



BE AN ICEBREAKER! **(Children's Story/Parable)**

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Snow swirls in a blizzard around a beaver pond. A beaver is an animal that lives around streams and marshes in North America and Eurasia.

Over the previous few days the edges of the ice have slowly crept toward the center of the pond, leaving only a small space of open water.

Suddenly only a couple of feet from the edge of the water, the head of a beaver pops through the thin, gray ice like a furry jack-in-the-box. It methodically frees slabs of ice by pressing down on the thinner edge until it breaks. Then it climbs up onto the thicker ice, which breaks under its water-soaked weight.

Ultimately winter will freeze the pond over completely, leaving the beaver colony imprisoned in their lodge. After that they may swim out in the water under the ice, where they have stored enough food to see them through to spring. But until the ice becomes thick enough to withstand the beavers' work, these industrious animals feverishly make what appears to be an attempt to prolong the coming of winter.

When you think about it, putting off winter may seem futile. Although a solitary beaver can't really stop the advance of the seasons, however, it can make a difference in its own pond. It can prolong by sometimes as much as several weeks the time when its pond will be sealed over until spring.

In our human world, too, there seem to be forces that we cannot do anything about. With literally millions of people on this planet, we may think that our feeble efforts to tell others about God's love may be a waste of time. We feel helpless and defeated, and we are too often tempted to give up.

This was the mistake that one of the servants made in Jesus' parable of the talents. He buried his talent, thinking that with so little to begin with, he would surely never be able to make things better.

But like the beaver, each Christian can make a difference in his own pond—in his own family, his own neighborhood, his own school, his own work place. The important thing is personal, individual effort and the refusal to give up, no matter how intimidating the task seems. That is the approach that a "good and faithful servant" will always take.