Today I have a bag of seeds [dried pinto beans work just as well] with me. I have two paper cups. One has a bunch of weeds and grass growing up in it already. One has some potting soil and good dirt in it and is ready to plant in.

So let's get started planting!

But before we start, let's talk about my trip to the Feed and Seed Store!

Suppose I go down to the Feed and Seed Store and buy 100 pound bags of seed to plant in my field at the farm. The guys at the loading dock pitch these big bags over into the back of my pickup truck.

There is always some seed that is going to leak out of the sack it seems. So at the Co-op some of the seed ends up in the parking lot.

As I drive back towards the house, suppose there is a big tear in the bag. More seed ends up shaking out of the bags into the back of the truck, then on out the tailgate and ends up on the roadway. As the traffic comes along, that seed gets scattered to the side of the road and ends up just off the shoulder in shallow ground.

Then when I finally get to the farm I might get lazy. It's just too much trouble to cultivate and prepare the ground for planting this year and besides I just don't have time to get it all done. This year I will plant a field that is ready for planting and one that is not. The field that is all grown over in weeds and tangled up in vines with thorn bushes all over it, something will grow out there, so I will just take part of the seed and throw it out there in the wind and see what will come up.

Then there is the other field at my farm. This field has been plowed already; the ground had fertilizer put on it. The soil is ready to plant in. Then I seed it.

How does this apply to the parable Jesus told?

The Way Side:

Matthew 13:4 And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up:

So the seed that fell out of the sacks as it was thrown into the bed of my pickup is like this seed. This illustrates people that hear God's Word, but want nothing to do with God or Salvation.

This is very sad. I have known some very kind people. However, when I try to tell them about Jesus, they will change the subject or tell me they don't want to talk about it.

I have also known people that have problems and are miserable. When I tell them that Jesus is ready and willing to forgive them of their sins and to help them through their problems, they decide that they would rather live a miserable life than to accept Jesus.

These folks just do not "understand" who Jesus is or what He is offering them for eternity!

These people are like this seed. [Illustrate by taking some seed and just throwing it out on the bare floor or the parking lot.]

Is it going to grow there?

Matthew 13: 19 When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.

The Stony Place

Matthew 13: 5-6 Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.

Here we have a group of people, many of them will be much like your school friends or maybe even some of your relatives or neighbors. You will know many people like this in your life time.

These are people that are curious about church, religion, and “the God thing” so they might even attend church.

These people might even join a church because it is expected of them. However, when God doesn’t do things to suit their wishes, they get mad and go home.

They are like the seed that falls out of the tailgate of the pickup on the way home. It lands on the side of the road and might even spring up in the shallow dirt and gravel area on the shoulders or just off of the shoulder of the roadway. But just as soon as it gets too hot, they dry up.

They are like this seed. [Illustrate by taking some seed and putting it in a box of rocks.]

Matthew 13: 20-21 But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.

The Thorny Place

Matthew 13:7 And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them

These are unfortunately the majority of Christians.

These people attend church, accept Jesus as Savior [are saved] because they believe the Gospel and they turn to Christ.

However, they never get entirely away from the attractions of this old world.

They know they should read their Bible and pray faithfully and bring others to church. But that video game, the TV, the sports teams, the ranch rodeo competitions, and a dozen other “things” are so much more fun to them.

If you give these folks a choice between going to church on Sunday or a Sunday vacation at Six Flags or the beach, they would make the wrong choice. Eventually they drop out of church or just go once in a while at best.

There is nothing at all amiss with taking time off. Jesus even went apart from His earthly ministry from time to time to refresh Himself while living in an earthly body. But it was never so that He could get away from the Father or His will.

He was always about fellowship with the Father, not about distancing Himself from Him.

These folks are like that seed that is thrown out into the field that is not prepared to receive it. There are thorns, weeds, and no fertilizer out there to assist in the growth of the seed. There may be some plants spring up; but they are not going to be healthy and bear fruit and definitely not “much fruit.”

[Illustrate by putting seed in the cup with all of the weeds.] Is this plant going to be healthy?

Matthew 13:22 He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.

Good Ground!

Matthew 13:8 But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.

These people hear the Gospel, accept Jesus as Savior, and realize that their permanent address has changed from that place called Hell to the place called Heaven.

With that understanding, they want to tell all of their friends, family, and everyone else about Jesus and His gift of salvation.

Every place they go they want to tell people about Heaven. They want others to go to Heaven with them. They want to tell people how easy it is to turn to Christ and how wonderful it is to live each day knowing that, no matter what happens, you will go to Heaven, it's your final Home!

These seed are like the ones in my feed sack that get planted on good ground that has been turned, fertilized, prepared to receive the planting. These seed produced fruit!

[Illustrate by planting a seed in the cup of good dirt.]

Matthew 13: 23 But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

What's your landing spot?

You are one of these types of seed. Where do you want to land?

Have seeds and cups of potting soil. Have the student plant in the good ground. Instruct them in water a little, place in sun, and care for the plant, and then watch for it to sprout.

While they are planting, talk about God wants us to be like the seed that sprouts.



Top Hand: Well Done or Wasted Time

Little Wranglers/Lesson 3

*Luke 15: 11-19; Ephesians
1:4a;*

There is a Plan:

Inflate inexpensive balloons. Conceal them from the audience. During the lesson you will need to pick a student to use in the illustration. You will use one balloon to illustrate a point; then the remainder balloons can be given to everyone at the end of the illustration.

Every person here is included in

God's eternal plan. In fact, you were in His plan over 6000 years ago. You were in His plan before you were born, before you parents were born, before your grandparents were born, and even way back before Adam and Eve were created and placed in the Garden of Eden.

Ephesians 1:4a According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, ...

God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit laid the plan for the Son of God to be the Lamb.

Revelation 13:8b of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

The opportunity was prepared in advance so that you would have the choice to be born-again into God's Family if you accept Him.

God even made a plan so that you could live a godly life, pleasing to Him.

1 Corinthians 10:13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

He has given you all the will power to do just that. It's your choices that can get in the way from you becoming all that God has prepared and promised you.

God wants to start using you today and keep on using you in His service the rest of your life.

He is interested in the details in your life!

However, some of you see all of the “FUN” this world offers and say “I will go do my thing and have fun for now; then I will serve God later.” These may not be your exact thoughts, but nonetheless, that may be how you choose to live your life.

Here is one of Jesus’ parables. It illustrates how God thinks about such a selfish attitude.

Luke 15:11-19 And he said, A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

The son wanted to have all of the great stuff he saw in the commercials and he did not want to wait.

Then he discovered, the hard way, that all of the world’s promises didn’t make him happy.

Instead, this old world robbed him of everything. He went back to his father in shame with nothing to offer him, except a head hug low.

Let me illustrate this.

There is a Purpose:

[Pick a student that you know well enough that they can handle a little drama; someone that trusts you but will also “react” a little.]

[Have the student come forward and start to hand them an inflated balloon. But STOP short and tell them before you give it, you’d like to check out if it can take the wear and tear of kids playing with it.]

Before I give you the balloon, I want to check out the guarantee on it.

The warranty says it’s SHOCK resistant. [STOMP on it.]Oops! Looks like it just didn’t hold up, but, hey, it still has this much of it left.

Well, now that I have checked this balloon out; I am through, here you go, it’s yours now.

What’s the matter? It’s not worth much of anything anymore?! EXACTLY!

In the Bible story we read, God was telling us this very thing.

Wasted time, a wasted used up life is somewhat like this used up balloon. It is possible to fix it up, band aid it up, and it might hold air again; but it will never be like it was before when it was in brand new condition.

There is a Promise:

We have worked with Kids' Ministry for 40 years. We have seen too many lives that have turned out just like this balloon. When some of the grown up kids finally figure out that God's Word really is true, they are so messed up. You can't go back and undo what has been messed up.

Yes, you can get forgiveness, but wasted time cannot be reclaimed.

Kids that disobeyed parents or ignored what they were taught by their teachers, or simply did not care what was right or wrong are prime examples.

Wasted years! Wasted Time!

The son in the parable stands before his dad and says "I am no longer worthy to be called your son." I took the inheritance you gave me and wasted it.

Now all I have to offer you is what's left; broken pieces. Be assured that God will patch up our broken lives and use what is left. But you will be limited by the damage that you caused.

If I patch up this balloon and got it to hold air again, you could still tell it was a mess. You would prefer a new balloon.

Why not start serving God with all your heart now?

God is looking for you to say: Here am I.

[Bring out the balloons so everyone can have an inflated balloon.]

When you see these balloons, just think about you have your whole life to give to Jesus; start today.

ACTIVITY:

Make a Paper Plate Clock.

While the students are making the clock ask them to name ways that they might be wasting time or spending time foolishly.

The internet has multiple patterns for this type of clock. Simply put "printable paper plate clock" in your browser for numerous patterns to choose from.



Top Hand: A Top Hand Life

Little Wranglers/Lesson 4

Mark 16:15

There is a Cause:

Most every person here wants to live a TOP HAND LIFE.

You want to be successful at whatever you do. If you take a test at school, you'd like to make a good grade.

If you compete at sports or if you can draw beautiful pictures, you would like to do well.

It's a natural thing to want to excel or do well.

There was a young cowboy in our Cowboy Church in Texas that was an unusually good roper while still in elementary school. He won saddles on a regular basis. He signed everything "The Champ."

Adults like to feel like they have accomplished something in life as well. A good paying job or a nice car or home are typical goals that your parents may have in mind when they think of excelling.

While these are all good things and good goals there is actually something that is far more lasting and in fact, is eternal, lasts forever, that is more urgent than anything I have just mentioned.

King David summed up that thought in this Bible passage: *1 Samuel 17:29 And David said, ...Is there not a cause?*

Ask yourself this question: Is there not a cause?

People can get excited about all kinds of causes. Some are very good ones: Relay for Life; Feeding the Homeless; Fund Raisers for someone with a serious illness.

Jesus took out time to heal the sick, raise the dead, and sometimes just stopped and said a kind word of encouragement. All of these things are good.

But far more important than being a success; far more important than helping people in need, far more important than all of these "good" things that are all just temporary, that will not last forever, there is something the most important.

While Jesus took care of humanitarian needs, He did not shy away from His bigger purpose for being on the earth.

He did not come to simply live a good example!

He came to be the Lamb of God and give His life a ransom so the payment, the way to Heaven is paid for and available for the asking.

You and I have a bigger purpose as well.

There is a Call:

Do we really believe God's Word? Or does God's Word seem like a book of comic strip type heroes? Or maybe like action hero movies? Are the Bible characters real to you? Or just stories? Do you know the facts and details of Bible Stories that you have heard, but you do not get that they are TRUE stories?

We are supposed to learn from the experiences of the people God took the time to write about in His Word!

God expects more out of His people than for them to be good little boys and girls. What does He expect?

Mark 16:15 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

He expects us to share the Good News that He is the way, the truth, and the life. He expects us to live a life that is a light in a dark world.

When your church has a special event going on like Vacation Bible School, for example, do you invite other kids to come with you? What are you doing to bring others to hear the Gospel of Jesus?

There is a Cure:

In the Bible we see the story of Jesus speaking to a lady at the well; it's commonly called the story of The "Woman at the Well" She got saved. She trusted Jesus as her way to Heaven.

But did she have to go to Bible College before she brought others to Jesus?

Did she go to Special Classes before she brought others to Jesus? Did she go through 14 weeks or 12 steps of training? Did she memorize 35 verses of the Bible?

No, not at all, she ran to people she knew and said: Come see a man that told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?

She wasn't ashamed to talk about Jesus! She didn't care that she didn't know all the answers. She knew Who did have the answers! JESUS!

She was so excited that Jesus would forgive her sins that she wanted to tell everyone that theirs could be forgiven also!

Daniel 12:3 And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.

So we have a job to do, too.

God wants you to be a TOP HAND for Him.

You can tell others that Jesus is the Son of God! You don't have to wait to be older to do that.

In fact, the Bible says:

Proverbs 20:11 Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right.

God is interested in what you are doing with the information that you already have. You know Jesus is God. You know that He is the creator of the universe. You know that He loves you. You know that Jesus came to earth, died on the cross, was buried and came back to life again so that one day you can make the choice to accept Him as your Savior.

You already know these important things.

Let's start sharing that GOOD NEWS with others today.

ACTIVITY:

Help the children to construct an invitation to your church that they can offer to someone this week.

Ask them to think of someone they know that does not go to church: A Relative, A Neighbor, A Friend.

Then NEXT WEEK have them tell about their experience of inviting that person[s] to church.

Invitation suggestion:

Before class have the church logo pre-printed on paper; have construction paper, glue sticks, scissors and other supplies such as markers, brown packaging string [to look like rope]. Use your imagination to make an invitation. Keep it simple in wording with a preprinted label or sheet of paper for them to place in the invitation. Include the name of the church, address, and directions/location and perhaps the website url as well.