

The Parables of Jesus

“He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” [Luke 8:8b](#)

An 11-week Bible study designed to provide a deeper understanding of how to read, understand, and apply the parables of Jesus.

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Lesson 1: Introduction and the Parable of the Lost Coin

Conversation Starter: What is your favorite parable? Why?

What is a Parable?

If you attended Sunday school as a kid, you were probably taught some of the parables Jesus told. Titles like “The Prodigal Son”, “The Good Samaritan”, and “The Parable of the Sower” may bring back memories of picture books and flannel graphs. But what really are parables?

The word parable comes from the Greek word *parabolē* (pronounced par-ab-ol-ay'). It means “a comparison – to place alongside”. A parable is “a likeness, illustration, or analogy”.

Parables are short, easy-to-remember, fictitious stories that use everyday situations to illustrate abstract spiritual truths to the listeners. It is a way of sharing spiritual realities that can bypass the filters in our minds and help us see things in a new light. Parables are sometimes thought of as “an earthly story with a heavenly meaning”.

Why did Jesus use Parables?

Great question! Why didn't he simply speak clearly about the spiritual truth? Some of that answer is explained above. Our earthly minds learn better when we can compare something new, intangible, and abstract to something we know and understand. Read [Matthew 13:10-14](#), where the disciples ask Jesus that very question.

Those with open hearts and minds would be able to understand the spiritual truth behind the story. Others would not understand, or would be offended because they saw themselves depicted as the spiritually deficient and rejected by God. But they all would remember the story. Some would never understand, as Isaiah foretold. For others, the parable would be like a seed, that as the person opened their hearts and minds to the gospel, it could be watered, fed, and they would then be able to understand.

Question: By using parables, does Jesus want to conceal truths? Explain your answer.

Parables are Meant to Be Applied

Throughout this study, we will discuss several parables to learn how to read better and understand them. However, once we have done our best to grasp what Jesus is saying to us, we should come away with one or both of the following and take action to apply what we have learned.

- The parable has taught us something about God's character or his kingdom.
- The parable has provided lessons or models for how Jesus wants us to live.

The Parable of the Lost Coin

Read this parable in [Luke 15:8-10](#). Review the sections below and answer the questions.

Read in the Proper Context

Like all of Scripture, the verses that contain a parable are embedded in a larger paragraph, a chapter, a book, and the entire Bible. Look at the verses before and surrounding The Parable of the Lost Coin to answer the following questions:

1. What events or dialogue have just happened?
2. Who is Jesus telling this parable to?
3. Why is Jesus telling this parable?
4. Is this parable in a group of parables, and if so, is there a common theme?

Note Surprise or Unusual Details

Note anything that stands out, seems unusual, or adds an unexpected twist to the story.

5. Why do you think the woman called her neighbors to celebrate the fact that she had found her lost coin?
6. Does the fact that the coin was considered lost, though it was in her house, have a deeper meaning?

Application

7. What does this parable teach you about God's character or his kingdom?
8. What lesson or model does this parable provide on how Jesus wants us to live, and how can you apply that?

Lesson 2: The Parable of the Sower

“He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” [Luke 8:8b](#)

Conversation Starter: Have you ever grown anything from planting a seed? Was it a success? Why or why not?

Read in the Proper Context

This is thought to be one of the first parables Jesus taught and is alternately titled ‘The Parable of the Soils’. Read [Luke 8:4-8](#) and answer the questions below on the context. This parable is also recorded in [Matthew 13:1-9](#) and [Mark 4:1-9](#), where some additional context is given.

1. Where is Jesus, and what is the setting where he is telling the parable?

2. Who is Jesus telling this parable to?

3. Why is Jesus telling this parable?

Determine What is Being Compared

Parables take an abstract spiritual concept and compare it to something the audience can relate to. Many parables that Jesus told, he did not explain what they meant, and left it to his listeners to interpret. He does explain the meaning of this parable. Read [Luke 8:9-15](#) and answer the following questions

4. Who do you think the farmer represents?

5. What does the seed represent?

6. Fill in the table below for the four types of soil.

Type of Soil and Its Characteristics	What the Soil Represents	What Happened to the Seed on that Soil

Application

After Jesus explains what The Parable of the Sower means, he immediately talks about how a light is not put under a jar or a basket. Read [Luke 8:16-18](#) to answer the following two questions.

7. Reading these verses as a conclusion to the explanation of The Parable of the Sower, what do you think are the points Jesus wants his listeners to come away with?

8. Does how we hear the Gospel determine what kind of soil we are? Explain.

If we choose to have ‘ears to hear’, the Holy Spirit reveals to us profound truths about God, his kingdom, and his people, alongside the everyday, practical truths that are present in the story.

9. What does this parable teach you about God’s character or his kingdom?

10. What lesson or model does this parable provide on how Jesus wants us to live, and how can you apply that?

Lesson 3: A Sampling of Kingdom Parables

Conversation Starter: Pretend you have discovered a village of bushmen that live on the remote plains of Africa. They have never ventured into civilization and do not have satellite, cable, or cellular services or devices. Assuming you can communicate with words, how would you describe your home and way of life to them so they could understand?

We mentioned in the first lesson that parables are used to illustrate abstract spiritual truths to listeners. What is more abstract to us humans than the kingdom of heaven? Hopefully, we can grasp what it means to love our neighbor or to receive the Gospel message with an open mind and heart. But we live on this earth in this world. We won't see or experience the kingdom of heaven to very much extent until we die or Christ returns. Jesus told over 30 parables, and about a quarter of them are defined as kingdom parables. It must be important, then, for us, as Christians, to have an understanding of what the kingdom of heaven is like.

Most of the kingdom parables are found in Matthew chapter 13. For this study, we will look at three of them—the parables of the yeast, the pearl, and the weeds.

Read in the Proper Context

The kingdom parables start in Matthew 13:24. Look at the verses before to answer the following questions:

1. What teaching(s) has Jesus just given in [Matthew 13:1-23](#)?

2. Why do you think Jesus now tells seven parables about the kingdom of heaven?

Determine What is Being Compared

In all of the kingdom parables, the abstract spiritual concept is the kingdom of heaven. Each parable tries to illustrate to the listener an attribute (or attributes) of the kingdom of heaven to something physical that they can relate to. Read both The Parable of the Yeast ([Matt. 13:33](#)) and The Parable of the Pearl ([Matt. 13:45-46](#)).

3. Fill in the following table for these two parables.

Physical Thing	Physical Characteristics (e.g., size, value, etc.)	What Happens to and/or What Does the Physical Thing Do?	How Does This Comparison Help to Explain the Kingdom of Heaven?
Yeast			
Pearl			

Find the Main Point

The main point is what we are to come away from the parable with a better understanding of. In The Parable of the Yeast, we get a better understanding of the kingdom of heaven and how it will affect the world. Generally, Jesus' parables have one main point. A few parables are more complex, like the one about the sower, but each section of that parable has a main point. Read The Parable of the Weeds in [Matt. 13:24-30](#) and [Matt. 13:36-43](#) and answer the following questions.

4. Who are the main characters, and what do they represent?

5. Who or what is the focus of the story?

6. What happened at the end of the parable? Some parables are lengthy and include many details, but the conclusion of the story is what is most important in understanding their implications. Notice the last person mentioned, the last action, and/or the last dialogue.

Application

7. What do these parables teach you about God's character and his kingdom?

8. Based on these kingdom parables, what are some of the ways Jesus wants us to live now on this earth and in this world?

Lesson 4: The Parable of the Ten Virgins

Conversation Starter: Have you ever been turned away from attending an event you had been looking forward to? What was the situation? How did that make you feel?

Consider the Cultural Norms of the Original Audience

We live in a very different time and place than the Middle Eastern, agrarian, non-technical, and often illiterate audience that Jesus spoke to. We may not immediately catch the significance that certain details give to a parable. A good study Bible or commentary can provide background to help us understand the cultural relevance, enabling us to comprehend the parable as it was intended.

Knowing the historical setting for this parable is very important in understanding what Jesus is teaching. D.A. Carson in the *Expositor's Bible Commentary* describes a first-century Jewish wedding this way: "Normally the bridegroom with some close friends left his home to go to the bride's home, where there were various ceremonies, followed by a procession through the streets – after nightfall – to his home. The ten virgins may be bridesmaids who have been assisting the bride, and they expect to meet the groom as he comes from the bride's house. Everyone in the procession was expected to carry their own torch. Those without a torch would be assumed to be party crashers or even brigands."

The bridesmaids/virgins were to trim their lamps as soon as they heard the call that the groom was near. The lamps were important in that they welcomed the wedding party, provided light to show the way, and illuminated the wedding feast that followed.

Read The Parable of the Ten Virgins in [Matthew 25:1-13](#) and answer the following questions.

1. Why was it essential for the virgins to bring extra oil?
2. What were the virgins supposed to do when they heard the herald calling that the bridegroom was there?
3. At what point in Jesus' ministry did he tell this parable?

Notice Usage of Familiar Imagery

In parables, Jesus often uses familiar imagery paralleled in the Old Testament, allowing the audience to easily grasp these spiritual ideas. For example, a shepherd, father, or king in a parable typically signifies God. Sheep, servants, or workers are often used to illustrate the followers of God.

4. Fill in the following table for what the person or thing in this parable represents.

Person	Represents	Thing	Represents
Bridegroom		Lamps/Oil	
Virgins/Bridesmaids		Wedding Feast	

Don't Get Hung Up on Minor Details

Details are needed to flesh out a story, but don't read too far into minor details. For example, in this parable, five virgins were wise and five foolish. It would be wrong to conclude that 50% of people are wise and 50% of people are foolish. This detail simply helps the story move along. Focusing on minor details can make us miss the entire point of the story.

Focus on the Ending

Some parables are lengthy and include many details, but the conclusion of the story is what is most important in understanding their implications. Notice the last person mentioned, the last action, and/or the last dialogue.

5. Based on verse 13, what is the main point of this parable?

Application

6. Read verse 10. What happened in the parable, and what is the implication for us?

7. What happened in verses 11 and 12, and how do you interpret that?

8. What was the mistake that the foolish virgins made, and how does this apply to the world we live in today?

9. How did the five wise virgins prepare? How does that apply to us as Christians?

Lesson 5: The Parable of the Good Samaritan

Conversation Starter: Describe a situation where someone who you thought had something against you acted in kindness to you or someone else. Did their actions change your opinion of them?

Jesus often used parables to reveal truth about God's kingdom while simultaneously challenging the customs, social norms, and preconceived ideas of those who were listening. Parables often prompt us to reevaluate our perspective on the world and our treatment of others, guiding us toward God's perspective on the situation. This is especially true in the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

Consider the Cultural Norms of the Original Audience

To fully grasp what Jesus is teaching, we must first understand the hatred between the Jews and the Samaritans. This enmity, on the level of our modern-day hate crimes, can be traced to when Judah in the south and Israel in the north split almost 1,000 years before Jesus. Then, in 722 BC, the Assyrians conquered Israel, which became known as the Assyrian province of Samaria. While many of the inhabitants of Samaria were led off into captivity, some were left behind. They intermarried with settlers from Mesopotamia and Syria and were considered 'half-breeds' by the southern Jews who returned from their Babylonian exile in 537 BC. The Samaritans considered themselves to be worshipers of the same God and even attempted to assist with the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple, but were rebuffed. They retaliated by opposing and therefore delaying the reconstruction.

In the 2nd century BC, the Samaritans helped the Syrian monarchs in their wars against the Jews. In 128 BC, the Jewish high priest burned the Samaritan temple on Gerizim. Sometime early in the first century, Samaritans threw human bones into the temple in Jerusalem on the day of Passover. In Jesus' time, the two groups used Rome against each other. Some Samaritans would enlist in the Roman auxiliary troops for a chance to legally harass the Jews. Both groups are said to have bribed Roman soldiers to persecute the other. A widely used Jewish proverb stated that "a piece of bread given by a Samaritan is more unclean than swine's flesh." (This [material](#) is adapted from an article by St. Sabina Parish.)

Read this parable in [Luke 10:29-37](#) and answer the following questions.

1. Why do you think the priest or the Levite did not help the injured man?

2. What would have shocked the listeners about this parable?

The Samaritan didn't have to help the wounded man; in fact, based on the rift between Jews and Samaritans, he would have been more justified if he had ignored the man than either the priest or the Levite.

3. List below all that the Samaritan did for the Jew.

4. Besides money, what did it cost the Samaritan to help the Jew?

Don't Confuse Parables With Fables or Allegories

It is also important to know that parables are neither fables nor allegories. A fable is a short, concise story that tells a moral lesson and uses personified animals or objects as characters. An allegory employs symbolism to convey a meaning that is not explicitly stated in the narrative. Allegorical interpretations have been misapplied to parables in the past. An example of this is Origen's interpretation of the Good Samaritan. He reads several details into the text: the man walking down the road signifies Adam, the priest represents the Law, the Levite signifies the Prophets, the donkey signifies the body of Christ that bore our sins, and the Samaritan signifies what Christ did for us.

There is no basis for this interpretation, and it misses the real point of the parable. Martin Luther called some allegorical interpretations of the parables "amazing twaddle" and "altogether useless."

Read in the Proper Context

Knowing the context will help us further understand this parable. Read [Luke 10:25-28](#).

5. The Lawyer (expert in Jewish law) recites the two greatest commandments to Jesus. What is the 2nd greatest commandment, and what does it mean?

6. Why is Jesus telling this parable?

Application

7. The Lawyer asks Jesus in verse 29, "And who is my neighbor?" Based on this parable, who is your neighbor?

8. The Lawyer's first question was, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Is there anything we can do to inherit eternal life? What does secure eternal life?

Lesson 6: The Parable of the Prodigal Son

Conversation Starter: In every family, there seems to be the “favorite(s)” and the “mess-up(s)” among siblings. What would you consider yourself? Explain why you think that.

Read in the Proper Context

Read the beginning verses in [Luke 15](#) to answer the following questions:

- 1. Who is Jesus telling this parable to?
- 2. What prompted Jesus to tell this parable?
- 3. Is this parable in a group of parables, and if so, is there a common theme?

Consider the Cultural Norms of the Original Audience

According to the [Jewish Mishnah](#) and [Deuteronomy 21:17](#), the oldest son has rights to an extra share of the inheritance. In this parable, there are two sons, so the older would get two-thirds and the younger one-third. Usually, the entire inheritance is passed on at the father’s death. Read The Parable of the Prodigal Son in [Luke 15:11-32](#).

- 4. What does the younger son’s request for his inheritance tell you about him?
- 5. What does the father giving the son his inheritance tell you about the father?

Notice Usage of Familiar Imagery

6. Fill in the following table for what the person in this parable represents.

Person	Represents
Father	
Younger Son	
Older Son	

Application

7. This parable is a model of repentance. What stages did the younger son go through in repentance?
8. Things had to get pretty bad for the son to repent. Do you think God had a hand in the “bad luck” that happened to the young man? Explain.
9. Why do things have to get so bad sometimes for us to turn to God?
- 10.What did the son do to deserve forgiveness? What did the father require of the son for him to forgive him?
- 11.Reread verses 20 – 24. Fill in the following table for each action the father did and each item the father gave the son, and then indicate what each represents.

What the Father Did or Gave	What that Represents

- 12.If the older son had first met the younger one coming home, what do you think he might have said to him?
- 13.What does this parable teach you about God’s character?

Lesson 7: The Parable of the Wedding Banquet

Conversation Starter: Have you ever invited someone special to a party you were hosting, only to have them give a flimsy excuse for not coming? How did that affect your relationship going forward?

Read The Parable of the Wedding Banquet in [Matthew 22:1-14](#) and answer the following questions.

Determine What is Being Compared and Use of Familiar Imagery

1. Fill in the following table for who the person in this parable represents.

Person	Represents	Person	Represents
King		King’s Servants	
Son		King’s Troops	
Original Guests		2 nd Group of Guests	

2. What does the wedding garment offered represent?

3. The man who was not wearing proper wedding attire tried to attend the feast. Who does he represent?

Consider the Cultural Norms of the Original Audience and Read in the Proper Context

In Lesson 4, we learned some of the customs of first-century Jewish weddings. Here are a few others that help us understand this parable.

The wedding banquet was one of the most joyous occasions in Jewish life and could last for up to a week. Invitations were always two-tiered. First, the guest would be informed that a banquet was scheduled and that they had been invited, but they would not be told when it was going to take place. The guest would then get a second invitation when the banquet was ready. Guests were expected to wear proper attire, and in some cases, were supplied with the garment by the host.

4. What actions of the guests would have seemed offensive and rude to the original audience as they heard Jesus tell this parable?
5. At what point in Jesus' ministry was this parable told? In what way does this timing affect this parable?
6. What did the king do to the original guests? Was his judgment appropriate? Why or why not? (See [Hebrews 10:29-30](#))
7. Was the judgment of the man who did not have wedding attire appropriate? Why or why not?

Application

8. What excuses do people give today to God's invitation?
9. As Christians, are there times when we give excuses to God? Explain.
10. Why was it essential for the king to send out his messengers to invite anyone who would come?
11. What did Jesus mean in verse 14 when he said, "For many are called, but few are chosen."?

I have to work The kids have sports That is my only day off
That's not a good time I HAVE OTHER PLANS The dog is
sick I have company That's too much effort My head hurts

Lesson 8: The Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard

Conversation Starter: Have you ever felt that someone was treated more fairly than you, or you were treated more fairly than someone else? Describe the situation(s).

Read in the Proper Context

1. What prompted Jesus to tell this parable? ([Matthew 19:27-30](#))
2. At this point, what do you think the disciples were thinking Jesus meant in verse 30, that the first will be last and the last will be first?

Planting, maintaining, and harvesting vineyards in first-century Israel was strenuous work that required hard physical labor in the summer heat. The owner of this particular vineyard went to the marketplace at the first hour of the morning (6:00 a.m.) to find workers for the day. The generous wage offered was one denarius, equivalent to a Roman soldier’s daily pay. As the day progressed, additional workers were hired to complete all the work.

Read The Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard in [Matthew 20:1-16](#) and answer the following questions.

Determine What is Being Compared and Use of Familiar Imagery

3. Fill in the following table for who the person or thing in this parable represents.

Person / Thing	Represents	Person	Represents
Landowner		Early Workers	
Wages		Late Workers	

Application

4. The first group of workers was paid what they were promised. Why were they upset?
5. Do you feel the landowner was unjust? ([Romans 9:14-16](#)) Explain.
6. What are some of the things that we compare ourselves to others with?
7. What are the dangers of comparing ourselves to others?
8. Is it ever OK to compare ourselves to others?
9. Write out [Psalm 135:6](#) and explain what that means to you in light of this parable.
10. What did Jesus mean in verse 16 when he said, “The first will be last and the last will be first”?
11. Did Jesus intend that this parable be taken literally, e.g., to pay the workers in your factory the same no matter how many hours they put in, or to always be satisfied with your pay even if it is well below market? Why or why not?

Lesson 9: The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

Conversation Starter: List some offenses and people that are easy to forgive and some that are hard to forgive. What makes the difference?

Read in the Proper Context

Read the verses in [Matthew 18:1](#) and [15-22](#) to answer the following questions:

- 1. Who is Jesus telling this parable to?
- 2. What prompted Jesus to tell this parable?

Consider the Cultural Norms of the Original Audience

In New Testament times, a talent was worth about 20 years’ wages, and a denarius was worth one day’s wage. Therefore, in today’s terms, ten thousand talents would be equivalent to about \$6 billion, and a hundred denarii would be worth about \$12,000. If a debtor could not repay, the lender had the right to have the person (and his family) jailed and then sold as slaves to help satisfy the debt. Read The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant in [Matthew 18:23-35](#) and answer the following questions.

Determine What is Being Compared and Use of Familiar Imagery

3. Fill in the following table for who/what the person/thing in this parable represents.

Person	Represents	Thing	Represents
King		Debt	
King’s Servants		Jail	

- 4. Could the servant ever have paid back the debt to the king?

Application

5. What does our sin deserve? Why?
6. Is there anything we can do to pay or make amends for our sin? ([Ephesians 2:8-9](#))
7. The king forgave the first servant, but then threw him in prison. What was missing from the first servant that got him thrown in prison after being forgiven so much? ([Ephesians 4:32](#))
8. What does this parable teach us about our sin against God compared with someone's offenses toward us?

Forgiveness can almost be considered scandalous at times. Think of a betrayed wife forgiving her husband, or a father forgiving the man who molested and murdered his daughter, or forgiving yourself at times.

9. Sometimes, we can say "I forgive you" to someone, but still harbor unforgiveness. What are some signs of unforgiveness to watch out for?
10. What is the effect on us when we hold back forgiveness, hold a grudge, or keep tabs on someone's offenses toward us? What is the impact on others?
11. Does someone have to be sorry before you forgive them for something? Why or why not?
12. Does forgiveness mean that someone does not need to make recompense or go to jail for their crimes? Explain.

Lesson 10: The Parable of the Tenants

Conversation Starter: Compare and contrast how people take care of things they own versus things they rent or lease (e.g., housing, cars, etc.).

Read in the Proper Context

Jesus begins this particular day in Matthew 21:18. He sees a fig tree that appears leafy but has no fruit. He then goes to the temple courts to teach, where the chief priests and elders confront him, and Jesus responds. ([21:23-27](#)).

Read the verses above to answer the following questions:

- 1. Who is Jesus telling this parable to?
- 2. What events or dialogue have just happened?
- 3. Why is Jesus telling this parable?

The Parable of the Tenants appears in three of the gospels ([Matthew 21:33-46](#); [Mark 12:1-12](#); [Luke 20:9-19](#)), with Matthew’s account being the most complete. The land owner rented the vineyard to the tenants, and, as was customary at the time, he could expect as much as half of the fruit as payment by the tenants for use of his land.

Determine What is Being Compared and Use of Familiar Imagery

4. Read [Matthew 21:33-46](#) and fill in the following table for who/what the person/thing in this parable represents.

Person/Thing	Represents	Person	Represents
Land Owner		Owner’s Servants	
Vineyard		Owner’s Son	
Original Tenants		New Tenants	

The imagery used is similar to that of Isaiah’s parable of the vineyard, found in [Isaiah chapter 5](#). The chief priests and elders would have immediately understood what Jesus was implying about them.

5. Read the covenant God made with Abraham in [Genesis 12:1–3](#) and what Moses told the Israelites would be one of the outcomes if they kept the Lord’s commandments in [Deuteronomy 4:6](#). What was the “fruit” God wanted Israel to display?

Application

6. In verse 40, why does Jesus ask what the owner will do to the tenants instead of just saying what the owner did?

7. In what way(s) is this parable prophetic as to what would be happening in the future?

In verse 42, Jesus quotes [Psalm 118:22](#): “The stone that the builders rejected has now become the cornerstone. This is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes.”

8. What is Jesus revealing in this parable? [Ephesians 2:20](#)

God expects fruit (vs. 19, 41, 43). If we are not bearing fruit, then we are not his true tenants.

9. What is the fruit that Jesus wants us to bear?

10. Do we produce the fruit? What is our role in the process? [John 15:4-5](#)

11. What does Jesus mean in verse 44 when he says, “And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.”?

12. In what ways can people today be like the bad tenants?

Lesson 11: The Parable of the Talents

Conversation Starter: Have you ever loaned something to someone and it was returned differently than you expected (either good or bad)? Explain.

Read in the Proper Context

The Parable of the Talents is Jesus’ last parable recorded. It is embedded in what theologians call the “Olivet Discourse” because Jesus was at the Mount of Olives when he spoke these words. The discourse starts in Matthew 24:3 and occurred a couple of days before Jesus’ arrest. Browse through [Matthew chapters 24](#) and [25](#) to answer the following questions:

- 1. What events or dialogue have just happened?
- 2. Who is Jesus telling this parable to?
- 3. Why is Jesus telling this parable?

Determine What is Being Compared and Use of Familiar Imagery

4. Read The Parable of the Talents in [Matthew 25:14-30](#) and fill in the following table for who/what the person/thing in this parable represents.

Person	Represents	Thing	Represents
Master		Talents	
Servants		Master’s Return	

We learned in The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant that a talent was worth about 20 years’ wages. Therefore, the master in this parable was entrusting his servants with a tremendous amount of wealth to care for.

5. All three were servants. What did the first and second servant understand?

6. What motivated the third servant, and why did he do what he did?

7. What was the reward for the faithful servants, and what happened to the third servant?

Application

8. What is the definition of a steward?

9. What does Jesus mean in verse 29 when he says, “For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.”?

10. List at least four general things we as Christians have been entrusted by Jesus to do or be.

11. We each have specific ‘talents’ that God has entrusted us with. List below a few ‘talents’ that you know the Lord has given you to use for his kingdom.

12. Why does God want us to ‘grow’ our talents?

13. What are some things that can get in the way of growing our talents, and what can we do to foster growth?

Parables: Open Lesson Format

There are many more parables that Jesus told beyond the ones included in this Bible study. You can use this format to study additional parables.

Parable to Study: _____

Scripture Reference: _____

Read this parable, review the sections below, and answer the questions.

Read in the Proper Context

Like all of Scripture, the verses that contain a parable are embedded in a larger paragraph, a chapter, a book, and the entire Bible. Look at the verses before and surrounding this parable to answer the following questions:

- 1. What events or dialogue have just happened?
- 2. Who is Jesus telling this parable to?
- 3. Why is Jesus telling this parable?
- 4. Is this parable in a group of parables, and if so, is there a common theme?

Determine What is Being Compared

Parables take an abstract spiritual concept and compare it to something the audience can relate to.

5. Fill in the following table for each person or thing mentioned in the parable and what it represents.

Person / Thing	Represents	Person /Thing	Represents

Consider the Cultural Norms of the Original Audience

We live in a very different time and place than the Middle Eastern, agrarian, non-technical, and often illiterate audience that Jesus spoke to. We may not immediately catch the significance that certain details give to a parable. A good study Bible or commentary can provide background to help us understand the cultural relevance, enabling us to comprehend the parable as it was intended.

6. Are there cultural norms that should be known to help understand this parable? If so, what are they, and how does this help explain the nuances of the parable?

Find the Main Point

The main point is what we are to come away from the parable with a better understanding of.

7. Who or what is the focus of the story?

8. What happened at the end of the parable? Some parables are lengthy and include numerous details, but the conclusion of the story is what is most important in understanding their implications. Notice the last person mentioned, the last action, and/or the last dialogue.

Application

9. What does this parable teach you about God's character or his kingdom?

10. What lesson or model does this parable provide on how Jesus wants us to live, and how can you apply that?

11. Is there anything else that stood out to you or that you have questions about with this parable?