



Jesus' Parables for Disciples Over 100 Stories, Analogies, and Figurative Sayings

Appendix 1. Participant Handouts

If you are working with a class or small group, feel free to duplicate the handouts at no additional charge. If you'd like to print 8-1/2" x 11" or A4 size pages, you can download the free Participant Guide handout sheets at:

<https://www.jesuswalk.com/parables/parables-lesson-handouts.pdf>

Discussion Questions

You'll typically find 3 to 7 questions for each lesson. Each question may include several sub-questions. These are designed to get group members engaged in discussion of the key points of the passage. If you are running short of time, feel free to skip questions or portions of questions.

Suggestions for Classes and Groups

Individuals who are studying online can probably complete one full lesson per week, though they'll need to be diligent to do so. But some of the chapters just have too much material for a one-hour class discussion. You may want to be selective, or to extend your class session beyond twelve weeks.

Feel free to arrange the lessons any way that works best for your group. Because of the length of these handouts – and to keep down the page count so we can keep the book price lower – they are being made available at no cost online.

<https://www.jesuswalk.com/parables/parables-lesson-handouts.pdf>

Book Versions

The study is available for a modest cost in book formats – paperback, PDF, and Kindle – at

<https://www.jesuswalk.com/books/parables.htm>

Introduction to Jesus' Parables

The Greek word is *parabolē* – “a narrative or saying of varying length, designed to illustrate a truth especially through comparison or simile, comparison, illustration, parable, proverb, maxim.” Notice that this is much broader than the usual definition of our English word “parable,” which refers to a story that makes a point. The Hebrew and Greek words emphasize the idea of “comparisons,” rather than “stories.”

Jesus' Purpose in Teaching via Parables

1. Parables Are Intended to Clarify Truth to the Spiritually Hungry (Mark 4:9, 11a). Furthermore, the parables encapsulate nuggets of Kingdom truth that can be remembered, pondered, and communicated to others.

2. Parables Are Intended to Hide Truth from the Spiritually Dull (Mark 4:11b-12). Jesus quotes from Isaiah 9, where Isaiah is called to preach to the Jewish people, but warned that most would not listen because they had dull hearts. See the Parable of the Narrow Gate (Matthew 7:13-14).

Guidelines for Interpretation

Allegory. For the most part, Jesus' parables are not typical allegories like Pilgrim's Progress, where each element corresponds to something else. Exceptions: Parables of the Wicked Tenants and the Sower.

The Single Point. Most parables make a single point. Exceptions: Parables of Good Samaritan and Prodigal Son.

First Century Context. It is vital that we understand the historical and cultural context in which Jesus is speaking, as Jesus' followers would have heard it.

Differences in Synoptic Gospels. Jesus told these parables many times to differing audiences in scores of towns and cities. We can expect some variations.

Danger of Allegorizing Jesus' Parables

Origen (185-254 AD) and later Augustine (354-430 AD) saw the Parable of the Good Samaritan as an allegory of Christ healing the wounds caused by sin.

Wounded traveler	Adam
Jerusalem	Paradise
Jericho	The moon that waxes, wanes, and dies; human mortality
Robbers	The devil and his angels
Priest	The Law
Levite	The Prophets
Samaritan	Christ
Wounds	Disobedience, vices, and sin
Oil and wine	Comfort and exhortation
Donkey	The Lord's body that bears our sins
Inn	The Church
Two Denarii	Knowledge of the Father and the Son
Innkeeper	The Apostle Paul
Promised Return	Christ's Second Coming

1. Parables about God's Love

1.1 Searching for the Lost

Parable of the Lost Sheep (Luke 15:3-6a; Matthew 18:12-14)

Parable of the Lost Coin (Luke 15:8-10)

Q1. (Luke 15:1-10) What do the Parables of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin teach disciples about God's heart? In what way do these parables represent a contrast to the murmuring of the Pharisees? How should a disciple implement Jesus' value of seeking the lost in his or her own community?

Parable of the Lost Son or the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32)

Inheritance laws in Israel were designed to favor the older son, giving him a double share, probably with the purpose of keeping a family's land holdings together and preserving the family farm intact. If there were four sons, the older son would receive two shares, with each of the other three sons one share apiece. Dividing up a father's estate before his death was known but frowned upon. Nevertheless, the sons are obligated to support their father as long as he lives.

Points: (1) God does not prevent us from sinning and rebelling. We have freedom to do so. (2) Repentance is necessary for us to return to God. (3) Though he loves us immensely, God waits patiently until we "come to our senses." (4) The sinner is morally bankrupt and has absolutely no claim on the Father. (5) God our Father is ready to show abundant mercy.

Q2. (Luke 15:11-32) What does this parable have in common with the Parables of the Lost Sheep and Lost Coin? What does the parable tell us about our Father's way of operating and his values? In what ways does the older son hold his father's values? In what ways does he lack them? What should disciples learn from this parable to equip them for ministry?

1.2 The Father's Forgiveness and Mercy

Parable of the Two Debtors (Luke 7:41-43, 4)

Five hundred denarii = year and a half's wages. Fifty denarii = one month's wages.

Q3. (Luke 7:41-43, 47) According to Jesus' Parable of the Two Debtors, do you think the woman was saved *prior to the dinner or during the dinner*? How effusive is your love for Jesus? How should we as disciples express our gratitude for salvation?

Parable of the Unmerciful Servant (Matthew 18:23-35)

One Tyrian talent would be worth about 6,000 denarii, a denarius being the average amount that a laborer might earn for one day's work. If day laborer earns \$150-\$200 six days per week, then, 10,000 talents = \$15 to \$20 million USD. 100 denarii = \$15,000 to \$20,000 USD. 100 denarii = 0.1% of 6,000 denarii.

Q4. (Matthew 18:23-35) In the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant, where do you see justice? Where do you see grace? Where do you see greed? Where do you see unforgiveness? What lessons from this parable are disciples to incorporate into their lives?

2. Parables about Israel's Unbelief

2.1 Israel's Barrenness, Pride, and Disobedience

Parable of the Barren Fig Tree (Luke 13:6-9)

In the OT, the fig tree represents prosperity and peace in Israel (Micah 4:4; cf. 1 Kings 4:25; Zechariah 3:10). Israel is often typified as a vine or vineyard, but here the unproductive fig tree likely refers to the nation of Israel (Luke 3:9).

Q5. (Luke 13:6-9) What caused Israel's barrenness in Jesus' time? What keeps the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) from growing and maturing in our lives? What can we disciples learn from the Parable of the Barren Fig Tree?

2.2 Rejection of the Messiah by Israel

Analogy of the Hen and Chickens (Matthew 23:37; Luke 13:34)

Parable of the Wedding Banquet (Matthew 22:1-10)

Parable of the Great Banquet (Luke 14:15-24)

The parables have obvious similarities. In both parables a wealthy master holds a great feast, but his invited guests refuse to come when informed that the hour has come. To replace them, servants scour the entire area for other guests.

Wedding Banquet (Matthew 22:1-10)

A king.

Banquet for son's wedding.

Invited guests pay no attention to servant.

Invitees mistreat and kill the servants. The king sends his army, kills them, and burns their city.

Servants invite guests both good and bad.

Man not wearing a wedding garment is severely punished.

Great Banquet (Luke 14:15-24)

A certain man.

Great banquet.

Invited guests make flimsy excuses.

Servants invite the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame of the town, and countryside, and "compel them to come in."

In the first century world, the invitation would be two-fold: (1) the initial invitation some days or weeks ahead of time, and (2) the actual summons to the meal when it is ready. Not to appear at a banquet to which one had previously agreed to attend was a grave breach of social etiquette, an insult to the host.

Inside the town would be the poor, the beggars, the indigent. But outside the town would be the vagabonds and sojourners, those who were shunned and unwelcome in the towns.

Identifications: (1) **The host is God the Father**, inviting his people Israel to the great messianic banquet (Luke 14:15). (2) **The rich and socially elite** who reject at the last minute the host's invitation are the Pharisees and Jewish religious establishment who reject John the Baptist and Jesus. (3) **The poor and downtrodden** are the common people who "heard him gladly" (Mark 12:37, KJV).

Common Themes include (1) lame excuses, (2) rejection and insult (John 1:11-13); (3) mercy and grace; (4) evangelism and the lost, (5) delaying the meal until the house is full (2 Peter 3:9; Matthew 24:14), (6) judgment;

6. judgment; (7) judgment on the Jewish nation (Luke 14:24). Matthew 22:7 is an allegory of the siege and destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Jesus prophesies this at the Triumphal Entry and later reiterates it to his disciples in the temple (Luke 21:5-6; 19:43-44). **(8) feasting in the Kingdom of God** (Revelation 19:7).

Q6. (Matthew 22:1-10; Luke 14:15-24) Who do the excuse-makers represent? What are the potential results of excusing ourselves from carrying out God's will as we know it?

Q7. (Matthew 22:1-10; Luke 14:15-24) In Jesus' Parables of the Wedding Banquet (Matthew) and the Great Banquet (Luke), who are the people represented by those recruited from the streets and lanes of the city? From the highways and hedges? Who do the servant-recruiters represent? How diligent are you and your church in recruiting those who are of a lower class than others in your congregation? What keeps you from this Kingdom task? How might your church fulfill it?

2.3 Excluding Israel from Messiah's Kingdom

Parable of the Wicked Tenants (Matthew 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19)

The vineyard sometimes refers metaphorically to Israel (Isaiah 5:1-7). Identifications: (1) tenants = Jewish leaders; owner = God; fruit = faith, worship; servants = prophets; son = Jesus; killed outside the vineyard = Golgotha, outside Jerusalem. There is a prophetic allegory to the utter destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 AD, the end of the Jewish nation. At the fall of Jerusalem, the temple was destroyed, the city was burned, the walls were pulled down, and perhaps a million or more people were killed during the siege of the city, with another 97,000 people enslaved, many of them dying in the arena as gladiators to entertain the Romans.

Stones

Jesus teaches how the Old Testament prophets had predicted this, using a series of references to the "stone." "Stone" and "Rock" are often used as titles of God in the Old Testament. Matt 21:42 quotes Psalm 118:22-23 in Matthew 21:42. Builders = the leaders of the Jewish nation. "Rejected" is *apodokimazō*, "to reject (after scrutiny), declare useless." "Stone" = Divine Messiah.

Matthew 21:44 = Luke 20:18 quotes Isaiah 8:14 and Daniel 2:34-44-45.

Judgment upon Israel

"The kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit."
(Matthew 21:43)

The fruit the son in the parable was sent to collect represents the faith and righteousness due to the God of Israel. But though Jesus has called them to repentance, the Jewish leaders reject the Son of God and kill him. Then God rejects them and transfers the Kingdom of God to others – namely, the Gentiles, as we see in the Book of Acts.

Progression of God's covenant blessings: (1) Abraham, (2) Moses, (3) Jesus, (4) the Cross, (5) resurrection and ascension, (6) Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

A future for Israel? Yes. See Romans 9, 10 and 11, especially Romans 9:2; 10:2; 11:24; 11:25-26.

Q8. (Matthew 21:33-46) Who do the servants sent to collect the landowner's share of the crop represent? What happened to Israel who rejected God's servants and Son who were sent to them? This is a parable about resisting those whom God sends to us to help us. Have you ever seen a church reject a pastor or leader that God sends to help them? Why is supporting our pastors and leaders important to God's plan for the church? (Hebrews 13:7, 17). In the Beatitudes, how does Jesus encourage those who are rejected and persecuted? (Matthew 5:10-12)?

3. Parables about Repentance

3.1 Uncleaness is Internal not External

Analogy of Cleansing the Cup (Matthew 23:25-26; Luke 11:39-41)

Pharisees practiced the “tradition of the elders” or the oral law. The “washed” hands before eating by dribbling water over their fingers ceremonially. This is not hygiene, but ceremony (See John 2:6; Mark 7:3-5).

Cups and dishes are an analogy regarding the Pharisees’ character. They are very concerned with outward purity and observance, but their hearts are full of greed and wickedness (Matthew 23:26). Cleaning must include the outside *and* the inside. The inside is the real person.

Analogy of the Whitewashed Tombs (Matthew 23:27-28)

(Also known as Analogy of the Whitewashed Sepulchers)

Just prior to Passover, the Jews would whitewash the tombs and graveyards around Jerusalem with lime-plaster to make them visible. Thus, pilgrims wouldn’t accidentally defile themselves by touching a grave.

Analogy of the Defiling Heart of Man (Mark 7:14-23; Matthew 15:10-11, 15-20)

Jesus is referring to the alimentary or digestive tract that his followers had a basic understanding of: (1) Eat with mouth. (2) Digest in stomach, intestines, etc. (3) Defecate (literally, “goes out into the latrine”). Wickedness is in human hearts:

Evil thoughts.	Deceit (Mark)
Sexual immorality or fornication.	False witness (Matthew, Exodus 20:16)
Theft (Exodus 20:15)	Lewdness or licentiousness (Mark)
Murder (Exodus 20:13)	Envy (Mark; Exodus 20:17)
Adultery (Exodus 20:14)	Slander
Greed or covetousness (Mark; Exodus 20:17)	Arrogance or pride (Mark), the opposite of humility
Malice or wickedness (Mark)	Folly or foolishness (Mark).

The Pharisees emphasized the outward act, but Jesus says that God looks at the inner person, the heart (Matthew 5:21-22; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 7:18; John 2:24-25, ESV)

Q9. (Mark 7:14-23; Matthew 15:10-11, 15-20) What does Jesus teach about the heart of man? What does Jeremiah 17:9 tell us about the heart of man? Why do we try to look good on the outside, but resist letting Jesus change us on the inside? Why is repentance necessary for an outwardly “moral” person in order to be saved?

3.2 Repent before Judgment Comes

Parable of the Guilty Defendant (Matthew 5:25-26; Luke 12:57-59)

Alcoholics Anonymous, Twelve Steps: Step 4. “Made a searching and fearless **moral inventory** of ourselves.” Step 9. “Made **direct amends** to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.” Don’t put it off. Seek reconciliation, make amends before judgment!

Q10. (Matthew 5:23-26) Why did Jesus tell the Parable of the Guilty Defendant? How do people we have wronged and to whom we have not kept our promises get in the way of us worshipping God properly? In what ways is it hypocritical not to address these matters to the best of our ability?

Parable of the Wise and Foolish Builders (Matthew 7:24-27; Luke 6:47-49)

Context is heedless followers, who follow, but don't put Jesus' teachings into practice.

Q11. (Matthew 7:24-27; Luke 6:47-49) Why does Jesus focus the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Builders on “putting into practice” rather than in “believing”? How can you help young Christians move from believing to true discipleship?

Parable of the Narrow and Wide Gates (Matthew 7:13-14)

This parable is a study in contrasts: Narrow vs. wide gate; hard/narrow vs. broad/easy way; few vs. many; life vs. destruction.

Q12. (Matthew 7:13-14) Why is “seeking” necessary to “find” the narrow gate? Why do you think Jesus concludes this brief parable with the phrase, “and only a few find it”? How is this parable designed to strengthen disciples to be willing to go against the flow, to be different from others in the culture?

3.3 Discipleship Requires Obedience**Parable of the Two Sons (Matthew 21:28-31)**

Q13. (Matthew 21:28-31) Which son represents the tax collectors and prostitutes? Why do you think so? Why is it harder to actually obey, rather than just mouth the words? How is the lesson of this parable similar to the lesson of the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Builders? (Matthew 7:24-27) Why is actual obedience essential to true discipleship?

3.4 Discerning Sin in Our Lives

We've been considering parables about repentance. But for us to repent, we need to discern our sins truly. Jesus tells two parables along this line. In Lesson 10.1 we'll consider several other parables about a different kind of spiritual discernment by disciples.

Parable of the Speck and the Beam (Matthew 7:3-5; Luke 6:41-42)

One object is **tiny**. “Speck” (ESV, NIV, NRSV), “mote” (KJV) is *karphe*, “a small piece of straw, chaff, or wood, to denote something quite insignificant, speck, splinter, chip.” One object is **large**. “Plank” (NIV), “log” (ESV, NRSV), “beam” is *dokos*, “a piece of heavy timber, such as a beam used in roof construction or to bar a door, beam of wood.” Jesus employs both humor and hyperbole.

Q14. (Matthew 7:3-5) What is humorous about the Parable of the Speck and the Beam? How can we get to a place where we can see with clear spiritual eyes? Why does Paul insist that “spiritual” members correct sinning Christians with gentleness? What does judgmentalism have to do with hypocrisy?

Parable of the Good Eye (Matthew 6:22-23; Luke 11:34-36)

The body's eyes are seen as lenses that transmit light into the body itself. It isn't a scientific concept but a spiritual one. Psychologists tell us that we all have a filtering system that enables us to concentrate on the important stimuli that we receive, while at the same time ignoring or filtering out all of the unimportant stimuli going on at the same time. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

4. Parables about Final Judgment

4.1 Role Reversal at Judgment

Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31)

Jesus is using a popular story genre to make a spiritual point. Snodgrass: “We must remember that parables are vignettes, not systems, and certainly not systematic theologies.”

Jesus pictures angels carrying Lazarus to Abraham. “Side” (NIV, ESV), “bosom” (KJV) is Greek *kolpos*, “bosom, breast, chest.” The ancient banqueting practice of reclining at the table would have one’s head on someone’s breast. So this puts Lazarus in the place of honor at the right hand of Abraham at the banquet in the next world. Bosom of Abraham = Great Messianic Banquet at the end of the Age.

The rich man is in “hell.” The Greek word used here is *Hades*, the place of the dead, and in Jewish thought, the intermediate place of the dead prior to the final judgment. Jesus is making several points. (1) In the Kingdom, the worldly wealthy and the poor in spirit reverse places. (2) If we close our eyes to the truth we are given, then we are doomed. (3) Wealth without active mercy for the poor is great wickedness (Luke 11:42).

Q15. (Luke 16:19-31). What was the Rich Man’s sin that landed him in hell? Since it isn’t stated explicitly, what must it be? In hell, what is the Rich Man’s attitude towards Lazarus? What is the main point of the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus? What are you and your church doing to aid the very poor in your area? In the world?

4.2 Separation of the Righteous and Wicked

Parable of the Sheep and the Goats (Matthew 25:31-46)

“**All the nations**” uses the noun *ethnē* (from which we get our word “ethnic”), “a body of persons united by kinship, culture, and common traditions, ‘nation, people.’” In other words, this judgment is not just of Israel or believers, but of all peoples, those about whom the Great Commission was given – “Go and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19).

“**As a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats**” (verse 32b). The place of honor, of course, is at a person’s right hand. Sheep and goats were pastured together and cared for by the same shepherd, but separated at night, since goats are more aggressive than sheep, and will trouble them in close quarters.

Separation is based on how people treated Jesus when they saw him in need. The occasions are: (1) Feeding him when hungry, (2) inviting him into one’s home when he had no place to live, (3) clothing him when he had no clothes, (4) visiting him when he was in prison. Jesus is saying that the way they treated “these brothers of mine” is the way they treated Jesus himself. In some way, Jesus is present in “these brothers.”

Four interpretations of “these brothers. (1) all needy persons, (2) needy Christians, (3) Jesus’ own disciples, then Christian missionaries, and (4) Jews during the tribulation. See Deuteronomy 10:18; Psalm 68:5; Proverbs 19:17a; Matthew 12:50; 28:10; 10:40-42; 11:25). Essentially, those in need

Q16. (Matthew 25:31-46) What are the “sheep” complimented for? What are the “goats” condemned for? Is this salvation by works? If no, why not? How does Jesus identify himself with “the least of these my brothers”? Why did Jesus tell this parable to his disciples? What do modern-day disciples need to learn from it? How should this parable motivate missions to aid immigrants, the poor, and the homeless?

Parable of the Weeds or Tares (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43)

“Weeds” (NIV, NRSV, ESV) or “tares” (KJV, NASB), “darnel” (NJB) is the plural of Greek *zizanon*, “a troublesome weed in grainfields, darnel, cheat.” Bearded darnel is a vigorous grass closely resembling wheat

or rye, a serious weed of cultivation until modern sorting machinery enabled darnel seeds to be separated efficiently from seed wheat. If darnel seeds are not separated from the wheat grain, the flour can be infected with the mold ergot, producing vomiting, malaise, and even death. Darnel still grows today as a hated weed in grain fields, waste places, moist farm fields, and along roadsides.

Jesus identifies seven points of comparison in this allegory: (1) sower = Son of Man, Jesus' exalted title; (2) field = the world; (3) good seed = genuine believers; (4) weeds = non-believers, (5) enemy = the devil; (6) harvest = end of the Age; harvesters = angels.

"Weeping and gnashing of teeth" is a stock phrase describing the terror and eternal regret of those who are being punished. Gnashing of teeth would be a response to extreme pain. See hymn: "Come, Ye Thankful People Come" (1844) by Henry Alford.

Parable of the Net (Matthew 13:47-50)

Two types of nets: (1) Casting net, throwing net, 10-20 ft diameter; (2) seine net or drag net, a weighted wall-type net, attached to the shore or to another boat which would drag in a semicircular arc and then back to the shore again, pulling in as many fish as it could.

Good fish would include tilapia (esp. St. Peter's Fish), carp, and sardines. The "bad fish" would have been catfish. Since catfish don't have scales, they aren't Kosher for Jews (Leviticus 11:9), and thus would have been thrown away.

Q17. (Matthew 13:47-50) What is similar about the Parable of the Weeds and the Parable of the Net? What belief are these two parables meant to counter? How does a belief in the ultimate triumph of righteousness encourage Christians?

4.3 Grace Triumphs over Judgment

Parable of the Laborers in Vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16)

Jesus paints a picture of a landowner at the end-of-summer grape harvest, just before the cold sets in. When the grapes are ripe, they must be harvested immediately while they are at their peak. In a large vineyard, this requires a lot of men working at the same time to cut the grapes.

Hiring Time	Promised wages
Early morning (about 6 am)	1 denarius, a normal day's wages
Third hour (about 9 am)	"Whatever is right"
Sixth hour (about noon)	No mention of wages
Ninth hour (about 3 pm)	Same
Eleventh hour (about 5 pm)	Same

"Are you envious because I am generous?" (NIV, NRSV). Pont: "So the last will be first, and the first will be last." (Matthew 20:16) God, represented by the landowner, operates on the basis of generosity, not fairness. This is grace – unearned and undeserved – even though that offends people who demand absolute fairness, a fair wage for a day's work. This is a parable of outrageous grace.

Q18. (Matthew 20:1-16) What does the Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard teach us about God's generosity? About grace? What in our heart rises up to demand recognition and fairness when we feel we are overlooked and taken for granted? How much of this is a godly sense of fairness and how much is pride?

5. Parables about Readiness for Christ's Return

5.1 Signs of Impending Return

Parable of the Weather Signs (Luke 12:54-5)

The Messiah, the Son of God, is present in their midst and they are too blind to see it!

Parable of the Budding Fig Tree (Matthew 24:32-33; Mark 13:28-29; Luke 21:29-31)

The fig tree *probably isn't* representative of Israel (as in the Parable of the Barren Fig Tree) since Luke's phrase "and all the trees" (Luke 21:29). Both Parables of Weather Signs and Budding Fig Tree say the same thing: stay alert to the signs you are seeing.

Analogy of Lightning (Luke 17:24; Matthew 24:27)

Lightning can be seen at great distance and lights up a huge area, a radius of 150 to 200 miles or more. When Jesus comes, he won't appear to just a few or in secret, but will be visible to all. "Every eye will see him" (Revelation 1:7), believer and unbeliever alike.

Analogy of the Vultures Gathering (Luke 17:37; Matthew 24:38)

Like our saying, "Where there's smoke, there's fire." "Eagle" (KJV) probably refers to the vulture. Jesus is referring to a rural phenomenon – the common behavior of vultures to circle high above a carcass, marking its location and making it obvious from miles around.

Q19. (Luke 17:24, 37) The Analogies of the Lightning and the Vultures Gathering both teach the same simple point. What is it?

5.2 Watchfulness and Obedience Needed

"Be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him." (Luke 12:40)

Parables of the Watching Servants (Mark 13:34-37; Luke 12:35-38)

Luke's version has the master commanding the servants not to go to bed and turn off the lights. He wants them ready instantly when he knocks -- commanded to stay awake and alert. *Prosdachomai*. "Waiting" (Luke 12:36) carries the idea of, "look forward to, wait for," with the connotation of "receive favorably." *Grēgoreō*. "Watch/watching" (NIV, KJV), "(stay) awake" (ESV; NRSV, Mark), "alert" (NRSV, Luke) is "to stay awake, be watchful," then "to be in constant readiness, be on the alert."

In Luke only, the parable takes an unexpected twist, a role reversal, where the master waits on the faithful servants when he returns – a hint of Jesus the servant, who didn't come to serve but give his life a ransom for many (Mark 10:45; cf. Isaiah 53; John 13:4-17).

Q20. (Luke 12:35-39; Mark 13:34-37) What are the main themes of the Parables of the Watching Servants? What kinds of behaviors should the parable inspire in modern-day disciples?

Parable of the Burglar (Luke 12:39-40; Matthew 24:43-44)

Homes in Palestine were typically barred at night. But in the dead of night, thieves would dig through the mud-brick wall of the house, remove a few bricks, slide through the opening, steal valuables, and then exit without waking the family. See 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 3:3; 16:15). Two points: (1) the Son of Man is coming unexpectedly, and (2) you must be alert for his coming, even if your alertness must be long-

maintained. What does readiness for the Son of Man consist of? (1) Avoiding sin, (2) Prayer, (3) the Word, (4) doctrinal Beliefs that Jesus can come at any time.

Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13)

Marriage began with a betrothal up to a year before the marriage celebration, usually arranged by parents. The man and woman would enter into a binding agreement to marry at this betrothal, more binding than our “engagement” in the West. The man would give the bride’s father a bridal gift, a form of compensation to the father (some of which becomes a dowry the father gives to the daughter at the marriage to help provide economic stability to the marriage bond). The couple doesn’t live together or consummate the marriage at their betrothal, though they are considered husband and wife by law and the bond cannot be broken without divorce. The final marriage event in this culture is a celebration. Typically, the groom and his friends go to the bride’s home. Perhaps there is a brief party there. But then they escort the bride in a festive procession to the groom’s home, where a grand celebration takes place.

To call them the girls “virgins” misses the point, since it places the focus on their virginity. Rather, think of a group of young, unmarried teenage girls, perhaps 11 to 13 years old.

This group of young teenage girls has decided not to go all the way to the bride’s house. Rather, they have positioned themselves right on the road to the groom’s house so they don’t miss the procession. That is the plan. Mothers probably told them to bring extra oil “just in case.” Only half the group heeded. No “oil vending stores” are open at midnight, but the oil merchant in their village would know the girls and probably sold olive oil out of his own house.

When everyone in the procession is inside the courtyard adjacent to the house, the door is shut. This isn’t an open party where people can drift in and out. No more guests are expected. It is final! (Matthew 7:21-23)

We are probably intended to see: (1) relationship between the kingdom of heaven and circumstances at a marriage feast; (2) relationship between wise preparedness and entering the kingdom; and (3) exclusion from the kingdom for those who aren’t prepared at Christ’s coming. But beyond this is to distort the clear meaning of the parable.

Q21. (Matthew 25:1-13) What are the main points from the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins that Jesus wants his disciples to understand and internalize? What constitutes preparedness for Christ’s coming for modern-day disciples?

5.3 Faithful Service in the Master’s Absence

Parable of the Wise and Faithful Steward (Matthew 24:45-51; Luke 12:42-46)

The chief protagonist is “the faithful and wise manager” is the “manager of a household or estate, house steward, manager.” His main duty is to give his fellow servants their food allowance at regular intervals. If faithful he will be placed over the entire household, like Joseph under Potiphar (Genesis 39:8). But if the master’s absence tempts him to take advantage, he is called “that wicked servant” (Matt 24:48). In Luke’s version, Jesus adds an element of proportional punishment, depending on how much understanding one had. There is also relative, proportional responsibility (Luke 12:48b).

Q22. (Luke 12:42-46) The Parable of the Wise and Faithful Steward is directed particularly at church leaders at various levels. Why are leaders sometimes tempted to take advantage of the perks of their position and to oppress those under their authority? What is the best antidote for these temptations? What does verse 48 teach disciples about responsibility?

6. Parables about Salvation

6.1 Analogies of Salvation

Analogy of Spiritual Birth (John 3:3-7)

Jesus is teaching Nicodemus, a Pharisee and member of the ruling group of Great Sanhedrin leaders in Jerusalem. Jesus insists that a person *must* be born again spiritually. “Again” in verses 3 and 7 could be translated “from above,” but Nicodemus tries to puncture Jesus’ illustration of salvation as re-birth, by claiming the physical impossibility of rebirth, thus suggesting that “again” is the main idea.

In verse 5, water could be interpreted as (1) amniotic fluid as symbolic of physical birth, or (2) perhaps repentance and cleansing inherent in John’s water-baptism mentioned previously in John’s Gospel. However, spiritual birth is distinct from physical birth.

This “new birth,” or “second birth” is as radical as our physical birth was, and necessary to “see” and “enter” the Kingdom of God. The theological word is “regeneration” (Titus 3:5)

Analogy of the Wind of the Spirit (John 3:8)

People who have been born of the Spirit are motivated, guided, and moved by an unseen but powerful force beyond themselves. The life of the Spirit is a new level of spiritual existence, a different plane entirely.

Q23. (John 3:3-8) In what way is becoming a believer in Jesus similar to a second birth? What aspects of physical birth are analogous to spiritual birth that Jesus seeks to clarify with this analogy? What about wind’s characteristics are we to attribute to the Spirit?

Analogy of Lifting the Bronze Serpent (John 3:14-15)

The Bronze Serpent incident was known to the disciples from Numbers 21:8-9. After the Exodus, God judged the rebellion of his people with an abundance of venomous snakes whose bite was lethal. The people repented of their sin and asked Moses to take the snakes away by fashioning a bronze snake and putting it up on a pole for people to look at and so be healed. (1) **Lifting up.** Like the snake was lifted up, so Jesus will be lifted up both on the cross and in resurrection and ascension (see John 8:28; 12:32-34). (2) **Faith.** Just as people looked at the snake and lived, so people will look to Jesus in faith and live, that is be healed of their sin and receive eternal life.

Parable of the Bread of Life (John 6:35)

As part of a long discussion of manna, Jesus identifies himself as “the true bread from heaven” (John 6:32) The true bread doesn’t give just physical life, but eternal life. Jesus spells it out using a metaphor, one of Jesus’ seven “I AM” declarations in John’s Gospel.

Parable of Water for Eternal Life (John 4:10, 13-14)

Water as a symbol of life in a largely arid land, water is a symbol of life. “Living water” normally referred to flowing water from a spring, stream, or river, as opposed to standing water in a pond, well, or cistern. Flowing water suggests a continuous flow. So “living water” is a symbol not just of life, but continuous, eternal, everlasting life (Jeremiah 2:13; cf. 17:13; Psalm 36:8b-9a; Zechariah 14:8). To the Samaritan woman at the well, Jesus makes two claims for those who drink his Living Water. (1) they will never again thirst spiritually, and (2) they will have eternal life.

Parable of Streams of Living Water (John 7:37-39)

At the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem, Jesus refers to Isaiah 12:3; 44:3 and (1) offers an invitation (vs. 37; cf. Isaiah 55:1-2; Matthew 11:28-29; Revelation 22:17); (2) offers a universal invitation (“whoever”), and (3) offers a promise that the Holy Spirit will flow from within them like an artesian well.

Q24. (John 4:13-14; 7:37-39) If water is symbolic of life, what is flowing or living water symbolic of in these passages? Who creates this spiritual thirst in a person? How are these promises fulfilled in believers?

Saying of the Camel and the Needle (Matthew 19:23-24; Mark 10:24-25; Luke 18:24-25)

Jesus' disciples were surprised at Jesus' saying that it was impossible for the rich to be saved (Luke 18:27). He gives the saying of a camel passing through the eye of a needle, like a rabbinical expression: “Draw an elephant through the eye of a needle.” It takes a miracle of salvation, impossible to man by himself.

Q25. (Luke 18:24-25) Why do you think people try to distort Jesus' Saying of the Camel and the Needle from a parable of impossibility? Why is salvation impossible to humans?

6.2 Parables of Jesus' Death and Resurrection

Acted Parable of the Bread and the Wine (Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:15-20)

The Last Supper is an acted parable, where the bread and wine are metaphors of body and blood. “Do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 21:19; cf. 1 Corinthians 11:24).

Q26. (Matthew 26:26-29; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26) How do the bread and wine remind us of Jesus' sacrifice for our sins? In what way, when we partake of the Lord's Supper, do we “proclaim the Lord's death until he comes” (1 Corinthians 11:26)?

Acted Parable of Baptism (Mark 1:4-8; Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16)

Baptism is an acted parable or metaphor of cleansing from sin and uncleanness (Acts 22:16; cf. 1 Peter 3:21). Paul sees it as a metaphor of death and resurrection (Romans 6:3-4; cf. Colossians 2:12).

Analogy of the Kernel of Wheat (John 12:24)

Jesus uses an agricultural analogy to typify both death and resurrection – a seed that is planted in the ground germinates, grows, and eventually reproduces itself many times over (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:36).

Analogy of the Rooms in the Father's House (John 14:2-4)

The Father's house seems to be a metaphor of heaven, the very presence of God.

Parable of the Woman in Childbirth (John 16:21)

6.3 Setting People Free

Analogy of a House Divided (Matthew 12:25-26; Mark 3:24-26; Luke 11:17-18)

By Jesus' day, Beelzebul or Beelzebub had become the popular name for Satan, the prince of demons.

Jesus uses a common-sense illustration from political life. A kingdom with a mortal conflict between leaders won't be able to continue. One party will destroy the other and the kingdom will topple.

Parable of Binding the Strong Man (Matthew 12:29; Mark 3:27; Luke 11:21-22)

Jesus is using military terms to picture an estate and outbuildings guarded by a fierce, well-armed warrior. He patrols the property constantly, so that no one can break in and steal the treasures within. But now, an even greater warrior faces him in battle with a head-on attack, coming against him with greater force. According to ancient practice, he strips the dead warrior of his sword and shield, his breastplate and helmet, his belt and clothing, and “distributes” them to his fellow men in arms (Joshua 5:13-15; Matthew 26:53; Revelation 19:11-14; 1 John 4:4).

Q27. (Luke 11:17-22) In the Parable of the Binding of the Strong Man, who is the strong man? Who is the stronger warrior? How does this explain Jesus' power to cast out demons? How does it explain Jesus' power to set you free? To set your friends free?

Parable of the Empty House (Matthew 12:43-45; Luke 11:23-26)

It is a difficult parable to interpret, but seems to be a story explaining the necessity for full commitment vs. neutrality. The key idea in Matthew 13:44 is that the house is “unoccupied” (NIV) or “empty” (ESV, NRSV, KJV). Morris: “When a man gets rid of an evil spirit but puts nothing in its place, he is in grave moral danger. No man can live for long with his life a moral vacuum.” So Luke 11:23.

7. Parables about the Nature of Christ's Kingdom

7.1. Small but Expanding

Parable of the Mustard Seed (Matthew 13:31-32; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-19)

The mustard seed was considered by the Jews as the smallest of seeds -- a commonly accepted generalization. "Black mustard," which grows to a shrub about 4 feet high, but occasionally can grow to 15 feet high and would qualify as a "tree." Birds (Daniel 4:12, 21 and Ezekiel 17:23; 31:6).

Parable of the Yeast or Leaven (Matthew 13:33; Luke 13:20-21)

A portion of leavened fermented dough from the previous day's baking was set aside and, after softening with water, was mixed with the dough for the next day's baking, passing on the live yeast from one batch to the next. Leaven was commonly used in baking the common round, relatively flat barley or wheat loaves. A small amount of yeast will leaven a large amount of dough. Small beginnings, large endings (Zechariah 4:10; 2 Corinthians 5:).

Q28. (Luke 13:18-21) What lesson did Jesus intend his disciples to learn from the Parables of the Mustard Seed and the Yeast or Leaven? Why might the disciples be discouraged by the "size" of the Kingdom? Why are we sometimes discouraged in Christian work? Why are patience and faith so important for disciples?

Parable of the Seed Growing by Itself (Mark 4:26-29)

"All by itself is *automatos* (from which we get our word "automatic"), "something that happens without visible cause, by itself." This is a parable of inevitability and thus an encouragement to patience (James 5:7-8).

7.2 John the Baptist and Jesus the Messiah

Parable of the Bridegroom's Guests (Matthew 9:14-15; Mark 2:18-20; Luke 5:33-35)

As you don't fast while the bridegroom hosts the wedding celebration, neither should my disciples fast while I am ushering in the Kingdom of God, a time for celebration, not for mourning. John the Baptist told the Parable of the Bridegroom's Friend, with Jesus as the Bridegroom and himself as the best man: "He must increase, but I must decrease."

7.3 The Old and the New

Parable of the Unshrunk Cloth (Matthew 9:16; Mark 2:21; Luke 5:36)

Parable of the Wineskins (Matthew 9:17; Mark 2:22; Luke 5:37-39)

Wineskins were made of whole tanned goatskins or sheepskins where the legs and tail were cut off and sewn shut. A skin might hold about 8 to 10 gallons (30 to 40 liters), depending upon the size of the animal. The whole large skin would be bulging almost to bursting as the carbon dioxide gas generated by the fermentation process stretched it to its limit (Job 32:18-19). The collagen protein that gives the leather its elasticity has been stretched out by the pressure and denatured by the alcohol, destroying its natural resiliency. The skin's ability to contract and stretch again has been lost. You can't join the new to the old or you'll ruin both the new wine and the old skin. The gas pressure from the fermentation would eventually be so great that the inflexible old skin would rupture and the new wine would gush out onto the ground and be wasted.

Q29. (Luke 5:36-39) What did Jesus intend his disciples to learn from the Parables of the Unshrunk Cloth and the Wineskins? Why are we tempted to say, “The old wine is better?” How might our church traditions limit the Holy Spirit’s work in our day? How do these parables illustrate the need for newly planted churches?

7.4 The Flock of the Kingdom

Parables about sheep and shepherds are: Parable of the Lost Sheep (Luke 15:1-6); Parable of the Sheep and the Goats (Matthew 25:31-46); Analogies of Lost Sheep (Matthew 9:36; 10:5-6; 15:24); Parables of the Good Shepherd and the Sheep Gate (John 10:1-18).

Parables of the Good Shepherd and the Sheep Gate (John 10:1-18)

Best understood as a series of spiritual lessons drawn from sheep-herding. (1) the Sheep-pen (verses 1-2), (2) the Shepherd’s voice (verses 3-5); the Gate or Door of the sheep-pen (verses 6-9); the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep (verses 10-18).

Throughout the ancient Near East, rulers and leaders were often spoken of as “shepherds” of their people (Ezekiel 34:2-5, 10-12).

The sheep pen is probably an enclosed pen, open to the sky, with a doorway through which the sheep might enter, protecting the sheep from straying at night and from attack by wild animals.

When several flocks would be put in the same pen on a remote sheep-field, each of the shepherds in turn would agree to act as the gatekeeper for one of the watches of the night.

In the morning, each shepherd would call his sheep, and they would recognize their own shepherd’s voice and coming when he called. See *Listening for God’s Voice: A Discipleship Guide to a Closer Walk* (JesusWalk Publications, 2018). www.jesuswalk.com/voice/

Q30. (John 10:1-5) Why is knowing the Shepherd’s voice and obeying it so very important for disciples? What happens when we act independently of the Shepherd? What causes sheep to stray?

“I am the gate/door for the sheep.” In some cases, the shepherd might sleep right in the opening, preventing straying and predators.

The good shepherd will protect his sheep at the cost of his life – lay down his life (vss. 11, 15, 17, 18a, 18b)

Q31. (John 10:6-15) Why does a true shepherd “lay down his life for the sheep”? How did Jesus’ do this for his disciples? For us? In what way did Jesus intend his disciples to learn that they, too, must be willing to lay down their lives for the sheep? Can you think of any examples where Christ’s servants have done this?

8. Parables about Responding to the Kingdom

8.1 Receptivity to the Kingdom

Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23; Mark 4:3-9, 13-20; Luke 8:4-8, 11-15)

The path is the narrow strip of hard-trampled dirt. Rocky places aren't surface rocks, but slabs of limestone just under the surface in certain parts of the field with an inch or two of soil over them. Thorns compete for light and water, and make it impossible to harvest any crop in the thorn patch. In a good year, a field might yield 100 grains of wheat for every grain that was sown – a hundred-fold. Good parables can both clarify and confuse. "He who has ears, let him hear" (Matthew 13:9).

But many, most are spiritually dull. Parables express truths in a form that cannot easily be used against him by enemies and are difficult for the any but the spiritually hungry to understand. When God called Isaiah, he told him most people would be dull-hearted, rather than understanding, repenting, and being saved (Isaiah 6:1-10; cf. Matthew 13:16-17)

Seed = the message (Romans 1;16; 2 Timothy 4: 2, 2:15); sower = the messenger; birds = Satan; rocky soil = trouble and persecution; thorns = worries, riches, distractions; good soil = open hearts.

Q32. (Matthew 13:20-21) Why, according to the Parable of the Sower, why do some people fall away so quickly? What is their problem?

Q33. (Matthew 13:22) How do "thorns" prevent the Word of God from maturing in our lives? What is the difference between a genuine "disciple," follower or learner of Rabbi Jesus, and a person who holds a Christian belief system? What can you do to clear your life of the thorns that prevent Christ's work from maturing in you?

Saying: Pearls before Swine (Matthew 7:6)

Don't entrust something precious to people who cannot or will not appreciate it – who, in another figure, don't have "ears to hear." To do so can be dangerous.

8.2 Forcible Nature of Discipleship

Parable of the Narrow Door (Luke 13:23-27)

"Make every effort" (NIV), "strive" (ESV, NRSV, KJV) is *agōnizomai*, from athletics, "engage in a contest" at the games, then more generally, "to fight, struggle. "Strain every nerve to enter." We must be urgent to enter the Kingdom, not passive (Lk 16:16; cf. Mt 11:12). Closing the door (Lk 13:25-27; Mt. 7:21-23).

Q34. (Luke 13:23-27) Beyond the message that few will be saved, what is the unique message of the Parable of the Narrow Door? Why must would-be disciples be aggressive in order to enter the Kingdom? What happens if we don't aggressively seek God? Why do you think Jesus told this parable to his disciples?

8.3 The Priority of Discipleship

Analogy of Foxholes and Nests (Matthew 18:19-20; Luke 9:57-58)

Analogy of the Dead Burying the Dead (Matthew 18:21-22; Luke 9:59-6)

Following Jesus comes even before family responsibilities.

Analogy of Looking Back from the Plow (Luke 9:61-62)

Plowmen fix their eyes on a point at the far end of the field and move steadily toward it, not veering right or left. To “put your hand to the plow,” means to begin the task of plowing.

Q35. (Luke 9:57-62) What do these three analogies tell us about Jesus' requirements for his disciples? Why is Jesus so urgent? What was he seeking to teach would-be disciples about their priorities?

8.4 Counting the Cost of Discipleship

Parable of the Tower-Builder (Luke 14:28-30)

(Also known as the Parable of the Tower)

Tower, *pyrgos*, “a tall structure used as a lookout” (or possibly a tower-shaped building, farm building).” If you don't have the wherewithal or willingness to see it through, don't even attempt the journey.

Parable of the Warring King (Luke 14:31-32)

“Give up” (NIV, NRSV), “renounce” (ESV), “forsake” (KJV) is *apotassō*, literally, “separate yourself from, “here, “to renounce interest in something, renounce, give up.”

Q36. (Luke 14:25-32) Are Jesus' demands of his disciples too uncompromising? Are we too compromising with the world's demands? What do you need to completely surrender so Jesus has all of you?

Parable of Taking Up One's Cross (Matthew 16:24-25; Mark 8:34-35; Luke 9:23-24; and Matthew 10:37-39; Luke 14:25-27)

The key to understanding this passage is to discern the meaning of the metaphor, “to take up one's cross.” Our culture uses the idea of “my cross to bear” in the sense of one's burden or destiny. But that is *not* what Jesus is teaching here! Just as a condemned man would carry the cross-beam of his cross to the place of crucifixion according to Roman custom, so each of Jesus' disciples must *daily* be willing to die. When a disciple has accepted death, no man can control him with fear; he belongs fully to Jesus.

Denying oneself: *arneomai*, originally, “refuse, disdain,” here “to refuse to pay any attention to, disregard, renounce, act in a wholly selfless way.” Paul also teaches this theme (Gal 2:20a; Col 3:3; 1 Cor 15:31).

Q37. (Luke 9:23-24, etc.) What does it mean to take up your cross daily? What does this have to do with “losing your life for me.” What are the consequences in one's Christian walk if a disciple wants to take this step of commitment? How does this contrast with trying to save one's life?

8.5 Ultimate Prize of the Kingdom

Parable of the Hidden Treasure (Matthew 13:44)

There are two keys to understanding this parable: (1) “In his joy” and (2) “sold all he had.”

Parable of the Pearl of Great Price (Matthew 13:45-46)

Pearls were regarded as precious stones in antiquity, taken by divers from the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, and the Indian Ocean, used for necklaces and other ornaments. When you find the ultimate pearl, you spare nothing to make it your own. Not passive, but an active entering in.

Q38. (Matthew 13:44-46). If you were to objectively assess your life, career, family, values, and possessions, is there anything more important, anything of greater value to you than your relationship with Jesus? How would you *objectively* prove to a friend that Jesus is first in your life?

9. Parables about Disciple Character

9.1 Humility

Parable of the Pharisee and Tax Collector (Luke 18:9-1)

The tax collector approaches God with humility: (1) standing at a distance, (2) not raising his eyes to heaven, (3) eating his breast, a sign of mourning. “Justified” means freed of all charges against him.

Q39. (Luke 18:9-14) Why do you think the Pharisee is so convinced of his righteousness? What do you think are his actual sins? What is so remarkable about the tax collector’s prayer? Why is it easier to promote ourselves in front of others rather than humble ourselves? Why did Jesus tell this parable for his disciples?

Parable of Becoming Like Little Children (Matthew 18:3-4)

“Become like little children” (verse 3), (2) “Humbles himself like this child” (verse 4). Humility is the key.

Parable of Welcoming Little Children (Matthew 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16, Luke 18:15-17)

Q40. (Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15-17). According to Mark 10:13-16, what characteristic of children is necessary for salvation? What characteristic were the disciples showing in rebuking the parents? When arguing about who was greatest? Why is humility essential to repentance? To learning? To obedience? Why did Jesus give his disciples the saying of becoming like little children?

Parable of Places at the Table (Luke 14:7-11)

Where one sits vis-à-vis the host is a public advertisement of one’s status. Preferred is at right or left hand (Matthew 10:21-23), at the head end of the table or middle of the middle couch (Proverbs 3:34; 1 Peter 5:5b-6; James 4:6-7a)/

Q41. (Luke 14:7-11) Why do people push themselves forward? According to verse 11, what will happen to them? Why is humility so important a lesson for Jesus’ disciples? What is the danger to us, if we don’t learn and internalize this lesson?

9.2 Avoiding Hypocrisy

Analogy of the Yeast of the Pharisees (Matthew 16:5-6, 11-12; Mark 8:14-15; Luke 12:1)

Leaven is used in New Testament teaching in both positive and negative ways, here, negatively. Be careful that the mindset of the Pharisees doesn’t influence you, too, starting small and growing to become large. The only antidote to hypocrisy is the willingness to contritely confess our sins quickly and openly to those before whom we have sinned.

Q42. (Luke 12:1; Matthew 16:11-12) Why is hypocrisy easy to detect in others, but difficult to detect in ourselves? Why is hypocrisy so deadly to spiritual growth? To witness? To obedience? To being a disciple? What is the antidote for hypocrisy?

9.3 Abiding

Parable of the Vine and the Branches (John 15:1-8)

The vineyard is often used to identify Israel itself, referred to by the prophets as “my vineyard” (Isaiah 3:14; 27:2-3). For Jesus to say, “I am the true vine,” is an announcement that, as the Messiah, he now becomes the true Israel, the true locus for God’s people.

The purposes of pruning are to: stimulate growth, allow the vinedresser to shape the vine, produce maximum yield without breaking the branches with too many clusters for them to bear, protect against mildew, and produce better quality wine, with more highly concentrated and flavorful grapes. “Prune” (NIV, NRSV, ESV), “purge” (KJV) in verse 2 translate the verb *katharizō*, “to clean, cleanse.” “Clean” in verse 3 is a participle of the same word. Jesus’ word is a cause of that moral and spiritual cleansing in us.

Q43. (John 15:1-3) How does skillful pruning increase the fruitfulness of a grapevine? How are we pruned or cleansed by exposure and obedience to Jesus’ words? According to John 8:31-32, how does obeying Jesus’ teaching bring cleansing and freedom from sin?

A key word is, “remain” (NIV), “abide” (NRSV, ESV, KJV), the Greek verb *menō*, “remain, stay,” occurring three times in these two verses. It means “stay,” often in the special sense of “to live, dwell, lodge.” Here, it is in the transferred sense of someone who does not leave a certain realm or sphere: “remain, continue, abide.”

Q44. (John 15:4-5) What does it mean “to abide”? What does abiding have to do with “mutual indwelling”? With a “personal relationship”? What does Jesus mean when he says, “Apart from me you can do nothing”? What is the value of things done without Christ? What is the final end of things done without Christ?

Parable of Eating Jesus’ Flesh (John 6:53-58)

See John 16:51 -- “The one who **feeds on me** will live because of me.” To feed on Jesus means to believe in him (vss. 47, 51a, 56, 57). Perhaps using such an offensive metaphor for believing and abiding was Jesus’ way of sorting out the true believers from the hangers-on. Feeding on Jesus as a metaphor similar to abiding in Jesus (John 15:1-9). We remain in him, meditate on him, ponder and hold fast his words, and find our spiritual nourishment in this living relationship.

Q45. (John 6:53-58) What does the metaphor of “eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood,” mean in practical terms? To extend the same metaphor, what do you think might be the difference between nibbling the Bread of Life rather than actually making a meal of it? How does “eating his flesh” relate to abiding in Jesus? Why do you think Jesus uses this offensive analogy that resulted in many disciples leaving him?

The Analogy of the Yoke (Matthew 11:28-30)

Yokes help people and animals carry/pull heavy loads more efficiently by means of wooden devices that enable men or beasts to carry weight across their shoulders. In Jesus’ day, the expression, the “yoke of the law” was common among rabbis to describe taking upon oneself an obligation to obey the law (Matthew 23:4)

Jesus gives three reasons we should come to him. (1) He is “gentle.” The word suggests humility, consideration of others, not being impressed with one’s own importance. (2) He is “humble in heart.” This is a similar word: unpretentious, humble – unlike the Pharisees. And (3) he offers “rest for your souls.” He shows you how to unwind and relax in a joyful faith – something you learn as you walk with him.

10. Parables about Disciple Values

10.1 Careful Discernment

Analogy of the Wolf in Sheep's Clothing (Matthew 7:15-16a)

"Watch out for" false prophets has the verb *prosechō*, "be in a state of alert, be concerned about, care for, take care," here "beware of" something.

Analogy of the Tree and Fruit (Matthew 7:16-20; Luke 6:43-44; Matthew 12:33-35)

Karpos, "fruit," can refer to physical fruit, but here it is used more generally as "result, outcome, product," that is, actions and results of their lives. Jesus uses hyperbole to make his point. There are two kinds of trees, he says: good and bad.

Analogy of the Treasure Chest of the Heart (Luke 6:45)

"Treasure" (ESV, NRSV, KJV), "stored up" (NIV) is *thēsauros* (from which get our word, "thesaurus"). It can mean (1) "a place where something is kept for safekeeping, repository," such as a treasure box or chest, or (2) "that which is stored up, treasure." The corruption that is inside a person can't help but manifest itself in a person's words and deeds (1 Timothy 5:22a; 3:10; Hebrews 13:7). Look for strange or somewhat perverted teachings; dominant character flaws; actions and attitudes that don't conform to what you expect of a Christian leader (Revelation 2:20-21; 1 Timothy 5:19-20; Acts 20:29-31a)

Q46. (Matthew 7:15-20; Luke 6:43-45) From Jesus' images of wolves in sheep's clothing, good and bad fruit, and the treasure chest of the heart, how does he teach us to discern false leaders? Why is this so important in our churches? Why must we distinguish flawed Christian leaders from dangerous false prophets?

Parable of the Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1-13)

It is confusing, since we've just been talking about false prophets and Jesus uses dishonest deeds to teach a spiritual truth and we find that troubling.

The overall theme of the parable, however, is the need for careful discernment by disciples, but this one has its own twist. Let's look at it in some detail. The household manager has been "wasting" or "squandering." He is about to be fired and desires that "people will welcome me into their houses." He has his master's debtors one-by-one change the records in their own hand from the full amount owed to a lower amount. Jesus doesn't applaud dishonesty, but he notes that "the people of the light" aren't as smart as worldly people when it comes to securing their future, that is, laying up treasures in heaven.

Q47. (Luke 6:1-13) In what way is the dishonest steward supposed to be a positive example to disciples? How does one "lay up treasures in heaven"? Why is the quality of our work of very small things so important to God? What is he waiting to see in us? What happens to people in the church who are promoted beyond their spiritual growth?

10.2 Trust and Money

Parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:16-21)

"Greed" (NIV, NRSV), "covetousness" (ESV, KJV) is *plēonexia*, "the state of desiring to have more than one's due, greediness, insatiableness, avarice, covetousness," literally, "a desire to have more." In English: "excessive or reprehensible acquisitiveness, avarice" (Proverbs 30:8-9).

Q48. (Luke 12:16-21) Is being wealthy a sin for a Christian? What was the rich man's actual sin or sinful attitude? How do you sometimes see greed in the people in your neighborhood or social circle? Christians aren't immune. In what ways might greed influence a Christian's behaviors and values?

Parable of the Two Masters (Luke 16:13; Matthew 6:24)

Q49. (Luke 16:13) What are the very subtle ways that we can begin to serve Money rather than God? How can we detect these temptations in our hearts? Why did Jesus tell his disciples the Parable of the Two Masters?

Parable of the Birds and the Lilies (Matthew 6:25-34; Luke 12:22-31)

Q50. (Matthew 6:25-34) How does the Parable of the Birds and the Lilies teach us not to worry? What does Jesus teach about worrying about the future? Rather than worrying, what does Jesus instruct his disciples to do? What does obeying verse 33 look like in your life?

10.3 Faithful Prayer

Analogy of Asking a Father for Bread (Matthew 7:9-11; Luke 11:11-13)

Jesus doesn't assume the basic goodness of man, but the basic evil. We can trust in our heavenly Father's basic goodness – even when we might be praying amiss or immaturely or selfishly.

Q51. (Matthew 7:9-11; Luke 11:11-13) Why did Jesus give his disciples the Parable of Asking a Father for Bread? What misconception was he seeking to correct?

Parable of the Friend at Midnight (Luke 11:5-10)

The neighbor's "boldness" (NIV), "impudence" (ESV), "persistence" (NRSV), "importunity" (KJV) motivates the father to take action. The Greek noun is *anaideia*, "lack of sensitivity to what is proper, carelessness about the good opinion of others, shamelessness, impertinence, impudence, ignoring of convention."

Parable of the Unjust Judge (Luke 18:1-8)

Purpose: to show disciples that they should always pray and not give up." (Luke 18:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; 1 Corinthians 15:58).

Q52. (Luke 11:5-10; 18:1-8) What is the similarity between Jesus' Parables of the Friend at Midnight and the Unjust Judge? What does this persistence look like in your life? What will persistence in prayer do to develop you as a disciple?

Analogy of the Faith of a Mustard Seed (Matthew 17:19; Luke 17:6)

11. Parables about Disciple Practices

11.1 Humble Service

Acted Parable of Washing the Disciples' Feet (John 13:4-17)

Context of his acted parable: Jesus' disciples arguing about who is greatest (Luke 22:24) at Last Supper. It was customary for a host to provide a basin of water so guests could wash their own feet upon entering. Washing *someone else's feet* was a task reserved for the most menial of servants. A Jewish commentary on the Book of Exodus suggests that Jewish slaves could not be required to wash the feet of others, that this task was so demeaning that it should be reserved for Gentile slaves or for women, children, or pupils. But for a superior to wash an inferior's feet was never ever done! Except by Jesus (Mark 10:43-45).

Q53. (John 13:4-17) In what way is Jesus washing the disciples' feet a parable? Why did this act of washing their feet feel so shocking to the disciples? In what sense is this a parable of cleansing? In what way is it a rebuke of pride and competition? In what way is it a parable of humble service? In what areas of your life do you need to implement its teaching?

Parable of the Dutiful Servant (Luke 17:7-10)

In the culture of Jesus' day, the master wouldn't "owe" the slave a reward for his hard work. The idea of a debt of gratitude that must be offered to even the score would be seen as placing the master in debt to the slave. We can have no sense of entitlement, but by God's grace, Jesus calls us "friends" (John 15:14-15).

11.2 Service in the Kingdom

Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30)

Parable of the Minas or Pounds (Luke 19:12-27)

Both parables are in the context of a delay in Christ's return. Both parables involve giving servants money to invest in various enterprises, so the master's total capital will be increased by the time he returns. To minimize risk a businessman might: (1) diversify by dividing the capital into several different investment pools (both parables); or (2) give the most capital to the most competent managers and less to those who have yet to prove themselves (Parable of the Talents). The verb is *pragmateuomai*, "do business, trade," variously translated: "put this money to work" (NIV), "engage in business" (ESV), "do business" (NRSV), "occupy" (KJV).

"Mina" (ESV, NIV) or "pound" (NRSV, KJV) is Greek *mna*, a Greek monetary unit equal to 100 drachmas in Greek money, perhaps \$15,000 to \$20,000 dollars USD in today's money. Each servant received the same amount. One Tyrian talent would be worth about 6,000 denarii or about \$1 million USD. Servant 1 gets \$5 million. Servant 2 gets 2 million. Servant 3 gets \$1 million.

In each case the "wicked and lazy servant" returns the capital only, but doesn't put the money to work to earn more. His excuses show he hates and resents his master.

Modern bank institutions don't appear until sixteenth century Europe. But in ancient times, If you had money to loan, you could deposit it with a money lender who would do the work and pay you for the use of your money. Though Jews were forbidden in the Torah from receiving interest on money loaned to poor countrymen, some other kinds of business loans were legal for them.

The money represents spiritual gifts, abilities, "talents," resources, family position, wealth, knowledge, etc. that Jesus bestows on his disciples. Both parables teach to each according to ability (Matthew 25:15; Luke 12:48; 1 Corinthians 3:12-15).

Q54. (Matthew 25:14-30; Luke 19:12-27) Why did Jesus give his disciples the Parables of the Talents and Minas? How are you using the “talents” Jesus has given you? What causes people to “bury” the talents they once used for the Lord? If it is not salvation itself, what is the reward for faithfulness? Why does God expect more of greatly gifted people?

11.3 Showing Love and Mercy

Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37)

Jesus encounters a lawyer, Greek *nomikos*, “legal expert, jurist, lawyer” who wants to publicly expose Jesus’ lack of formal training, who asks “who is my neighbor” that I am required to love. Jesus answers with a parable. Jericho was known as a principal residence for priests and Levites. They were concerned about ritual purity in case the man was dead – and didn’t want to get involved.

Samaritans were hated by Jews, and hated the Jews in return, since the Jews had destroyed their temple on Mt. Gerezim in 110 BC. The Samaritan shows mercy, and advances two denarii, \$300 to \$400 USD to the innkeeper for his care. Mercy is required of us (Micah 6:8; Isaiah 58:6-7; Hosea 6:6; Luke 6:36).

Q55. (Luke 10:30-37) Why does Jesus contrast a Jewish priest and Levite with a hated Samaritan? According to the parable, how do you think Jesus would define “neighbor,” that is, someone we have a responsibility toward? How much does compassion move you to go out of your way and comfort zone to care for those in need?

12. Parables about Caring for the Lost

12.1 A Heart for the Lost

Analogy of the Doctor and the Sick (Matthew 9:12; Mark 2:17; Luke 5:31)

“The Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost” (Luke 19:7, 10; cf. Matthew 9:13; Hosea 6:6).

Q56. (Matthew 9:13; Hosea 6:6) What does Jesus mean when he tells his disciples, “I desire mercy, not sacrifice”? What attitude did the Pharisees have towards sinners? What attitude did Jesus have toward sinners? What attitude do you have toward sinners? What is the role of a spiritual doctor?

Analogies of the Lost Sheep (Matthew 9:36; 10:5-6; 15:24; John 10:16)

Isaiah 53:6; Jeremiah 50:6; Ezekiel 34:5. In Matthew 9:36, “harassed” can mean “weary” as well as “mal-treated, molested, troubled” and “helpless” (1 Peter 2:25). The phrase, “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” differentiates Israelites from other ethnic groups (Matthew 10:5b-6; Matthew 15:24; Romans 1:16). Sheep of another sheep-fold (John 10:16) probably refers to the Gentiles.

Q57. (Matthew 9:36) Why is Jesus’ heartbroken over lost sheep? Who are the lost sheep of your community? Of the mission fields that you know about? What is your attitude toward them?

12.2 Workers in the Harvest

Analogy of the Harvest and the Laborers (Matthew 9:37-38; Luke 10:2)

When the field is ripe you would hire a number of harvesters and reap the whole field at one time. Having too few workers at harvest time can be a disaster. Jesus says to ask the Father to send out laborers.

Analogy of Fields White for Harvest (John 4:35)

It isn’t yet the season of harvest; harvest is still four months off. But Jesus asks his disciples to look beyond the natural harvest that isn’t ready, to the spiritual harvest that is indeed ripe! Jesus refers to a popular proverb of the day: “One sows and another reaps” (1 Corinthians 3:5-8).

Q58. (Matthew 9:37-38; John 4:35-38) Where in your region does the harvest seem most ripe, that is, where people are most receptive to the gospel? Do you see yourself mainly as a sower or a reaper? Why is there such a shortage of reapers? Would you be willing to be a reaper, if Jesus helps you?

Analogies of the Sheep and Wolves, Serpents and Doves (Matthew 10:16; Luke 10:3)

12.3 Witnessing to the Lost

Analogy of Sparrows (Matthew 10:29-30; Luke 12:6-7)

Analogy of Fishers of Men (Matthew 4:18-20; Mark 1:16-18; Luke 5:10-11)

Analogy of the Savorless Salt (Matthew 5:13; Mark 9:50; Luke 14:34-35)

Both ancient and modern peoples have used salt as both (1) a food preservative and (2) to bring out the flavor of foods. Here, flavor is the point, the tanginess of our speech and witness (Colossians 4:6).

The salt the Israelites obtained was often impure, mixed with alkali salts from around the Dead Sea. Water could leach out the sodium chloride, leaving the other salts intact. It still looked like salt, but tasted insipid.

Analogy of the City on a Hill (Matthew 5:14)

This is a parable of visibility.

Analogy of the Lamp under a Bushel (Matthew 5:15; Mark 4:21; Luke 8:16-17; Luke 11:33)

Also, a parable of visibility.

Q59. (Matthew 5:13-14) Why is a sharp and tasty witness so important? What is a bland witness to Jesus? How do we stay “salty”? Why are people tempted to hide their “light” or witness? What does Jesus say about that?

12.4 Teaching the Kingdom**Parable of the Scribes of the Kingdom (Matthew 13:51-52)**

The term “teacher of the law” (NIV), “scribe” (ESV, NRSV, KJV) is unexpected, since in Jesus’ day, the scribes were Jesus’ enemies, though the word “scribe” itself didn’t have negative connotations. In secular Greek *grammateus* is the title of a high official. In Judaism it usually refers to “specialists in the law of Moses: experts in the law, scholars versed in the law, scribes,” here by extension, “an interpreter of teaching, scribe, instructor.” The great post-exilic reformer Ezra is described as “the priest, the scribe, a man learned in matters of the commandments of the Lord and his statutes for Israel” (Ezra 7:11). See Matthew 23:34.

Jesus cross-trains his disciples to interpret both the Old Testament, as well as knowing the power of Jesus ushering in the Kingdom of God and its salvation (2 Timothy 2:15).

Q60. (Matthew 13:51-52) What is the “old” that the householder brings out of his treasure box? What is the “new.” In what way must we disciples be “cross-trained” as scribes of the Kingdom?

Appendix 2. List of Jesus' Parables and Analogies

1. Asking a Father for Bread (Matthew 7:9-11; Luke 11:11-13; Lesson 10.3)
2. Baptism (Mark 1:4-8; Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Lesson 6.2)
3. Barren Fig Tree (Luke 13:6-9; Lesson 2.1)
4. Becoming Like Little Children (Matthew 18:3-4; Lesson 9.1)
5. Birds and the Lilies (Matthew 6:25-34, Lesson 10.2)
6. Binding the Strong Man (Matthew 12:29; Mark 3:27; Luke 11:21-22; Lesson 6.3)
7. Blind Leading the Blind (Matthew 15:14; Luke 6:39; Appendix 4.3)
8. Bread and the Wine (Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:15-20; Lesson 6.2)
9. Bread of Life (John 6:35, Lesson 6.1)
10. Bridegroom's Guests (Matthew 9:14-15; Mark 2:18-20; Luke 5:33-35; Lesson 7.2)
11. Bridegroom's Friend (John the Baptist, John 3:29-30; Appendix 4.2)
12. Brood of Vipers (Matthew 12:34; 23:33; Appendix 4.3)
13. Budding Fig Tree (Matthew 24:32-33; Mark 13:28-29; Luke 21:29-31; Lesson 5.1)
14. Burglar (Luke 12:39-40; Matthew 24:43-44; Lesson 5.2)
15. Camel and the Needle (Matthew 19:23-24; Mark 10:24-25; Luke 18:24-25; Lesson 6.1)
16. Children in the Marketplace (Matthew 11:16-19; Luke 7:31-32; Appendix 4.3)
17. City on a Hill (Matthew 5:14; Lesson 12.3)
18. Cleansing the Cup (Matthew 23:25-26; Luke 11:39-41; Lesson 3.1)
19. Dead Burying the Dead (Matthew 18:21-22; Luke 9:59-60; Lesson 8.3)
20. Den of Robbers (Matthew 21:13; Luke 19:46; John 2:16; Appendix 4.3)
21. Defiling Heart of Man (Mark 7:14-23; Matthew 15:10-11, 15-20; Lesson 3.1)
22. Doctor and Sick People (Matthew 9:12; Mark 2:17; Luke 5:31; Lesson 12.1)
23. Dutiful Servant (Luke 17:7-10; Lesson 11.1)
24. Eating Jesus' Flesh (John 6:53-58, Lesson 9.3)
25. Empty House (Matthew 12:43-45; Luke 11:23-26; Lesson 6.3)
26. Faith of a Mustard Seed (Matthew 17:19; Luke 17:6; Lesson 10.4)
27. Fields White for Harvest (John 4:35)
28. Fishers of Men (Matthew 4:18-20; Mark 1:16-18; Luke 5:10-11; Lesson 12.3)
29. Foxholes and Nests (Matthew 18:19-20; Luke 5:57-58; Lesson 8.3)
30. Friend at Midnight (Luke 11:5-10; Lesson 10.3)
31. Good Eye (Matthew 6:22-23; Luke 11:34-36; Lesson 3.4)
32. Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37; Lesson 11.3)
33. Good Shepherd and the Sheep Gate (John 10:1-18; Lesson 7.4)
34. Great Banquet (Luke 14:15-24; Matthew 22:2-10; Lesson 2.2)
35. Guilty Defendant (Matthew 5:25-26; Luke 12:57-59; Lesson 3.2)
36. Harvest and the Laborers (Matthew 9:37-38; Luke 10:2; Lesson 12.2)
37. Hen and Chickens (Matthew 23:37; Luke 13:34; Lesson 2.2)
38. Hidden Treasure (Matthew 13:44; Lesson 8.5)
39. House Divided (Matthew 12:25-26; Mark 3:24-26; Luke 11:17-18; Lesson 6.3)
40. Kernel of Wheat (John 12:24; Lesson 6.2)
41. Keys of the Kingdom (Matthew 16:19; Appendix 4.4)
42. Laborers in Vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16; Lesson 4.3)
43. Lamp under a Bushel (Matthew 5:15; Mark 4:21; Luke 8:16-17; 11:33; Lesson 12.3)
44. Lifting the Bronze Serpent (John 3:14, Lesson 6.1)
45. Light of the World (John 8:12; 9:5; 1:4-9, Appendix 4.1)
46. Lightning (Luke 17:24; Matthew 24:27; Lesson 5.1)
47. Looking Back from the Plow (Luke 9:61-62; Lesson 8.3)
48. Lost Coin (Luke 15:8-10; Lesson 1.1)
49. Lost Sheep, Parable of (Luke 15:3-6a; Matthew 18:12-14; Lesson 1.1)
50. Lost Sheep, Analogies of (Matthew 9:36; 10:5-6; 15:24; John 10:16; Lesson 12.1)
51. Lost Son or the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32; Lesson 1.1)
52. Minas or Pounds (Luke 19:12-27; Lesson 11.2)
53. Mustard Seed (Matthew 13:31-32; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-19; Lesson 7.1)
54. Narrow Door (Luke 13:23-27; Lesson 8.2)
55. Narrow and Wide Gates (Matthew 7:13-14; Lesson 3.2)
56. Net (Matthew 13:47-50; Lesson 4.2)
57. Ox and the Son (Luke 14:2-5, Appendix 4.2)
58. Pearl of Great Price (Matthew 13:45-46; Lesson 8.5)
59. Pearls before Swine (Matthew 7:6; Lesson 8.1)
60. Peter the Rock (Matthew 16:18; John 1:42, Appendix 4.4)
61. Pharisee and Tax Collector (Luke 18:9-14; Lesson 9.1)
62. Physician, Heal Yourself (Luke 4:23-24; Appendix 4.2)
63. Places at the Table (Luke 14:7-11; Lesson 9.1)
64. Rich Fool (Luke 12:16-21; Lesson 10.2)
65. Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31; Lesson 4.1)
66. Rooms in the Father's House (John 14:2-4; Lesson 6.2)
67. Savorless Salt (Matthew 5:13; Mark 9:50; Luke 14:34-35; Lesson 12.3)
68. Scribes of the Kingdom (Matthew 13:51-52; Lesson 12.4)

69. Seed Growing by Itself (Mark 4:26-29; Lesson 7.1)
70. Sheep and the Goats (Matthew 25:31-46; Lesson 4.2)
71. Sheep and Wolves, Serpents and Doves (Matthew 10:16; Luke 10:3; Lesson 12.2)
72. Sign of Jonah (Matthew 12:38-42; Luke 11:29-32; Appendix 4.2)
73. Slave and the Son (John 8:34-36; Appendix 4.2)
74. Sower (Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23; Mark 4:3-9, 13-20; Luke 8:4-8, 11-15; Lesson 8.1)
75. Sowers and Reapers (John 4:35-38; Lesson 12.2)
76. Sparrows (Matthew 10:29-30; Luke 12:6-7; Lesson 12.3)
77. Speck and the Beam (Matthew 7:3-5; Luke 6:41-42; Lesson 3.4)
78. Spiritual Birth (John 3:3-7; Lesson 6.1)
79. Streams of Living Water (John 7:37-39, Lesson 6.1)
80. Taking Up One's Cross (Matthew 16:24-25; Mark 8:34-35; Luke 9:23-24; Matthew 10:37-39; Luke 14:25-27; Lesson 8.4)
81. Talents (Matthew 25:14-30; Lesson 11.2)
82. Temple of Jesus' Body (John 2:18-22, Appendix 4.2)
83. Tower-Builder (Luke 14:28-30; Lesson 8.4)
84. Treasure Chest of the Heart (Luke 6:45, Lesson 10.1)
85. Tree and Fruit (Matthew 7:16-20; Luke 6:43-45; Lesson 10.1)
86. Two Cancelled Debts (Luke 7:41-43, 47; Lesson 1.2)
87. Two Masters (Luke 16:13; Matthew 6:24; Lesson 10.2)
88. Two Sons (Matthew 21:28-31; Lesson 3.3)
89. Unjust Judge (Luke 18:1-8; Lesson 10.3)
90. Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1-13; Lesson 10.1)
91. Unmerciful Servant (Matthew 18:23-35; Lesson 1.2)
92. Unshrunk Cloth (Matthew 9:16; Mark 2:21; Luke 5:36; Lesson 7.3)
93. Vine and the Branches (John 15:1-8; Lesson 9.3)
94. Vultures Gathering (Luke 17:37; Matthew 24:38; Lesson 5.1)
95. Walking in Light and Darkness (John 9:4; 11:9-10; 12:35-36a; Appendix 4.1)
96. Warring King (Luke 14:31-32; Lesson 8.4)
97. Washing the Disciples' Feet (John 13:4-17; Lesson 11.1)
98. Watching Servants (Mark 13:34-37; Luke 12:35-38; Lesson 5.2)
99. Water for Eternal Life (John 4:13-14; Lesson 6.1)
100. Weather Signs (Luke 12:54-56; Lesson 5.1)
101. Wedding Banquet (Matthew 22:1-10; Lesson 2.2)
102. Weeds or Tares (Matthew 13:24-30; 36-43; Lesson 4.2)
103. Welcoming Little Children (Matthew 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-14; Luke 18:16-17; Lesson 9.1)
104. Whitewashed Tombs (Matthew 23:27-28; Lesson 3.1)
105. Wicked Tenants (Matthew 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19; Lesson 2.3)
106. Wind of the Spirit (John 3:8; Lesson 6.1)
107. Wineskins (Matthew 9:17; Mark 2:22; Luke 5:37-39; Lesson 7.3)
108. Wise and Faithful Steward (Matthew 24:45-51; Luke 12:42-46; Lesson 5.3)
109. Wise and Foolish Builders (Matthew 7:24-27; Luke 6:47-49; Lesson 3.2)
110. Wise and Foolish Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13; Lesson 5.2)
111. Wolf in Sheep's Clothing (Matthew 7:15-16a; Lesson 10.1)
112. Woman in Childbirth (John 16:21; Lesson 6.2)
113. Yeast of the Pharisees (Matthew 16:5-12; Mark 8:15; Luke 12:1; Lesson 9.2)
114. Yeast or Leaven (Matthew 13:33; Luke 13:20-21; Lesson 7.1)
115. Yoke (Matthew 11:28-30, Lesson 9.3)