

# Frederick Douglass's talents (Matthew 25:14-30)

**When the true master returned, he found  
Douglass using his gifts for justice.**

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Frederick Douglass, born into slavery in 1817 or 1818, realized as a young child that there must be something quite important about being able to read and write. After he was sold to a family in Baltimore, his slaveowner's wife, Sophia Auld, taught the young Douglass the alphabet and a few simple words.

But when Hugh Auld—the master and Sophia's husband—found her teaching Douglass, he chastised her, telling her that education would make for a discontented slave. Douglass reasoned from Hugh's insistence that he not be taught to read and write that education must be a valuable means to freedom, and he worked diligently to teach himself those tools that were not otherwise available to him.

In his autobiography, Douglass recounts using every means available—catching a glimpse at newspapers or books when he could, sharing bread with poor White boys on the streets of Baltimore who had any reading skills in exchange for a primer—to further Sophia Auld's foundation and to learn the skills of reading and writing. Those skills would indeed be for him tremendous gifts, allowing him to spread the hope of freedom among people entrenched in slavery.

Douglass's autobiography proved to be popular and enlightening in his time. He gained the respect of noted abolitionists, including William Lloyd Garrison and, later, Abraham Lincoln, who gave Douglass an audience to share his story and his plea for enslaved people to be set free.

When a false master who reaps where he does not sow and gathers where he does not scatter returns after having entrusted his servants with his resources, no doubt he expects the servants to have continued his exploitative and manipulative ways of increasing his wealth at the expense of any and all others. But upon the return of the true master, there is found the one servant who instead refuses to participate in such exploitation.

Such is the story of Frederick Douglass, whom the true master returned to find increasing and using the gifts of reading, writing, and speaking to try to secure the freedom and well-being of others—bringing about justice for God's people and helping to bring about the kingdom.