



THE PARABLES OF JESUS

SESSION 1

Introduction to the Parables of Jesus

WELCOME

Thank you all for signing up for this CORE Seminar on the Parables of Jesus. We're excited about spending the next couple of months with you as we study the teachings of Jesus. Each week we'll dive into a parable – you will have a participant guide – and at the end of each participant guide you will have the Scriptural content for next week's lesson.

Please read AND study ahead. This will make our time more interesting as we grow together and learn together.

SCRIPTURE

Have someone in the group look up and read [Isaiah 6:9-10](#)

BACKSTORY

Most of us are familiar with the Old Testament story of Israel – right? How God choose a particular people, delivers a particular people and provides for a particular people. This particular people being Israel – the descendants of Abraham. This is the story of the Old Testament where God binds Himself in love to Israel. In His love, He chooses, delivers, and provides for the people of Israel, despite their constant disobedience.

And really, this is the best definition of their relationship: it's a cycle of sin, punishment, repentance, and deliverance – that repeats throughout their history. Through this cycle, we see God's persistent invitation [through His prophets] to a relationship, offering identity, purpose, and belonging to Israel through His messengers. However, the people often reject this and insist on doing things their own way, leading to spiritual dullness.

Isaiah was one of God's prophets. He was sent to call God's people to repentance. In [Isaiah 6:9-10](#), we see God's words – commissioned through Isaiah – to shut the people's eyes, stop-up their ears and harden the hearts of His people. The language we see here is very similar to Paul's in [Romans 1:28](#),

And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.

Whenever God's message is shared, it has a powerful impact on everyone who listens. No one stays the same after hearing it. If you embrace it, you grow in kindness and goodness. But if you ignore or don't care about it, your heart can become hard, and understanding the message becomes more difficult. It's like your eyes and ears becoming less receptive, and the important teachings become harder to grasp.

QUESTION

In Isaiah 6:9-10, what was God's purpose for Isaiah's ministry?

- That the people of Israel would repent and follow God's ways.
- That Isaiah would destroy the idols in the land.
- That Isaiah would lead Israel to victory against its enemies.
- ***That the Israelites would harden their hearts and be judged.***

QUESTION

When Jesus said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." In Mark 4:9, what do you think He meant?

- How does this verse shed light on the purpose of parables within the teaching ministry of Jesus?

QUOTE

The expression 'those outside' [Mark 4:11] does not refer to the crowds in general – some predetermined group – but to people like Jesus' family and the religious leaders who are not ready to hear and do the will of the Father. It is the stance of willingness to hear and obey that determines whether one is outside or inside. - Klyne Snodgrass

- What do you think it means to have a "stance of willingness to hear AND obey?"

What is a Parable?

The term "parable" originates from the Greek words "para-" meaning "alongside" and "ballō" meaning "to throw." When combined, it forms "parable," which literally means something thrown alongside something else. In the context of Jesus' teachings, parables are a distinctive feature. Jesus would use these stories alongside his regular teachings, often framed as similes, to illustrate spiritual truths. Parables are narratives and illustrations drawn from real-life experiences, serving to convey truths or exemplify principles.

QUESTION

Which parable of Jesus has the most meaning to you? How has God used this parable to help direct your life?

- Which parable do you wrestle with the most?

Why did Jesus teach in Parables?

During His earthly ministry, Jesus extensively utilized parables as a primary method to teach about the Kingdom of God. His parables often served to challenge listeners' perspectives and invited them to reconsider reality.

QUESTION

In the New Testament, the function of parables is _____.

- To explain the truths about the Kingdom of God.
- To hide the secrets of the kingdom from some and reveal them to others.
- To make God's truths more accessible to those willing to be taught.
- ***All of the Above.***

Why are the themes of Parables?

Parables composed over **1/3** of Jesus' teaching! Based on this fact, we will be unable to study ALL of Jesus' parables. But, what we hope to do is study a parable from each of the classifications or themes which are commonly associated with the parables.

Those themes/ classifications are:

- The Kingdom Parables; The Sinner Parables; The Forgiveness Parables; The Prayer Parables; The Stewardship Parables; The Service Parables; And, the Preparedness Parables.

QUESTION

In what ways does Jesus bring good news?

- In what ways does He bring bad news?
- How does this contrast – good news vs. bad news -affect the church's evangelism?
- Your personal evangelism?

How should we interpret Parables?

Well, here's practical advice as you read parables:

- Listen from the hearer's **perspective**.
- Look for the main **point**.
- And, then let the **truth** change your perception.

Misunderstanding Parables

- Parables Generally Aren't **Fables** or **Allegory**.
 - A **fable** is a short story, where the storyteller is attempting to convey some type of moral. As they tell the story, they will use animals, plants, inanimate objects, or forces of nature as characters.
 - **Allegories** are defined as a story, poem, or picture that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning, typically a moral or political one. Which means that someone has gone in and given significance to every word and every detail.

QUESTION

The allegorical method of interpretation _____.

- Searches for hidden meaning in each element of a parable.
- Attempts to give significance to every word and every detail.
- Usually ends up with a weird translation and distortion of the Word of God.
- **All of the above.**

CONCLUSION

The parables we will be discussing this spring are:

- ***The Parable of the Sower/ Soils; the Parable of the Pharisee and Tax Collector/ Publican; the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant; the Parable of the Prodigal Son; the Parable of the Talents; the Parable of the Ten Virgins; and, the Parable of the Good Samaritan.***

I would encourage you to read ahead and study these parables in the days and weeks ahead. I am excited to see where this study leads us as a group and individually in understanding the teachings of our Lord, Jesus Christ.