The Parable of the Ten Virgins
(Middle and Upper Elementary)

Overview
In this week’s Gospel passage, Jesus tells the parable of the ten virgins. Five of them foolishly did not prepare enough oil to greet the bridegroom, while the five wise virgins were ready when the bridegroom arrived. In this week’s lesson, students will consider how to be prepared for the Kingdom of God.

Directions
A. Have your students read the Gospel passage, or read it aloud to your students, and then answer the focus questions.
B. Review and discuss the answers when they have completed the focus questions.
C. In groups of three or four, have your students reflect on the painting Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins by Francken Hieronymus the Younger using the given reflection questions.
D. When they are finished, call on groups to share and discuss their answers with the class.

Answer Key

Focus Questions
1. The bridegroom.
2. Oil for their lamps.
3. All of them.
4. Some of their oil because the foolish virgins' lamps were going out.
5. No, because then there might not be enough oil for all of their lamps. They told the foolish virgins to go to the merchants and buy some oil for themselves.
6. To the wedding feast.
7. They found the door locked, and when they asked to be let in, the bridegroom said he did not know them.
The Ten Virgins

1. They are playing musical instruments and one of them is sleeping. Cards, money, and theater masks are scattered on the floor.
2. They are praying and working. One of the virgins is pouring oil in her lamp and the other is praying in the background. Lit oil lamps are at their feet.
3. The group on the left is dressed in rich clothing and jewels. Their gaze is distracted, perhaps even looking at the viewers. The group on the right is dressed simply and their attention is fixed on the cross and on their work.
4. The group on the left are the foolish virgins, while the group on the right are the wise virgins.
5. To show how the parable applies to the viewers and how Jesus intended the parable to apply to everyone at all times.
6. It shows the bridegroom welcoming the five virgins in a heavenly scene, while the five foolish virgins are wailing as they are cast away. The heavenly scene shows the outcome of the lives the ten virgins are living in the scene below it.
7. Though all ten virgins sleep, it is the preparation before sleep (remembering to bring extra oil for their lamps) that gives the wise virgins the opportunity to welcome the bridegroom. This painting shows how the wise virgins' attention is fixed on heavenly things, while the foolish virgins are focused on earthly things. It is important to remember that the good things of this earth are a gift from God and that we are allowed to enjoy them, but also that they should never distract us from our relationship with God.
8. Accept reasoned answers. For the wise virgins, nothing was more important than the bridegroom. They were not willing to risk his arriving in darkness and unwelcomed because they had split their oil with the foolish virgins. We must accept the light of God's grace into our souls, no one can do it for us.