



# Living in Faith

Discipleship Series

Telling  
the gospel  
with story  
pictures



## Parables of Jesus



# Parables of Jesus

*Telling the gospel with story pictures*



**Multi-Language Productions**  
Bringing the Word to the World

## **PARABLES OF JESUS**

### ***Living in Faith*** Discipleship Series

Text adapted from The Bible Teaching Series

The Broken-Hearted Father – © 2007 text produced by the Prison Ministry Committee of the Commission on Special Ministries of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. Text revised 2013 by Multi-Language Publications of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

The Parables of Jesus – © 2011 produced by Multi-Language Publications of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

### ***LIVING IN FAITH*** Discipleship Series 2019

All cover and black and white illustrations are the work of Allie Lyo. Rights to Allie Lyo illustrations reserved by Multi-Language Productions and Allie Lyo.

Scripture taken from the Holy Bible, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION® and NIV® are registered trademarks of Biblica, Inc. Use of either trademark for the offering of goods or services requires the prior written consent of Biblica US, Inc.

Multi-Language Productions  
Suite B, 11/F, Chun Hoi Commercial Building  
688 Shanghai Street, Mongkok  
Kowloon, Hong Kong  
[AsiaMLP@yahoo.com](mailto:AsiaMLP@yahoo.com) • (852) 2190 6211

# Table of Contents

Getting Started.....	2
Introduction .....	3
<b>Chapter 1: The Broken-Hearted Father.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Chapter 2: Searching for the Lost.....</b>	<b>20</b>
• The Lost Sheep	
• The Pharisee and the Tax Collector	
• The Rich Man and Poor Lazarus	
<b>Chapter 3: Pursuing What is Most Valuable.....</b>	<b>34</b>
• The Wise and Foolish Builders	
• The Rich Farmer	
• The Hidden Treasure	
• The Pearl of Great Price	
<b>Chapter 4: The Kingdom of God Grows Like a Seed.....</b>	<b>47</b>
• The Sower and the Seed	
• The Wheat and the Weeds	
• The Quiet Growth of Seed	
• The Mustard Seed	
• The Yeast and the Dough	
<b>Chapter 5: Producing Fruit in Life .....</b>	<b>64</b>
• The Barren Fig Tree	
• The Talents	
<b>Chapter 6: Treating Others with Justice and Love .....</b>	<b>76</b>
• The Unmerciful Servant	
• The Good Samaritan	
• The Sheep and the Goats	
<b>Chapter 7: Prepared for the Lord’s Return .....</b>	<b>91</b>
• The Ten Bridesmaids	
• The Wedding Feast	
• Workers in the Vineyard	

# Getting Started

Sometimes what the Bible teaches is hard to understand. Jesus made it simple for us by telling stories about everyday things to teach us about spiritual truths and heavenly things. These parables are easier to remember and to share God's wisdom and grace with others.

## READ THE TEXT

Each lesson is broken up into smaller sections with a review question after each section. Feel free to stop at any of the passages to make sure you understand them or to dig more deeply into what they are saying. Circle, underline, or highlight key words.

## GRAPPLE WITH THE QUESTIONS

In this book there are also questions to start, review and end the lesson. If you are studying this on your own, think through the questions for yourself. If you are studying in a group, use the questions for deeper discussion. Designate someone as a facilitator. Allow each individual a level of comfort to ask questions and freedom to discover and grow.

## PREPARE TO SUMMARIZE AND SHARE AT THE END

The lessons are not just about learning information but applying it to your life and sharing it with others. As you go through lessons prepare to summarize it at the end to be able to retell it. It might be helpful to underline or circle key phrases or passages.

## NOTICE OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER STUDY

Each page also includes additional references on the sidebar for those who want to dig deeper (You will need a Bible or a Bible app to read those sections). They are available to use in group or in personal study.



= Location of Bible Story



= Search options – related passages

## APPLY IT TO YOUR LIFE & MAP OUT YOUR NEXT STEPS



After connecting the timeless truths to your life, make sure you map out Next Steps before ending the lesson.



# Introduction

## *Jesus teaches by telling stories*

### **Parables – Spiritual lessons from everyday life examples**



Have you ever had anyone ask, “What is a Christian’s life like? How can you know what God is doing?” God oversees the world, the universe, the future, eternity. But you cannot see God. How can you grasp things that are spiritual and not physically plain to your senses?

---

**Parables are stories about common things to help describe heavenly things**

---

One of the ways Jesus helped people understand how God is at work in the life of a Christian was to tell stories called parables. They are stories about common things to help describe heavenly things. He would say something like, “Here is what the kingdom of heaven is like.” Then he would tell a story about a situation or image of what people might experience in everyday life.

Because many of the people Jesus talked with were farmers, he told stories about raising crops and herding sheep. Other stories were about the ways hired men work together with their bosses or the ways sons and daughters work together with their parents. All these parables were meant to give people an understanding of how our life changes when it is led by God.

## Studying a parable

The parables of Jesus are not myths or fables but rather teaching lessons of Jesus. They are filled with rich treasures of insight to the kingdom of God, Jesus said,

**“Therefore every teacher of the law who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old”** (Matthew 13:52).

### KNOW THE CONTEXT - THE SETTING OF THE PARABLE

By using an earthly story from everyday life, Jesus teaches us something about God and our relationship with him. To properly interpret a parable, it is especially helpful to understand the context. Without the background and setting, people miss the main point and misapply what Jesus is saying. You might be able to better grasp the context by reading the sections or sentences before and after a parable. Sometimes Jesus tells us why he told a parable. Sometimes he even explains the meaning of a parable. Many of the parables, however, are not quickly understood. The Holy Spirit will help us see that each parable of Jesus relates to the other teachings of the Bible.

### IDENTIFY THE KEY MESSAGE - THE ONE MAIN POINT

It is also important to identify the main message of the story. Many of the other details may not in themselves have a spiritual message to convey but are there just to support the telling of the story. It is best to identify the one main point to

---

**It is best to identify the one main point to recognize what Jesus is teaching**

---



recognize what Jesus is teaching. It is that main point of the parable that he wants us to apply. So as you study a parable you do not have to find a spiritual meaning for every element or apply every thought.

Often a person concludes that living as a Christian is nothing more than keeping God's laws and living an upstanding, moral life. But the Bible says that Christian life is more than that. Life with God does not start when we do things so that God will accept us. Life with God begins when he wins our trust because he accepts us. We start to live as Christians when we believe that God loves and accepts us because of what Jesus did for us, not because of what we do for God. Often this is the overall context of all the parables.

Each of the parables of Jesus is important for our faith and our life on earth. Choose your favorites and look for opportunities to tell them to others when the right time presents itself.

# Chapter ONE

## The Broken-Hearted Father

*Welcoming back a prodigal son*



Have you ever noticed how the people you love the most can hurt you the most? That is a scary thing about real love. It leaves you wide open to getting hurt. Perhaps you are the one who badly hurt those who love you the most and failed to recognize the pain it caused.

1. Describe ways people can turn against those who loved them most and the pain it brings.

Different types of people came to hear Jesus. One group was labeled “sinners” by the others who boasted of their moral purity. They criticized Jesus by saying, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.” This prompted Jesus to tell this parable. Some call it the **Parable**

of the Prodigal Son. Some label it **The Two Lost Sons**. Others prefer the **Parable of the Waiting Father**. We'll call it the **Broken-hearted Father**. Whatever the title, it is a beautiful picture of the heart of God.

## WALKING AWAY FROM THE FATHER

Luke 15:11-13

**“There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them. Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living” (Luke 15:11-13).**

2. Recap this part of the story. What surprises you the most?

What the younger son did to his father was cold and selfish. First, he demanded his inheritance early. It was almost like saying, “I wish you were dead” since an inheritance isn’t usually distributed until after the father died. It showed he cared more about the possessions of the father than the relationship with the father. And his quest for personal freedom, independence, and self-fulfillment meant a lot more

---

**His quest for personal freedom, independence, and self-fulfillment meant a lot more to him than family did.**

---

to him than family did. Yet the father gave his son what he asked for. So the younger son sold his part of the family farm and left home for his life adventure. He filled it with wild living and prostitutes.



### Walking away from God

1 Kings 9:6-9

2 Kings 21:1-9

Revelation 2:4-5

This brought dishonor to the father and disgrace on the family. It must have crushed the father's hopes and dreams for his son. But the father did not try to force his son to stay. He did not want resentful resistance, but his son's honest love. God is like the father in this story. He wants honest love. Jesus quoted Moses from 1500 years earlier.

**"The most important (command of God), " answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength'" (Mark 12:29-30).**

He wants willing hearts, not forced loyalty or resentful obedience. That is what God wanted from Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.. Apostle John warns,

**"Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever" (1 John 2:15-17).**

What about you? Have there been ways that you ignored God's love and walked away from it? Did it seem like the world had more to offer than your heavenly Father? Did you think you could do better on your own just like the younger son?

3. Explain additional insight you gained here.



### Love the Lord above all else

Deuteronomy 6:4-7;  
10:12-13



### The Original Rebellion and Disgrace to God's Love and Honor

Genesis 3



### Those that live like this will not inherit kingdom

1 Corinthians 6:9-11  
Ephesians 5:1-6

## LONGING TO RETURN HOME

Luke 15:14-20

This parable continues with the wayward son:

**"After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.**

**"When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' So he got up and went to his father"**  
(Luke 15:14-20).

4. Retell this part of the parable. What stuck out most to you?

The happy, care-free life the younger son expected was gone. He had no money to rent a place to sleep or to buy food. The friends he made when he was able to pay for drinks and prostitutes

---

**Recognizing your situation can turn into self-pity and despair or into action to turn to God**

---



### Empty way of life

Ephesians 2:1-3

1 Peter 1:14, 18

were not his friends anymore. The only work he could find was taking care of pigs – a job that was shameful for Jews. In his hunger, even the pig’s food looked appetizing. It led him to say himself: “What is wrong with my life?” “What have I done?” Even his father’s hired workers had more than enough food to eat.

When people walk away from God and his love, they often run into the harsh realities of the world. Sometimes people “hit rock bottom.” It suggests that things couldn’t get any worse. It can turn into self-pity and despair, or it can turn a person to God through repentance. Apostle Paul said,

**“Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death” (2 Corinthians 7:10).**

Some of the hardest words to say are, “I was wrong.” It hurts your pride. But that is part of what the Bible is talking about when it uses the word “repentance.” In fact, “Repent” was the first recorded command of Jesus. “Repentance” means “a change in the way you think” – about God, yourself, and sin. Without that change of thinking, a person either denies there is a

---

**Repentance is a change in the way you think about God, yourself, and sin**

---

problem or makes things worse by trying to fix the hole he has dug for himself. Repentance

recognizes the truth about yourself and reaches out to God. A person would not return to God without it.

The younger son finally recognized that his disgraceful choices made him unworthy to be considered a son of his father, but he longed for home. He finally appreciated how good things were



### **Hitting rock bottom**

Job 29:1-11

Psalm 38

Psalm 22



### **Repentance – a new re-start**

2 Samuel 12:11-14

Psalm 51

there. He acknowledged he had not only sinned against his father, but also against God. Feeling totally undeserving of love, he would be satisfied even if he could just work a lowly hired servant in his father's house.

5. Review what repentance means.

## THE WELCOME OF THE WAITING FATHER

Luke 15:20-24

Here is the amazing and most important part of the story. It continues with the son returning.

**“So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate” (Luke 15:18-24).**

6. Describe what is surprising or unexpected in this part of the parable.

In the parable, you can picture the son walking more and more slowly as he got closer to home. Maybe he thought he would find his father standing at the edge

---

**The father didn't care what others thought or how filthy his son was when he hugged him**

---

of his property with his arms folded ready to reject him. You can imagine him going rehearsing the speech he was going

to try to give. It was worth a try. As he came close to home, he saw someone running down the road toward him in a cloud of dust. It was his father yelling his name! The father's unrestrained action would have been undignified and drawn shame in that culture. But the father didn't care what others thought or how filthy his son was when he hugged him. He had been waiting a long time for this moment. And he didn't wait until his son was all cleaned up or proved himself first. His joy was too great. Maybe the son began to understand how badly he broke his father's heart by leaving. The son tried to make his little speech, but his father did not seem to pay attention to his offer. What mattered most to the father was NOT how sorry he was or how he would make up for his wrongs. What mattered most to this father was his love for his son and having him back again. The past was forgotten. Then his father threw a grand party for the wayward son who had returned. He put the best robe on his son and a ring on his finger. He had the fatted calf cooked up for a savoury feast. It was filled with music and dancing. So much to celebrate as Jesus said earlier:



**God's patience  
with you**

2 Peter 3:9



**“In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (Luke 15:10).**

How do you think God is looking at you? Do you think of him looking at you with a disappointed frown on his face? Do you think of him pushing you away and telling you, “I want to see if you are really sincere before I take you back?” Sometimes people think they have to straighten out their lives first and clean up their act before they come to God. The truth is, you need to come to God just the way you are, no matter how bad your life is. God accepts NOT because you lived right. God loves you freely and willingly because our God of Love sent Jesus, his eternal Son, to live as our flesh and blood brother. Jesus died to cover your shame and remove our guilt. He did everything that needed to be done. Jesus said,

**“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matthew 11:28-29)**

**“Whoever comes to me I will never drive away” (John 6:37). “Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.” (Romans 10:11)**

Notice the “all” and “whoever” and “anyone” in these passages. No one is excluded who returns to

---

**Picture God, your Father, putting on you the robe of Christ’s righteousness to cover your shame**

---

God in repentance and faith. Picture God, your Father, waiting with open arms and a welcome feast prepared in his

heavenly home. Picture God, your Father, putting on



## Reconciled by God

Romans 5:6-11

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

Colossians 1:21-23



## God showers us with love

1 John 3:1-3

Titus 3:3-7

you the robe of Christ's righteousness. It covers your shame no matter who you are or what you have done. Picture him slipping the family ring on your finger to show you belong. Imagine him saying, "I am glad you are back so I can show you how much I love you!" Picture those who will celebrate with you!

**"I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 8:11).**

7. Describe how God receives you and how that changes how you see him.

## **JEALOUSY UNDERESTIMATES LOVE**

Luke 15:25-32

Jesus has one more part of the story to tell.

**"Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.' The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'"**



### **The Feast**

Psalm 23:5-6

Isaiah 25:6-9

**“My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found’” (Luke 15:25-32).**

8. What is your impression of the older brother and the conversation with his father?

---

**They didn't appreciate the kind of love shown to the wayward son who came home**

---

This part of the parable was aimed at the Pharisees who would have a hard time picturing God like this father.

They didn't appreciate the kind of love shown to the wayward son who came home. They were like the older brother in the parable. The older brother told his father that he had been dutifully slaving for him and never disobeyed his orders. How is it that the younger son who wasted his father's money with some prostitutes and wild living gets the party thrown for him? How is that fair? No wonder he became angry with his father!

This was probably the biggest feast they had experienced for a long time, but the older son became bitter and refused to join in. The father loved his older son too and begged him to join in the feast. But

---

**Picture God, your Father, putting on you the robe of Christ's righteousness to cover your shame**

---

the son criticized his father's joy. Why him and not me? The older son expected his faithfulness and



**Living by law instead of grace**

Romans 3:19-20

Galatians 3:1-14



**Willingly doing what is your duty**

Luke 17:7-10

obedience to pay off for his own benefit. He didn't understand love. And that is what broke his father's heart – the way the older son viewed his younger brother. Jesus was telling the pious-looking religious leaders that they didn't understand love. They made their achievements and spiritual superiority the basis their standing before God. It is the feeling that "God owes me" for doing good. You've earned the right. You don't need a savior to pardon you. They were overlooking what makes you part of the kingdom of God.

**"Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him" (Matthew 21:31-32).**

Are there times you are like the older brother? Do you assume you are a better person who deserves God's blessing more than others? Do you see some people as unworthy of God's love? Where do you

---

**No one deserves it. But God loves us and made a way to bring us back into his family**

---

draw the line? He does not see a dividing line between people who deserve to be saved and people who don't deserve it. Jesus is in the business of erasing lines. No one deserves it. But God loves us and made a way to bring us back into his family.

**"This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one**



**Apostle Paul used to be like the older brother but returned as the prodigal son that was shown unlimited grace**

Galatians 1:13-16

Philippians 3:3-9

1 Timothy 1:14-16



**Forgiving sin**

Psalm 86:1-13

103:1-18

**God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people” (1 Timothy 2:3-6).**

Jesus is inviting you to see how high and wide and deep his love is – not just for you, but for everyone. He also wants you to join in the celebration of anyone who has come to God by faith. That is what a Christian life is – a celebration of God’s love for us and for others. And the celebration goes on forever.

9. What additional insights did this part point out?



**Compelled to see  
people in a new  
light**

2 Corinthians 5:14-15



## CONNECTING TO YOUR DAILY LIFE

1. Discuss what the world seems to offer that causes people to walk away from God. Why? What is the result?
2. Evaluate the reaction of the father to the wayward son as he returned home. What encouragements does that give you for your daily life?
3. Review the reaction of the older brother. Who do we tend to think is unworthy of God's love? Why is it important to change that perspective in our world today?
4. Pick out the one point that was most meaningful for you in this lesson.
5. Who do you think most needs to hear the message of this parable?
6. Please pray to God based on this.



**DEVELOP A SUMMARY OF THE LESSON** – Write down and discuss a brief explanation of this lesson. Make it clear and simple enough to share with others. If possible, illustrate it with a drawing or diagram.



## **YOUR NEXT STEPS**

### **Study it!**

Review and practice telling the parable in your own words.

### **Memorize it!**

Suggestion: Memorize **1 Timothy 2:3-6** (Or identify a different Bible passage in this lesson that is most meaningful for you).

### **Apply it!**

Discuss how you can put this lesson into your life this week.

### **Share it!**

Who especially needs to hear this? Determine how you will share this chapter with others. (You can use this lesson and its summary to help you).

*Go on to the Chapter TWO to see who gets God's loving attention.*

## Chapter TWO

# SEARCHING FOR THE LOST

*How far will God go to save?*



Have you ever lost something valuable? Maybe you were frantic to find your ring or mobile phone. Maybe it was a dog or cat that ran off.

1. Tell a brief story of how you felt when you lost something valuable. Discuss what you did to find it and how you felt then.

The pious leaders couldn't understand why Jesus would waste his time welcoming and eating with "sinners." Why would God pay attention to them? What use are they to God? Jesus told them these parables:



## THE LOST SHEEP

Luke 15:4-7

**“Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent” (Luke 15:4-7).**

2. Describe what stood out most for you in this parable.

The people of Jesus’ day were accustomed to seeing shepherds take care of sheep. They knew how helpless sheep are. A lost sheep would not be able to

---

**They knew how helpless sheep are on their own**

---

find its way home on its own. By itself, the sheep would be easy prey to wolves

and other wild animals. The religious leaders in the Old Testament were supposed to be like shepherds to the people. But many wouldn’t go out of their way to help people. They only criticized them. In fact, they were often the ones leading the sheep astray.



**Religious leaders failed to be the shepherds**

Ezekiel 34

Zechariah 11:16



In this parable, the shepherd takes the initiative to go out and search diligently for the sheep. God wants the lost one back in the fold no matter how risky or difficult it may seem. Jesus made it clear,

**“The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost”** (Luke 19:10).

When Jesus saw the sickness and struggles of people, his heart ached for them.

**“When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd”** (Matthew 9:36).

Jesus came to be the Good Shepherd. Jesus came into this world to begin his journey to rescue us. It would mean dying so we could live.

**“You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly ... God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us”** (Romans 5:6,8).



## The Good Shepherd

John 10:1-5, 11-16,  
25-30

Jesus, our shepherd, will not give up until he rescues

---

**God's compassion especially goes out to the lost sinner who is struggling**

---

the lost sheep and welcomes him back in the fold. Are you that lost sheep? We all were once. We still are all prone to knowingly

or ignorantly wander into sin. But he is good!

**“You were like sheep going astray,” but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls”** (1 Peter 2:5).

Do you know someone who is a lost sheep? Look at a similar parable in Matthew 18:10-15. Jesus follows it up with instructions on how to talk to your brother who has sinned so that you can win them back and rejoice. In the parable, when the shepherd finds the sheep, he doesn't punish the sheep for wandering but gently carries it on his shoulders. The parable ends with this beautiful picture of what brings joy and praise in heaven:

**“I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent”** (Luke 15:7).

Jesus also tells a similar parable of a lost coin (Luke 15:8-10). When the woman reclaims the coin she was diligently searching for, she calls her friends and neighbors to celebrate with her. Are we able share that joy?

3. What additional insights did you gather about this parable?



**The Shepherd's gentle care**

Isaiah 40:11



**Winning a brother back to the flock**

Matthew 18:15

## THE PHARISEE AND THE TAX COLLECTOR

Luke 18:9-14

Here is another parable Jesus told after describing the faith found in persistent prayer that doesn't give up.

**"To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: 'Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people – robbers, evildoers, adulterers – or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'**

**"But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted" (Luke 18:9-14).**

4. What was the main point that stood out for you? Retell it with a bit more modern setting.



In this parable the Pharisee stands prominently in the front of the temple and points out to God that he is better than other people. He does not steal or commit

---

**He points out to God that he is better than other people**

---

adultery or do other evil things. He then begins to list the good things he does and is proud that he does more than God requires by law. But Jesus

points out that the self-righteous Pharisee was not the one accepted (justified) by God.

Tax Collectors, on the other hand, were viewed as traitors because their job was with the oppressive foreign government, the Romans. They also cheated people by charging higher taxes than required and keeping the “profit.” In this parable the tax collector stands at a distance. His grief and shame do not even let him look at God in his prayers. He says,

**‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’**

His plea reaches out with desperate trust in God’s compassion like King David in his prayer:

**“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love... a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise”** (Psalm 51:1, 17).

Jesus tells us this tax collector is the one who went home “justified.”

**“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness”** (1 John 1:8-9).



**No one will be declared righteous by the things he does**

Romans 3:20-24



**The Lord binds up the broken-hearted**

Psalms 34:18; 147:3

Isaiah 61:1

---

**We are justified not because of the good things we do, but because of God's mercy**

---

We are justified not because of the good things we do, but because of God's mercy for us through Jesus. Jesus' death on

the cross secured our peace with God and covered our sin. So, our boast before God isn't based on our keeping of the law, but on Jesus who perfectly kept the law in our place. The apostle Paul writes,

**"Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded... For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law" (Romans 3:27-28).**

It is interesting to note that after telling this parable, Luke tells about the disciples trying to stop mothers from bothering Jesus by bringing babies to Jesus to bless them. Why would he bother with them if they couldn't understand his teachings. But Jesus taught the lesson. He said,

**"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it" (Luke 18:16-17).**

A baby can't produce such a list, but Jesus holds them up as an example of what he is looking for. The gift of saving faith is a

---

**Saving faith is a trust as simple and uncluttered as that of a baby**

---

trust as simple and uncluttered as that of a baby. Being accepted into the kingdom of

God isn't about the great things we have done. Being "justified" depends on God and what he has done for



**Saved by faith**

Romans 4:1-8, 22-25

Galatians 3:6-14

Ephesians 2:4-9

us in Jesus. A pre-requisite for receiving the grace of God is knowing how much you need it. Such a faith makes us feel free to unburden our consciences of sin by confessing sin to God and trusting his mercy and love to us in Jesus.

5. What additional insights did you gain from this parable?

## **THE RICH MAN AND POOR LAZARUS**

Luke 16:19-31

Another story of Jesus contrasts two people. This time it is a rich man and a poor man.

**“There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man’s table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.**

**“The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.’ But Abraham replied, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been set in place, so that those who want to go from here to you**

cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.'



"He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.' 'No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead'" (Luke 16:19-31)

6. Capture what Jesus is teaching here.

We don't know the name of the rich man, but the poor man has a name - Lazarus. It means "God has helped." (Mary and Martha had a brother with the same name who was a friend of Jesus). It isn't



important to Jesus' story to tell us why Lazarus fell on such hard times. Meanwhile the rich man was living a life of luxury on the other side of the gate. There was no act of kindness toward the beggar. No compassion. No generosity. Just his own selfish enjoyment of what he had worked hard for. What people value in life, is often not what God values. Just a few verses before this parable, Jesus said,

**"...You cannot serve both God and money .... What people value highly is detestable in God's sight"** (Luke 16:13,15).

Many things that seem to bring satisfaction and meaning now, may not line up with what God deems

---

**Life isn't all about what we enjoy now. It is about the relationship with God that continues on after death**

---

valuable. Life isn't all about what we enjoy now but about the relationship with God that continues after death.

So in the parable both die. The rich man may have had a splendid funeral but ends up burning with unquenchable pain in hell. Maybe no one attended Lazarus' funeral, but angels attended him to heaven where he is sitting at the banquet feast next to Abraham. What a paradox - the rich man becomes the beggar in hell and the beggar becomes lavished with the wealth of heaven. Remember that the parables have a main point and some of the details are just supporting the story. The purpose here is not

---

**Those may be symptoms of the real problem**

---

to teach us exactly what heaven and hell are like, even though much of it

agrees with what we learn elsewhere. And although we do get a flavor of God's concern for the poor, the



**God's upside-down values that see blessedness**

Matthew 5:1-12

purpose is not to show the consequences of abusing wealth or neglecting the poor. Those may be symptoms of the real problem –living a life unbelief and its fruits. Thus the verdict:

**“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’ They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’ He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’ Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life” (Matthew 25:41-46).**

Our eternal outcome is not based on if we are rich or poor or how we perform. It is rejection of God in unbelief that lands a person in hell and faith in Jesus that directs the angels to carry us to heaven. In the

---

**It is unbelief that lands a person in hell and faith in Jesus that directs angels to carry us to heaven**

---

parable, there was no relief for the torment the rich man was suffering – not even a complementary drop of water for his thirst.

But the rich man doesn’t want the rest of his brothers to face the same torment. He begs to have Lazarus return from the dead. Perhaps that profound miracle or a scary apparition of Lazarus would make his

brothers take notice and repent. But what Abraham says is important for us to remember.

**“They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them...If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead”**

Only God’s Word has the Holy Spirit power to bring people to repentance and faith. In it are both a preaching of law to show us our sinfulness and the comforting message of the gospel that shows us how Jesus has saved us. And through the Scriptures, God nurtures a faith that puts us at the banquet table with Abraham and all believers in heaven. Such a faith motivates people to represent God’s compassion and generosity toward others, just like the rich man should have shown to Lazarus.

7. What additional points did you learn from this parable?



## CONNECTING TO YOUR DAILY LIFE

1. List ways you might apply the parable of the Lost Sheep and Lost Coin to your interactions with others.
2. Review the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector. Analyze your own attitudes as you approach God. When does the law convict you here? Where does the good news of Jesus (the gospel) comfort and renew you?
3. Re-evaluate your priorities in view of the parable of the Rich Man and Poor Lazarus. How will it affect your time with the Bible and the need to share it with others?
4. Pick out the one point that was most meaningful for you in this lesson.
5. Please pray to God based on this.



**DEVELOP A SUMMARY OF THE LESSON** – Write down and discuss a brief explanation of this lesson. Make it clear and simple enough to share with others. If possible, illustrate it with a drawing or diagram.



## **YOUR NEXT STEPS**

### **Study it!**

Review and practice retelling the parables in your own words.

### **Memorize it!**

Suggestion: Memorize **1 John 1:8-9** (Or identify a different Bible passage in this lesson that is most meaningful for you).

### **Apply it!**

Discuss how you can put this lesson into your life this week.

### **Share it!**

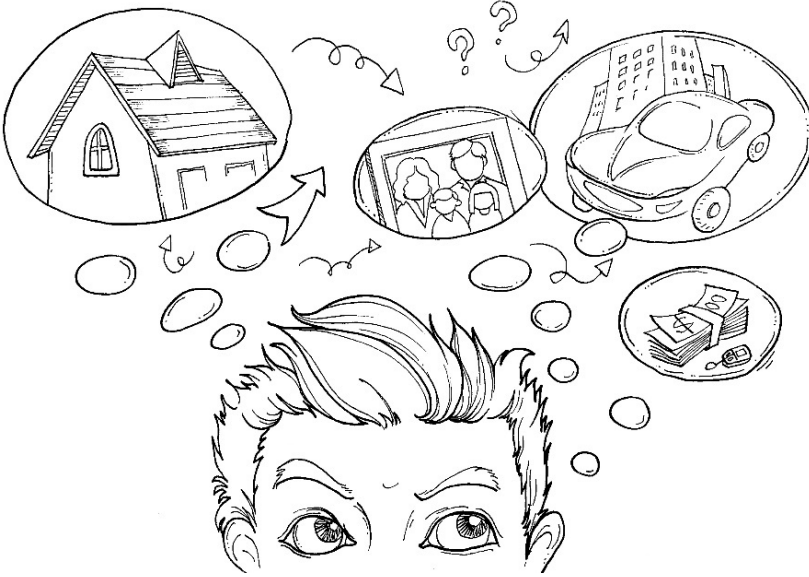
Who especially needs to hear this? Determine how you will share this chapter with others. (You can use this lesson and its summary to help you).

*Go on to the Chapter THREE to analyze what is most valuable in life.*

## Chapter THREE

# PURSuing WHAT IS MOST VALUABLE

*Making the Right Choices for Life*



What is the most important thing in your life? Is it your family? Or is it your house or car? Is it your career or your possessions? Is it your jewelry or your technology?

1. Discuss what people feel is most valuable in life, and what they will do to get it.

There are many things in this world that beg for our attention. There are many excitements that lure our hearts. There is a lot of advertisements that promise happiness, if we would just do or buy what they promote. People build their lives around those promises. Jesus, in the next parables teaches us what provides lasting value.

## THE WISE AND FOOLISH BUILDERS

Matthew 7:24-27

This parable is one Jesus told toward the end his Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). The crowds were amazed at his teachings, but he said,

**“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”**

2. What is the main point that Jesus is teaching here?



**Amazed at Jesus' teaching**

Luke 2:47; 4:22, 32

Mark 1:27; 11:18

John 7:15

There are two kinds of people living in this world – the wise and the foolish. The wise people are those who build their lives on Jesus as their rock-solid foundation. That comes through study of the Bible, and faith that applies God’s Word to our daily lives. Paul says,

**“By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ”** (1 Corinthians 3:10-11).

That doesn’t mean life will always be easy and everything will go like a dream. Just like everyone

---

**The wise people are those who build their lives on the rock of faith in Jesus**

---

else, troubles come into the lives of the wise people as pictured by the rain, the flood and

the wind in the parable. In this world we may lose wealth, careers, family, and health. But when troubles come, including the final struggle with death, the wise place their trust in Jesus and find their strength in his Word. They are able to remain standing firm in faith, hope and joy through the strongest storms of life.

The foolish hear God’s Word with their ears only but do not obey or follow it. They build their lives on the shifting values and opinions of the world. Building on sand can be trusting the philosophies of the world instead of God’s Word. Building on sand can be depending on the pleasures and riches of the world as if that is what life is all about. Then when troubles come into their lives, foolish people are swept away by the storms of life. Their worst disaster is dying



### **My Rock on which I build**

Psalm 18:1-2; 31:1-3;  
61:1-4; 71:1-4  
Matthew 16:18



### **Like a tree with root by streams of water**

Psalm 1  
Jeremiah 17:5-9



without hope, crumbling in fear when they face the God they neglected.

We are strong and secure when our lives are built on faith in Jesus. That kind of faith not only hears God's

---

**We are strong and secure when our lives are built on faith in Jesus through God's Word**

---

Word, but also does what God's Word tells us. It submits to God's wisdom and puts it into practice no matter how much

it clashes with mindset of the culture around us. It produces faithful obedience born from love for the one who loved us first. Then we are wise. Then we have built our lives on a firm foundation – Jesus himself. He makes us spiritually invincible, unshakeable.

3. What other insights have you gained here?

## THE RICH FARMER

Luke 12:13-21

How important are the things we possess in life?

**"Someone in the crowd said to him, 'Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.' Jesus replied, 'Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?' Then he said to them, 'Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.' And he told them this parable:**



**More than Conquerors**

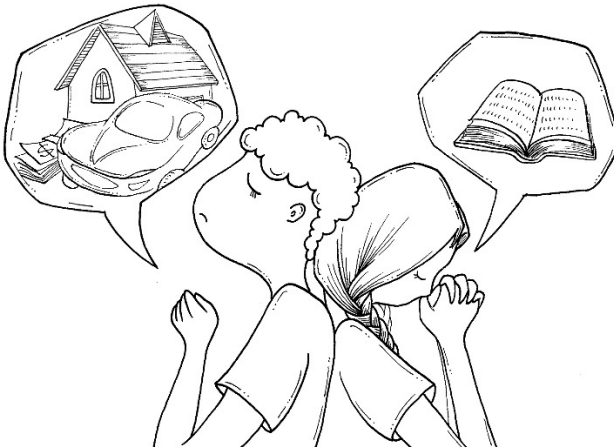
Romans 8:18, 31-39

1 John 4:4; 5:4-5

**“The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’ Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. And I’ll say to myself, ‘You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.’**

**“But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’ This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God” (Luke 12:13-21).**

4. Explain the main point Jesus makes here.



Jesus says it is foolish for a person to think that happiness depends on the abundance of things we have. And yet that is what the world teaches. God

blessed the rich man with a good harvest. But the man believed the increased amount of grain was all of his own doing. He did not recognize the Giver nor thank God for his good crops. God is far from his thoughts. This man's possessions were his god. He

---

**This man's possessions were his god**

---

depended on them for his security and his joy. He wrapped his heart around them. Now, it isn't a crime to be rich. Many in the Bible

were very rich. You may even know some of the Christians today who are rich - very rich. But God doesn't promise that to everyone. It isn't a crime to be poor either, if that is the circumstance you find yourself in. What is the attitude? Consider what Proverbs says,

**"Two things I ask of you, LORD; do not refuse me before I die: Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the LORD?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God" (Proverbs 30:7-9).**

For the rich farmer the future was all about enjoying what he had worked hard for. God and eternal life were not on his radar screen. He didn't think about how short-lived it would be. God's judgment on this man is clear. He said, "You foolish man! This very night I will take your life away from you." Jesus told others,

**"What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?" (Matthew 16:26).**



**Loving the world**

1 John 2:15-17



**Living in indulgence as if there were no judgment**

Matthew 24:36-39

This man did not think about his soul. He was not prepared for death. His crops could not lengthen his life one minute. His success could not redeem him from a single sin. His wealth could not buy one square foot of heaven. That is why right after this parable Jesus told his disciples:

**“Then Jesus said to his disciples:.... Do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well...For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”**  
(Luke 12:22, 29-31,34).

Jesus teaches us that we are foolish if we center our lives only on the things of this world. We need to seek true riches. They are the spiritual and heavenly gifts found only in Jesus Christ. Is becoming rich more important to you than being a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ? Are you rich in God’s eyes? Do you value the riches of forgiveness of your sins, peace with God, and faith in God? Do you give him credit for what he gives you in life and use it for his glory instead of merely for your pleasure?

No matter whether God provides us with earthly riches or we struggle to make ends meet, through faith in Jesus our future in heaven is safe. It leads us to worship God with thanks for whatever he gives us now. It steers us to use whatever we have to honor him and share to benefit others.

5. What other insights did you learn?



### Real Treasure is...

Luke 12:33-34; 16:9  
1 Timothy 6:6-10, 17-19

# THE HIDDEN TREASURE

Matthew 13:44

Matthew chapter 13 is filled with parables of Jesus which he told by the lake. Such large crowds gathered on the shore that he got into a boat and sat in it to teach them. That brings us to two more parables about riches – the right kind to pursue.



**“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field” (Matthew 13:44).**

6. What do you hear Jesus teaching here?

In ancient times rich people often buried some of their money or precious jewels in the ground. They

---

**The great treasure is the gospel**

---

wanted to protect their treasure from being stolen in times of war or

change of government. If that person died before

digging up the treasure, it remained hidden in a field. Later someone might find it. The great treasure in the parable is the gospel message that we can find in Scriptures. In the Scriptures we find Jesus as our Savior from sin. When the Holy Spirit opens our eyes of faith to the treasures Jesus brings, we enter into the kingdom of heaven. We experience the joy and eternal life that come with it. Sometimes it seems like people “stumble” on the treasure, but God led them there.

**“I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me” (Romans 10:20).**

Many from nations around the world have had to give up careers, and family ties, and even safety because the kingdom of heaven is of greater value than anything else in their lives.. Jesus said,

**“For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self?” (Luke 9:24-25).**

They held tightly to the treasure of the gospel in cultures that were hostile to it. The heavenly treasure of being with Jesus forever in heaven is worth more than anything else in this world. It is worth giving up worldly things to be in possession of the greatest thing.

7. What additional insights did you see here.



**Paul considers everything else worth losing to have Jesus**

Philippians 3:7-9

## THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

Matthew 13:45-46

**“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it”** (Matthew 13:45-46).

8. What you grasp Jesus teaching here?

This parable of the pearl of great price and the treasure in the field may seem to teach the same thing. But there is a small difference. In the parable of the treasure in the field, the man stumbles on this treasure as a great surprise. But in the parable of the pearl, the man has been looking diligently for it. In ancient times merchants would pay large amounts of money to buy excellent pearls. In the parable the man, after much searching, gives up everything else to obtain the pearl he was found.

How do you search for the pearl of great price?

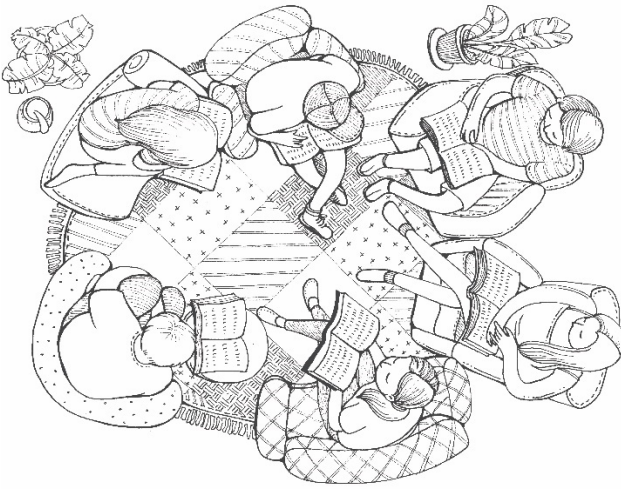
**“You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me”** (John 5:39).



**Where your  
treasure is...**

Matthew 6:19-21

Colossians 6:17-19



The study of the Bible leads us to Jesus and everlasting life in heaven. In the gospel we learn that God the Father sent Jesus into our world. Jesus kept the law perfectly for us. He died on the cross in our place to bear the punishment for our sins. And he rose from the dead to assure us that at the end of our lives we will live with Jesus in heaven. This good news is the treasure and the pearl of great price. It is priceless. Jesus and our salvation through faith in him are more valuable than anything we have during our life on earth. The glory and beauty of God's mercy found in the gospel is so great that that a person will give up everything that stands in the way of obtaining it.

9. What additional insights did you gain here?



### **The treasure in clay jars**

2 Corinthians 4:7

Hebrews 11:24-26





## CONNECTING TO YOUR DAILY LIFE

1. Look at the parable of the Wise and Foolish Builders. List earthbound hopes, dreams, or possessions that people build their lives on. Discuss how these are like shifting sand compared to building on Christ, the solid rock.
2. Consider the parable of the Rich Farmer. Analyze where you are investing your time, energy and hopes. What measurables would you weigh in your analysis? What adjustments would you make?
3. Tell your story of how you came upon the treasure of the gospel of Jesus? What impact has it made to your passions and priorities?
4. Pick out the one point that was most meaningful for you in this lesson.
5. Please pray to God based on this.



**DEVELOP A SUMMARY OF THE LESSON** – Write down and discuss a brief explanation of this lesson. Make it clear and simple enough to share with others. If possible, illustrate it with a drawing or diagram.



## **YOUR NEXT STEPS**

### **Study it!**

Review and retell the parables in your own words.

### **Memorize it!**

Suggestion: Memorize **Luke 12:31,34** (Or identify a different Bible passage in this lesson that is most meaningful for you).

### **Apply it!**

Discuss how you can put this lesson into your life this week.

### **Share it!**

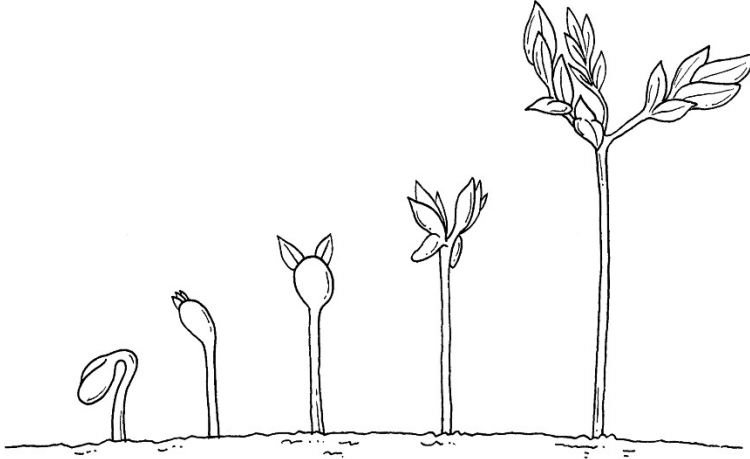
Who especially needs to hear this? Determine how you will share this chapter with others. (You can use this lesson and its summary to help you).

*Go on to the Chapter FOUR to see how the kingdom of God grows like seed.*

## Chapter FOUR

# THE KINGDOM OF GOD GROWS LIKE A SEED

### *The miracle of faith*



It is often said that if something isn't growing, it is dying. We see life and growth all around us unless something interrupts that growth. Most of those living and growing organisms started as a small seed. When a seed is planted, it doesn't seem like much is happening ...at first.

1. Discuss the amazing part of the growth of living things.

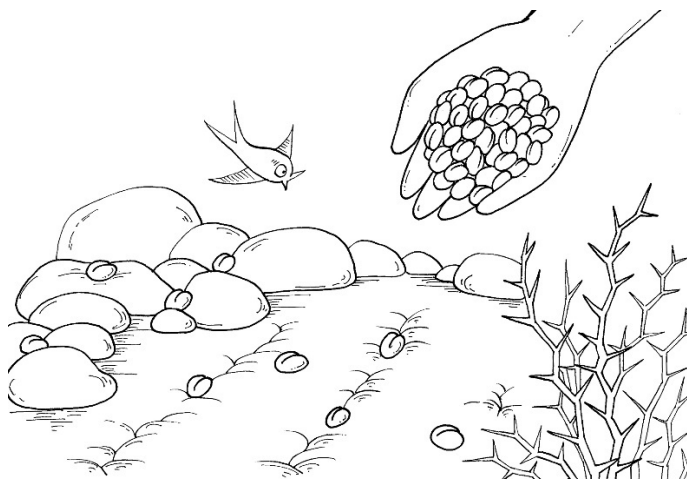
Now ask yourself, what happens when the Word of God is preached and taught? We find the answers in these parables about seeds.

## THE SOWER AND THE SEED

Matthew 13:3-9 (Mark 4:1-20, Luke 8:4-15)

**“A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. Whoever has ears, let them hear”**  
(Matthew 13:3-9).

2. What is the main message here?



Later in the chapter Jesus explains the parable:

Matthew 13:18-23

**“Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”**

3. What additional insights does Jesus provide?

The parable describes four different kinds of hearers of the Word and their heart’s reactions. The seed is the Word of God.

---

**The seed is the Word of God. The ground is the heart that hears the Word**

---

The ground on which the seed fell is the mind or heart that hears the Word

of God. The scattering of the seed is the Word of God going out into the world.

The seed falling on the hard path was easy picking for birds to eat. It represents hardened hearts that reject what God says or lack proper understanding of it. Satan snatches it away before it has a chance to grow.

The seed that fell on the rocks had a bit of soil to grow in but quickly withered. Some get excited at first with what they hear in God's word but don't sink their hearts into it. Faith didn't develop enough root to withstand the troubles, the sufferings, and the persecution that come into their lives. Because they didn't understand God enough to trust him, they feel God has let them down. They may become discouraged that God didn't make life as easy and wonderful as they had expected.

The lives of the third kind of people seems to grow well at first, but no one paid attention to the weeds that started to crowd out the plant. In this parable, these hearers become filled with worldly desires and seeking after wealth. Those who have gardens know how quickly weeds grow and take over. Like weeds, many things can quickly choke out the life of faith. The love or worries over the attractions of the world fills their hearts and crowds out the message of God's Word and the love of God.

Finally, the last group of people listens to God Word and follows Jesus. Their hearts are prepared by the law like a farmer plowing a field to make it ready for a seed to grow. They hear the good news that Jesus saves us. Jesus says,

**“Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life”**  
(John 5:24).



### The obstacles to growing faith

1 Corinthians 1:18-25

1 Corinthians 8

1 Timothy 6:6-10

Then the gospel brings forth good things in their lives. They produce fruit in the form of caring and productive relationships. They multiply the seed by spreading the word of God's love in Jesus to more and more people.

---

**They produce much fruit in the form of caring and productive relationships that spread the word of God's love in Jesus**

---

Do not let Satan, the troubles of the world, or the pleasures of this life lead you away from hearing and

studying God's Word. That Word of God gives you many blessings and makes the kingdom of God grow in our hearts and lives.

**"Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God"**  
(Revelation 2:7).

4. What additional insights did you gain?

## **THE WHEAT AND THE WEEDS**

Matthew 13:24-30

**"Jesus told them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. The owner's servants came to him**



### **The fruit of the Spirit**

Psalm 1:1-3

Jeremiah 17:7-8

Galatians 5:22-23

and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?' 'An enemy did this,' he replied. The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' 'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn'" (Matthew 13:24-30).

5. What did you get out of what Jesus is teaching here?

This parable confused the disciples, so Jesus explains,  
Matthew 13:36-43

"Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, 'Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.' He answered, 'The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the blazing furnace,



where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear” (Matthew 13:36-43).

6. What additional insight did Jesus give?

This parable is a bit different from the Sower and the Seed. The field in this parable is the visible church. The farmer is Jesus, the Son of Man. His good seed produces believers which are represented by the wheat. They bear the good crop that God wants. The enemy is the devil. The weeds he plants among the

---

**Both the believers and unbelievers will live next to each other in the world**

---

wheat represent those who pretend they believe but really do not. The weeds may resemble

morally good and religious people and may be nearly impossible to distinguish from the wheat. Both will live next to each other in our world. They may even be sitting next to each other in church. But at the end of the world, God will separate his own from those who did not trust in him. The believers will enjoy the eternal blessings of heaven. But those without faith will be gathered together and suffer the everlasting burning of hell. That is why Jesus tells us to listen carefully to what he teaches.



### **Wolves in Sheep's Clothing**

Matthew 7:15

Matthew 23:23-28



### **Pharisee and "Sinner" in the Temple**

Luke 18:9-14



At times people want to play God and weed out bad people. The problem is, we can't always distinguish if there is saving faith in a person's heart. That is

---

**At times, people want to play God and weed out bad people**

---

why the Holy Christian Church is sometimes called "the Invisible Church." Sometimes the one who looks righteous is depending on their own

goodness to get to heaven instead of putting their faith in Jesus. And some don't appear to be Christians because they are struggling with their sins. Yet in their inner being they are constantly reaching out to God for help. They have an active faith that clings to the fact that God accepts them only because of the mercy, grace, and work of Jesus. God wants us to address sin in a person's life to help them grow in Christ, and false teaching needs to be identified so it doesn't destroy others. But God, not us, will be the judge of who is in or out in the end.

In some ways this is also like the parable of the Fishing Net. The net catches both good and bad



**Destructive teachers**

Matthew 24:10-13

2 Peter 2:1-3

fishes. But it isn't until the fisherman are on shore that they separate them. Jesus says that will be how it is at the end of the age when the angels come and separate the wicked from those God considers righteous. Our job is not to be the final judge. Until that time we are not to give up on anyone. We are to be faithful in sharing law and gospel so God can work in their hearts at the proper time.

7. What else did you learn from this?

## THE QUIET GROWTH OF SEED

Mark 4:26-29

Jesus told another parable about the seed to describe how the kingdom of God grows in our lives.

**“This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain – first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come”** (Mark 4:26-29).

8. What do you understand of Jesus' teaching here?



## The Parable of the Fishing Net

Matthew 13:47-51

The kingdom of God is a planting and growing of seed. This parable helps us understand our part and God's part in the growth of the seed of faith. Jesus sends us out to "make disciples of all nations." Our

---

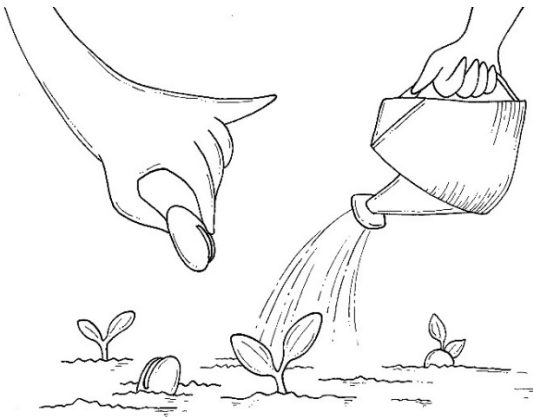
**God is the one who makes faith grow in a person's life and the fruit it eventually brings**

---

part, however, is planting and watering – telling and nurturing. But only God can make faith grow in a person's life

and produce the fruit it eventually brings. Inherent in the seed is the power to grow. For faith, it is the gospel through which Jesus works. That doesn't diminish our part but leaves the results to God. Paul said,

**"What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe – as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow" (1 Corinthians 3:5-7).**



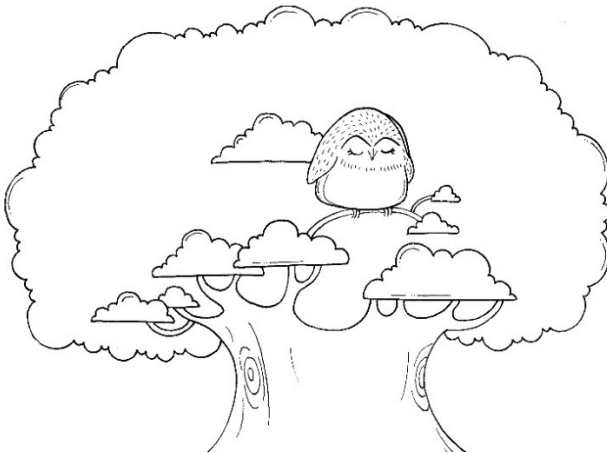
The sickle in the parable is the sharp harvesting knife. It may sound scary, but for the farmer it symbolizes that the crop has reached maturity and is ready to be gathered in. The kingdom of God is this absolute and unchallenged reign of God over his people that brings them into eternal splendor of heaven. This happens at the end of time or when he sees our time of growth and service on earth has reached it fullness in his plan.

9. What additional thoughts does this bring?

## THE MUSTARD SEED

Matthew 13:31-32

Jesus tells a different parable to explain the extent and effect of the kingdom of God in the world:



**“He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches” (Matthew 13:31-32).**

10. What does it sound like Jesus is teaching here?

In the parables we studied before this one, we learned how God plants the Word of God in our

---

**The church was being planted when Jesus chose his twelve apostles... Today believers are found around the world.**

---

hearts and it grows in our lives. In this parable we learn how God plants his Word in the world. The small seed becomes a large

tree. When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the world he came to save hardly noticed. It is amazing how the kingdom of Jesus grew from small beginnings until it spread over the entire world. The New Testament church started to grow as Jesus chose his twelve apostles. Jesus told his disciples,

**“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8).**

**“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20).**

Then on the festival of Pentecost 3,000 souls were added to the church (Read Acts 2:1-41). Later the Bible speaks of the number growing to 5,000 (Read Acts 4:4). Today believers are found in every continent. The small seed has grown to a mighty tree through the message of the gospel. When the church properly represents Jesus, it becomes the physical “tree” that God planted. People today, like the birds in the parable, find hope and rest for their souls in Jesus. He calls to everyone, “Come to me ...and I will give you rest for your souls” (Matthew 11:28-30).

This parable encourages us in the spreading of the gospel which results in developing churches throughout the world. No matter how small it may

---

**The small seed has grown to a mighty tree through the message of the gospel**

---

seem locally, God’s people are part of this large global impact of the kingdom of God

that is characterized by God’s grace. Wherever we plant the good news about Jesus, the growing church becomes a blessing to all who find shelter and hope in its branches throughout the world.

11. What additional insights did you gain?

## **THE YEAST AND THE DOUGH**

Matthew 13:33

**“He told them still another parable: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of**

**flour until it worked all through the dough.”  
(Matthew 13:33).**

12. What do you hear Jesus saying here?

Jesus provides another view of the different facets of the Kingdom of God. When a person mixes yeast in flour to make dough for bread, it doesn't just affect one part. The whole clump of dough rises to become a beautiful loaf of bread when it is baked. The kingdom of God is like that. When God enters our life and connects us to him by faith, it affects every part of our being. It isn't just about going to church. It makes us a whole different person:



**“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:17-18).**



**A new heart – a  
new life**

Jeremiah 31:33-34

Ezekiel 36:25-27

Ephesians 3:16-21

1 Thessalonians 1:2-10



Like yeast, God word of faith influences every part of our being and activities to bring glory to God. It is the natural response of awe and thanks for what he

---

**When God enters our life, it affects every part of our being**

---

had done for us. It affects our attitudes, our relationships, our choices in life, our values and our priorities.

13. What additional insights did you gain?



## CONNECTING TO YOUR DAILY LIFE

1. Review the 4 different types of soil in the parable of the Sower and the Seed. What do you need to understand about your heart so that the seed of God's word grows and produces maximum fruit?
2. In the parable of the Wheat and the Weeds, why did Jesus say not to pull up weeds out of the field of the church? How will this help you in your view of others and your interaction with them?
3. Look over the parable of the Mustard Seed. How have you seen the seed of the gospel grow into a large tree that people can find spiritual shelter in? What encouragement does that give to you and your group?
4. Pick out the one point that was most meaningful for you in this lesson.
5. Please pray to God based on this.



**DEVELOP A SUMMARY OF THE LESSON** – Write down and discuss a brief explanation of this lesson. Make it clear and simple enough to share with others. If possible, illustrate it with a drawing or diagram.



## **YOUR NEXT STEPS**

### **Study it!**

Review and retell the parables in your own words.

### **Memorize it!**

Suggestion: Memorize **1 Corinthians 3:5-7** (Or identify a different Bible passage in this lesson that is most meaningful for you).

### **Apply it!**

Discuss how you can put this lesson into your life this week.

### **Share it!**

Who especially needs to hear this? Determine how you will share this chapter with others. (You can use this lesson and its summary to help you).

*Go on to the Chapter FIVE to hear Jesus talk about fruit in our lives.*

## Chapter FIVE

# PRODUCING FRUIT IN LIFE

*The seed matures to a healthy crop*



Perhaps you have heard someone say, “That wasn’t a very Christian thing to do.” But it is amazing how differently people think it means to be a Christian. What does it look like to be a Christian?

1. Describe how people often judge whether someone is Christian.

The essence of being a Christian is not in the behavior and actions, but in faith in Jesus. But neither is Christianity just sitting around merely enjoying God’s love or waiting for his return. Faith in Jesus produces fruit. But what does he consider “fruit?”

## THE BARREN FIG TREE

Luke 13:6-9 (Matthew 7:17-23, Luke 6:43-45)



**"Then he told this parable: A man had a fig tree growing in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it but did not find any. So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, 'For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?' 'Sir,' the man replied, 'leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it. If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down'" (Luke 13:6-9).**

2. What do understand Jesus is teaching us?

How disturbing would it be for you to plant an apple tree and after years of watering it, you didn't see one apple just a lot of leaves? That is what it was like in this parable. God plants faith in a person's heart. And

---

**Faith in Christ alone saves. But faith is never alone. It produces fruit**

---

it is faith in Christ alone that saves. But faith never is alone. It produces fruit. In the book of

James it says that if faith doesn't result in living for God, it must be dead.

**"This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples"** (John 15:8).

The problem is, we can't produce fruit just by wishing for it. Nor are there 10 easy steps to make it happen. God causes it to grow. In the parable it is the garden caretaker who convinces the owner to give him more time to work on the fruit-less fig tree. You can imagine Jesus having this conversation with God the Father. He puts an extra effort into fertilizing the tree to get it to produce fruit. Peter tells us,

**"The Lord ...is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance"** (2 Peter 3:9).

The fruitfulness God looks for starts with repentance and faith. Jesus told

---

**The fruitfulness God looks for starts with repentance and faith and matures into love for God and people**

---

the Pharisees to "produce fruit in keeping with repentance." It matures into love

for God and loving actions toward people. God patiently works in hearts through his messages law



**Faith without fruit is dead**

James 2:14-18



**God expects fruit from the vineyard he planted**

Isaiah 5:1-7



**Fruit of repentance**

Matthew 3:7-10

Luke 3:7-14

and gospel to draw us closer to him. Sometimes God even prunes our lives with painful circumstance now so we can produce a rich harvest of fruit in the future. Jesus tells us that the fruit only comes from being connected to life in him. Jesus says,

**“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener... Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing”** (John 15:1, 4-5).

Love would be the main ingredient of the fruit. And “by this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35).

Jesus told another parable of the wicked caretakers of a farmer’s crops. He was addressing it to Pharisees and religious leaders who didn’t follow Jesus. They knew he was talking about them and wanted to arrest him for that – more proof there was no fruit.

**“Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit”** (Matthew 21:43).

Finally, if there is no fruit in the end, there will be a day of reckoning. Eventually God removed his attention from the nation of Jews and invested his kingdom in people of many nations and languages who would bear the fruits of faith.

3. What further insights does this open up?



### God’s Discipline for producing a greater harvest

Hebrews 12:5-11  
Hebrews 13:15-16



### Fruit of the Spirit

Galatians 5:16-25  
Ephesians 5:5-10  
Colossians 1:10-12  
Hebrews 13:15-16

## **THE TALENTS (bags of gold)**

Matthew 25:14-30

Another indicator of whether we live in our relationship with God is whether or not we invest our lives for his purposes and glory.

**“Again, it (the kingdom of heaven) will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.**

**“After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.’ His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’ The man with two bags of gold also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see, I have gained two more.’ His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’**





**“Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’ His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. ‘So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth’ (Matthew 25:14-30).**

4. What is Jesus wanting us to understand?

---

**I would seem like Jesus is gone a long time, but he promises to return again**

---

days he would be hanging on the cross to die. After he rose from death, he would return to heaven and

---

**God had honored and trusted them with part of his wealth and they wanted to make sure they invested it for the master's benefit.**

---

leave his disciples behind. It would seem like Jesus is gone a long time, but he promised to return. The parable depicts what we have in life as valuable gifts belonging to God that he entrusts to us for a time. The Greek "talent" in the parable was the amount of gold that some estimate to be worth about 20 years of a common laborer's wage. The differing amounts "talents" or "bags of gold" given to each of the servants represent people with different abilities, gifts, or opportunities. Jesus wants to see what we will do with it. The first two realized what an honor it was that God had trusted them with part of his wealth. They wanted to make sure they wisely invested it for the master's benefit so he would receive the return on the investment. The same is true of us.

**"For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:10).**

God works in the world through all the gifts he gives to different people. He wants them put into motion.



**Jesus will return**

Matthew 25:31-33

John 14: 1-7

Acts 1: 7-11

**“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good” (1 Corinthians 12:4-7).**

And we should not compare ourselves with others and their apparent success. We have different abilities. Some have their strengths in serving the needs of others, some are good at caring for the young or weak, some provide a useful skill for the community. Some are best at inviting other people nearby to read and study God’s Word, and some excel in going to the ends of the earth to reach those who know nothing about Jesus. Jesus reminds us that he will hold us accountable proportionate to the level of the gifts. “To whom much is given, much is required.” The apostle Peter writes,

**“Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen” (1 Peter 4:10-11).**

God entrusts us with skillsets, resources, and life opportunities. He gives us freedom to decide how to invest it so that he receives it back “with

---

**Those who understand their role with God do this instinctively**

---



## **Gifted by God for different types of serving**

Romans 12

1 Corinthians 12

Ephesians 4



## **The faithful and wise servant**

Matthew 24:42-51

Luke 12:42-48

interest." Those who understand God do this instinctively. It is their honor to participate with God's work in the world. Those who "invest" what God gave them, no matter how large or small it was at first, hear Jesus say, **"Well done, good and faithful servant!"** Then he welcomes them into the joy of heaven. There they share Jesus' happiness over the impact of their investment and invites them to join his rule over all things.

But there is also that unfaithful servant. He also was asked to give an account of his service, but he did nothing with what God gave him. He buried it. This servant is called evil and lazy. His lack of action revealed his view and attitude toward God. The things of God meant nothing to him. To try to save face, the unfaithful servant said it was unreasonable for God to expect others to do his work. But it was just an excuse and a bold indicator of his lack of faith and respect for the master. The man knew God does his work through people. So God took the little the man had and gave it to the one who showed the greatest return to his portion. Then he had the "worthless servant" thrown outside into darkness – a picture of hell – where there is only anguish.

Our acceptance into heaven is based on faith in what Jesus did to get us there. But what we do in life may

---

**Those who do not invest  
the gifts of his love  
reveal they have not  
relationship with God**

---

be an indicator of the presence or absence of faith. No matter how obvious or hidden our actions, it is our privilege to

invest for God. God will bless whatever the gift with abundant return for his glory and the benefit of others.



**Those who cannot  
love, haven't  
invested God's  
love in their lives**

1 John 4:16-21



**The parable of the  
Minas**

Luke 19:11-27

**"So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty'" (Luke 17:10).**

5. What further insights does this provide?



## CONNECTING TO YOUR DAILY LIFE

1. Discuss the kind of fruit God looks for in his followers. Why is that fruit important to God and also to us? How might that change how you look at your daily life?
2. Evaluate the different types of “talents” or blessings God entrusts to the people in your group. Determine ways they can be used to accomplish God’s plans in the world.
3. Develop approaches you can follow when you look at the fruit of your life and feel it is lacking.
4. Pick out the one point that was most meaningful for you in this lesson.
5. Please pray to God based on this.



**DEVELOP A SUMMARY OF THE LESSON** – Write down and discuss a brief explanation of this lesson. Make it clear and simple enough to share with others. If possible, illustrate it with a drawing or diagram.



## **YOUR NEXT STEPS**

### **Study it!**

Review and retell the parables in your own words.

### **Memorize it!**

Suggestion: Memorize **John 15:4-5** (Or identify a different Bible passage in this lesson that is most meaningful for you).

### **Apply it!**

Discuss how you can put this lesson into your life this week.

### **Share it!**

Who especially needs to hear this? Determine how you will share this chapter with others. (You can use this lesson and its summary to help you).

*Go on to the Chapter SIX to see how this fruit shows itself in our relationships with others.*

# Chapter SIX

## Treating Others with Justice and Love

*Building a bridge from God to others*



People want justice. If someone has done wrong, they should pay for it. If someone is not conforming, he should be alienated. If someone does not agree with our cultural expectations, they should not be tolerated. Yet we feel people should accept us no matter what we do. We get upset if others are intolerant of our ways and actions.

1. Describe how people act toward others who they feel are not conforming to their values. Where do you most see this?



God is a God of justice and righteousness. Tolerating wickedness undermines the peace, success, and safety of others. But God is also a God of Love who provides forgiveness. How does he balance the two? How does that affect our relationships with others? Here are a few parables Jesus told to give us a better perspective.

## **THE UNMERCIFUL SERVANT**

Matthew 18:21-35

How much should you forgive? How far should that extend?

**“Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, ‘Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?’ Jesus answered, ‘I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.**

**“Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. At this the servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’ The servant’s master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.**

**“But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he demanded. His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.’ But he refused. Instead, he went off**

and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt.

“When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened. Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’ In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart” (Matthew 18:21-35).

2. What is Jesus teaching us here?



The king in the parable is God himself. In his mercy

---

**There is no way we could get out from underneath the burden of sin. But God canceled our debt to him**

---

he forgives each of us a tremendous debt. This debt is caused by the sin we commit. There is no way we could

repay the debt or get out from underneath its burden. The curse of it would land us in the prison of hell. But God canceled our debt to him. But he didn't just forget about it, someone had to absorb the cost. It was his son Jesus who paid it.

**"For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect" (1 Peter 1:18-19).**

In comparison to the many sins we have committed against God, the sins of our neighbors against us are very small. But sometimes we are not ready to forgive our neighbor. We think only about ourselves and our feelings. We hold a grudge against him or her. We won't speak to them. We say bad things about the person. What does that tell us about our understanding and attitude about God's forgiveness toward us? Jesus' parable tells us to have a constant attitude of forgiveness that mirrors God's mindset toward us. That attitude of forgiveness is the Holy Spirit's work in our hearts. Apostle Paul writes,

**"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to**

**one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you” (Ephesians 4:30-32).**

At the end of this parable Jesus says, “Forgive your brother from the heart.” Jesus wanted Peter to

---

**Our relationships  
should be ones lived  
in forgiveness**

---

recognize that just as our lives should be ones of repentance to God, so also our relationships should be lived in forgiveness toward others. In the

Lord’s Prayer we keep this constantly in front of us,

**“Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.”**

Such an attitude and mindset of forgiveness is based on God’s forgiveness which has no limits.

**“If your brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them; and if they repent, forgive them. Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying ‘I repent,’ you must forgive them” (Luke 17:3-4).**

God wants us to be faithful in distributing to others what he has distributed to us. That is a tall order but lifts a burden from our shoulders. The disciples’ response was to this was, “Lord, increase our faith.” They knew they didn’t have strength in themselves to accomplish that. But when we comprehend the magnitude of what God has done for us, it moves our hearts to put into the past what others have done against. Our task is focused on helping them grasp the forgiving love of God.

3. What additional thoughts did you have here?

## THE GOOD SAMARITAN

Luke 10:25-37

What is it that pleases God? What does he notice as good in our lives? Is it the special religious activities? Is it the clean lifestyle? What is it that God looks for? Listen to Jesus response in this parable.



**"On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. 'Teacher,' he asked, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?' 'What is written in the Law?' he replied. 'How do you read it?' He answered, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' 'You have answered correctly,' Jesus replied. 'Do this and you will live.' But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?'"**

**In reply Jesus said: 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him**

half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

'Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?' The expert in the law replied, 'The one who had mercy on him.' Jesus told him, 'Go and do likewise'" (Luke 10:25-37).

4. Describe the point Jesus was making.

"What must I do to inherit eternal life?" is a question different people asked Jesus. From their responses, we get the impression they thought quite highly of themselves and felt they had been living an upstanding life. To get to the heart of the issue, Jesus

---

**He wanted clarification about who really qualifies as his neighbor**

---

referred to the summary of God's will. Moses, God's law-giver,

condensed the 10 commandments down to this: Love God above everything else with and show it by loving your neighbor. But that wasn't specific enough for the law expert. He wanted clarification about who really qualifies as his neighbor. He wanted to narrow the field of people suitable for his love. So Jesus told the parable to illustrate it for him (and us).

The parable centers around a man who had been robbed and left half dead by the side of the road. You would think the two religious leaders would be the first to help a fellow Jew - especially if he is badly wounded. But when each of them saw the man lying

---

**They were apathetic and  
unsympathetic to the  
man's dilemma**

---

in a ditch, they passed by him on the other side of the road. The sight might have

repulsed or scared them. Maybe they had more important religious duties to hurry to. Maybe they were afraid of becoming unclean by touching him. Maybe they were worried they might get robbed too if they stuck around. Either way, they stayed clear of getting involved. They were apathetic and unsympathetic to the man's dilemma. They didn't want to be bothered.

Then a Samaritan came by. These Samaritan people and their culture were despised by the Jews. The Jews wouldn't even think of setting foot in the house of a Samaritan or be caught talking to them. Yet it was this Samaritan foreigner who took pity on the wounded man. His schedule and destination became less priority than the urgent need of the wounded man. The Samaritan did some emergency care for the man's wounds. But then he went the extra mile by

putting the bloodied man on his donkey and checking him into an inn. When the Samaritan had to leave, he provided money for the continued care of the wounded man. He did all of this for someone who, if the other man was healthy and strong, might have despised and shunned him for being a Samaritan. The Samaritan's action was quite a vivid picture of unconditional, unrestricted love.

So Jesus switched around the law expert's question. Instead of listing all the people who fit the category

---

**The Samaritan's action was quite a vivid picture of unconditional, unrestricted love**

---

of a "neighbor" for this man, Jesus asks, "Who do you think was neighbor to the man who was attacked by

robbers?" It was obvious that only one acted like a neighbor. It was the man who felt sorry for wounded man and did something about it. To be a neighbor in our lives, we need to ask, "Who needs my help?" Jesus challenged the law-expert by saying "Go and do likewise."

But don't miss another main point here. There were no qualifications of race, gender, culture, language that defined someone as neighbor. But in his life, this man probably had narrowed it down to his own kind - those who thought like him and shared his viewpoints. It convicted the man of neglecting the core attitudes and actions of the law in favor of his pet righteousness. He hasn't been a neighbor to those who needed him. Like him, we have not kept God's law. We fail. Like him, we need a Savior, Jesus Christ. And that is the point.

Once a troubled jailor in Philippi asked Paul a similar question, "What must I do to be saved." But he



**Love your enemies**

Matthew 5:43-48



asked out of humble fear and not arrogant pride or self-assurance of being good. Paul responded, **“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved - you and your household”** (Acts 16:30-31). That is the only way we can “inherit” eternal life – by believing in what Jesus did perfectly for us, not by our failed attempts at perfection.

5. What additional insights did you gain?

## THE SHEEP AND THE GOATS

Matthew 25:31-40

Jesus uses the images of sheep and goats to describe those who have followed him as the Good Shepherd compared to those who have gone their own way. This image depicts the great dividing at the end of time. The believers in Christ are gathered into the excitements of heaven, and the unbelievers are sent away from God’s presence and removed from joy and blessings (see Rich Man and Poor Lazarus parable).



**“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.**

**“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’**

**“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me’” (Matthew 25:31-40).**

6. What stands out in this picture?

An interesting picture emerges depicting those Jesus welcomes into heaven. Instead of pointing out their faith in him, he lists the instinctive responses to those in need. It is an visible fruit of a living faith. It was so much a natural part of life, they didn't keep records of it, unlike the Pharisee who bragged before God of

---

**Instead of pointing out their faith in him, he lists the instinctive responses**

---

all the good he had done. They didn't even remember doing them. Instead these were the

natural rhythms of their relationships. It was a grace-filled extension of their relationship with Jesus - "whatever you did, you did for me."

Of course the rest of the story describes the goats which represents those who don't depend on Jesus or

---

**These were the natural rhythms of their relationships – an extension of their relationship with Jesus**

---

live in his love. Jesus is the only way out of the fateful condemnation of all humanity. Without faith in Jesus, there is no other way to

the Father and his eternal home. Those who were unbelievers (the goats) showed their lack of faith with the lack of concern for the less fortunate and marginalized people. Their outward apathy was an indication of what was wrong on the inside. They would join the devil and his angels in the darkness and pain of eternal separation for God and his goodness. It is the outcome we also would have shared if God had not rescued us by bringing us to faith in Jesus.

These deeds were evidence of whether or not the people grasped the extraordinary love of God shown

to us in Jesus. It is he who saved us by his life, death and resurrection. Faith in that connection to God affects the way we live.

7. What else did this help you understand?



## CONNECTING TO YOUR DAILY LIFE

1. How did the Unmerciful Servant show he failed to understand the extraordinary mercy his master had shown to him? Examine ways you can put Christ's forgiveness into action in your life.
2. Recall how Jesus used the parable of the Good Samaritan to illustrate how to be a neighbor. Discuss the people in your life or community that need such a neighbor. List ways you can respond.
3. Review the list of good works the King used as measurements of faith in the story of the Sheep and the Goats. Evaluate ways your response to needs of others can become an instinctive rhythm of your life.
4. Pick out the one point that was most meaningful for you in this lesson.
5. Please pray to God based on this.



**DEVELOP A SUMMARY OF THE LESSON** – Write down and discuss a brief explanation of this lesson. Make it clear and simple enough to share with others. If possible, illustrate it with a drawing or diagram.



## **YOUR NEXT STEPS**

### **Study it!**

Review and retell the parables in your own words.

### **Memorize it!**

Suggestion: Memorize **Ephesians 4:31-32** (Or identify a different Bible passage in this lesson that is most meaningful for you).

### **Apply it!**

Discuss how you can put this lesson into your life this week.

### **Share it!**

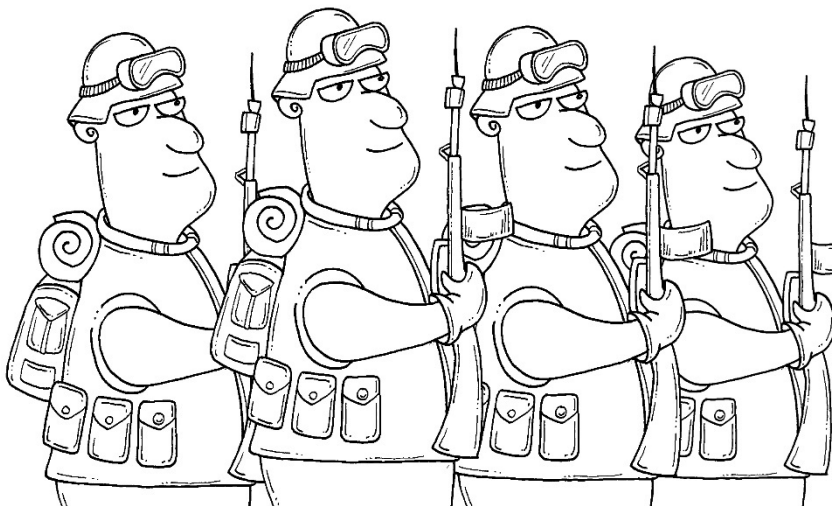
Who especially needs to hear this? Determine how you will share this chapter with others. (You can use this lesson and its summary to help you).

*Go on to the Chapter SEVEN to see how to be prepared for the end of the world.*

## Chapter SEVEN

# PREPARED FOR THE LORD'S RETURN

*Living as if Jesus will return today*



“Be prepared!” That is the cry of a government when it fears being invaded by an enemy. “Be ready!” is the message of school systems to get ready for disasters. Preparation doesn’t start at the last moment, but long before there is a crisis. To prepare for a battle, people go through strict training. That way they are ready for anything that might unexpectedly happen. School children often go through drills for emergency situations. That way lives can be saved.

1. Describe events for which people must be prepared. How do people prepare for it?

“Be prepared!” That is Jesus’ cry to all of us as we prepare to meet him. That will happen either on the day of our death or when Jesus comes again to judge all people at the end of time. The following parables illustrate the importance of being ready at any time.

## **THE TEN BRIDESMAIDS**

Matthew 25:1-13

The Scriptures often describes heaven as the wedding feast. The end of the world is the time Jesus welcomes into his heavenly home his bride, the church, his people of faith. Here Jesus provides lessons on being ready.

**“At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. The wise ones, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.**

**“At midnight the cry rang out: ‘Here’s the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!’ Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.’ ‘No,’ they replied, ‘there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.’ But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.**



**“Later the others also came. ‘Lord, Lord,’ they said, ‘open the door for us!’ But he replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I don’t know you.’ Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour” (Matthew 25:1-13).**

2. What key point did you get from this parable?



In Jesus’ day, Jewish marriage celebrations took place in the evening. It was sometimes a long wait for the bride. The bridegroom would first have to finish building their home. When he was ready, the groom would go to the family house of the bride. Then in a type of parade, he would take her to his house. The friends of the bride, the bridesmaids, would go with her and light the way with their lamps.

This parable focuses on the groom and the bridesmaids. The groom is Jesus. The bridesmaids are the followers of Jesus. We might call our faith in Jesus the flames in lamps that shines out with love and good works. The oil that keeps it burning is the



**Signs the End is  
near**

Matthew 24:3-31

Mark 13

gospel message that feeds our faith. The wise bridesmaids are those constantly pay attention to their Christian lives and refuel it with God's Word.

---

**Jesus' love and truth reflects as a light in their lives**

---

Jesus' love and truth reflects as a light in their lives to those around them.

The foolish bridesmaids hear God's word but are too distracted with the things of this world. They don't pay attention to their faith or supply it with the fuel it needs - the message of the Scripture. They didn't expect the groom to come so soon and the flame of faith in the foolish bridesmaids has gone out. There is no last-minute run to the store to buy faith. The time of grace comes to an end when Jesus calls us on the day of our death or when he comes again on the Last Day. After the door is shut, the foolish bridesmaids want to get in. But Jesus says, "I don't know you." How terrible!

The wise bridesmaids, however, are ready to go into heaven. The dinner is the blessedness of heaven prepared for all who are true followers of Jesus. In a similar way in Luke 12 Jesus says:

**"Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, like servants waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. Truly I tell you, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the middle of the night or toward daybreak. But**



**Words you don't want to hear from**

**Jesus:**

**"I don't know you"**

**Matthew 7:21-23**

**understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him” (Luke 12:35-40).**

Paul describes believers as those who long for Jesus appearing (2 Timothy 4:8). We are to be watching for

---

**We always need to be prepared for the unexpected hour**

---

Jesus to come. We always need to be prepared for the unexpected hour when he arrives. One day each of us will meet the

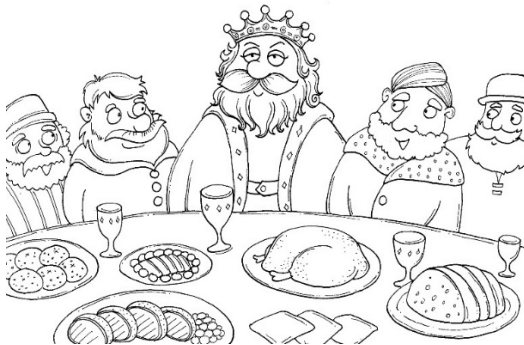
Lord face to face! Our watching shows we treasure God’s grace and incorporate it into our faith and life. Therefore, be prepared! Don’t wait until tomorrow! Only the wise in faith will enter the wedding dinner.

3. What further insight did you find in this?

## THE WEDDING FEAST

Matthew 22:1-14

Jesus tells another wedding parable.



**“Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come. Then he sent some more servants and said, ‘Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.’ But they paid no attention and went off – one to his field, another to his business. The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.**

**“Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. So go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.’ So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, the bad as well as the good, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.**

**“But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. He asked, ‘How did you get in here without wedding clothes, friend?’ The man was speechless. Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are invited, but few are chosen’” (Matthew 22:1-14).**

4. Describe what you hear Jesus teaching with this parable.

Those who have been married know how much preparation goes into a wedding and how important the guest list is. In this parable, the wedding dinner portrays the joys of heaven. The king and the son in this parable are God the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. The people of Israel, God's chosen people, received this invitation to the wedding dinner through the words of the prophets. Accepting the invitation required repenting of their sin and trusting in the Messiah to come. But they had excuses. They found other things in life more urgent or exciting. They not only ignored the invitation, but some even killed prophets who brought them the invitation.

Because the first guests rejected the invitation, the king sends out his servants into the street corners to

---

**The king sends out his servants into the street corners to invite those who had been ignored**

---

invite anyone who would come. These represent people of all other nations, including yours. Some may have

had sinful pasts or been the undesirables in society, but they accept the invitation. The wedding hall is filled with guests. Time for a celebration!

But there is one more problem. The king has a dress code for wedding dinner to show respect and honor the wedding of his son. But one man does not have on the proper clothing for the dinner. He treats this like a common meal and chooses to come in with his street clothes. He soon is embarrassed and

---

**God's heaven is holy. The dress code is perfection**

---

speechless. Because he wasn't properly clothed, he receives the same fate as



### **Jewish rejection of Jesus became invitation to world**

Romans 11:1-25

Acts 13:44-52; 14:26-28



### **Properly dressed**

Isaiah 61:10

Ezekiel 16:8-14

Galatians 3:26-29

those who rejected the initial invitation. God's heaven is holy. The dress code is perfection. We cannot choose our own dress code and wear the garment of our own efforts, our own good works. The clothing of our daily actions and attitudes are filthy with sin. But when God graciously invites people to be with him at the feast in heaven, he also offers to clothe each guest with the robe of Jesus' righteousness. That righteous robe represents all that Jesus did for us. Jesus kept the law perfectly to present us pure before God. He was punished on the cross for our sins to cover our stains. With faith in Jesus, we will be properly dressed for the marriage dinner of Jesus in heaven. Only then will they be suitably dressed to respect the king and honor his son.

5. What additional information was helpful?

## **WORKERS IN THE VINEYARD**

Matthew 20:1-16

**"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard. About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. He told them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' So they went. He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. About five in**

the afternoon he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, 'Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?' 'Because no one has hired us,' they answered. He said to them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard.'

"When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.' The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. 'These who were hired last worked only one hour,' they said, 'and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.'



"But he answered one of them, 'I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to

**give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?' So the last will be first, and the first will be last" (Matthew 20:1-16).**

6. What message do you see Jesus is teaching here?

We all want a fair shake in life. Already in childhood we cry out "it's not fair!" when it seems one child gets more than others. The cry also comes when one seems to work harder, behave better, achieve more and in the end gets the same reward as the others.

In this parable, Jesus reminds his listeners that the promise of the inheritance of heaven is the same for all. It was the offer to everyone no matter when and how long they worked for him. But some didn't see it that way especially if they worked all day and those who came at the last hour got the same as they did. **"Are you envious because I am generous?"**

Remember the older brother in the parable of the **Are you envious because I am generous?** Prodigal Son (or the Broken-Hearted Father)? He was angry and jealous

that his wayward brother was given a homecoming celebration when it was he, the older brother, that had worked hard and faithful all these years. But in the parable of the lost sheep and coin, there was great rejoicing over every sinner that comes to repentance. We can imagine that heaven rejoiced when the thief



on the cross reached out in faith to Jesus on the cross next to him and said, "Remember me when you go into your kingdom." What a lesson it is for us to hear Jesus respond, "Today you will be with me in paradise."

Sometimes life-long Christians find it unfair that someone coming to faith on their deathbed (or before their execution for crimes) will receive the same heavenly inheritance as they will. Our sinful nature

---

**The crown of life isn't earned because of our faithfulness. It is a generous gift of God**

---

doesn't like to hear that the crown of life in heaven isn't earned because of our faithfulness or hard-working lives. If we

don't recognize the tremendous grace and mercy granted even to us, then we fail to see the great joy of others receiving it - especially if they had lived a shameful life for so long. Our eternal life is God's generous gift. It was gained only through the sacrificial life and death of Jesus. We fail to realize that none of us deserve it, but faith depends on it. Our joy will be seeing everyone who made it there as a proof of God's grace and glory in doing the impossible in and for all of our lives. It will be sufficiently exciting for all of us.

7. What additional thoughts did you gain from this?



## CONNECTING TO YOUR DAILY LIFE

1. Reconsider the parable of the 10 Bridesmaids. How can the anticipating the excitement of Jesus' return prepare you in the way you live your life from day to day?
2. Review the parable of the Wedding Feast. What excuses do people use to avoid listening to God's Word or accepting Jesus' gospel invitation? How do you respond to that?
3. Use a more modern analogy to retell the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard. How does the lessons on fairness and God's generosity change the way you see your situation and the situation of others?
4. Pick out the one point that was most meaningful for you in this lesson.
5. Please pray to God based on this.



**DEVELOP A SUMMARY OF THE LESSON** – Write down and discuss a brief explanation of this lesson. Make it clear and simple enough to share with others. If possible, illustrate it with a drawing or diagram.



## **YOUR NEXT STEPS**

### **Study it!**

Review and retell the parables in your own words.

### **Memorize it!**

Suggestion: Memorize **Luke 12:35** (Or identify a different Bible passage in this lesson that is most meaningful for you).

### **Apply it!**

Discuss how you can put this lesson into your life this week.

### **Share it!**

Who especially needs to hear this? Determine how you will share this chapter with others. (You can use this lesson and its summary to help you).

# Parables of Jesus



**Multi-Language  
Productions**

Bringing the Word to the World

Living in Faith Series - English

Parables of Jesus

MLP Catalog No: 385539