

JESUS AT THE CENTER OF OUR STORY

NEW LIFE

May 5, 2024

DIGGING DEEPER

This message series is based on parables in the New Testament.
For further direction on interpreting parables, see page 2 of this guide.

Use the questions below by yourself or with friends as you seek to know God.
To find a group, visit brookwoodchurch.org/groups.

Words and phrases in this study guide are based on language from the New International Version (NIV).

Read Matthew 9:14-17 and Mark 2:21-22.

1. John's disciples came to Jesus with a question about fasting. Why would this have been important to them?
2. What spiritual lesson is Jesus trying to teach John's disciples?
3. What did Jesus mean with His reply about wedding guests?
4. How is the question about fasting related to *patches of old clothing and new cloth and new wine into old wineskins*?
5. How has Jesus transformed your life?
6. After your transformation, what habits did you have to change?
7. How did the change in habits affect your relationships?
8. Is there anything you're holding onto from your old life that you need to give to God? Pray now and lay that at the Father's feet.
9. How do you respond when faced with temptations to go back into your old habits?
10. How will this parable affect your prayer life this week?
11. How can you use this parable in your daily life?
12. **Read Galatians 5:22-23.** In these verses, Paul writes about the Fruit of the Spirit which flows out of a transformed heart. Which of these are apparent in your life? As you read through them, which would you like to be more evident in all you do?
13. Pause and ask God what He wants to say to you.

Nothing is too hard for God, no sin too difficult for His love to overcome, no failure that He cannot make into a success.

Oswald Chambers.

SIMPLE GUIDE TO INTERPRETING PARABLES

A parable is literally something *cast or thrown alongside* something else. It's a simple story used to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson. A parable often compares two (usually seemingly unrelated) things, and is commonly understood as an *earthly story with a heavenly meaning*.

Jesus spoke in parables...

Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. This is why I speak to them in parables:

*“Though seeing, they do not see;
though hearing, they do not hear or understand. Matthew 13:11,13 [NIV]*

1. **To reveal truth** to those seeking to understand the mysteries of the kingdom.
2. **To conceal truth** from those who remain blind or are unwilling to listen and learn.

AS YOU SEEK TO UNDERSTAND...

Consider the context. Who is Jesus talking to in the story? What events happened before He told the parable? Are there introductory words that set up the story?

Look for two things being compared or contrasted (*e.g.*, righteousness and sin, good and evil, generosity and greed, forgiveness and love, etc.). How are these two related? What major themes emerge as you read?

Don't get distracted by the details. While it's important to take note of particular words and phrases, don't get so bogged down in the tiny details that you miss the point.

Focus on Endings, Not Beginnings. The end of the story often provides a clue or ties things up. The accent commonly falls on the last person mentioned, the last deed or the last saying.

Seek to summarize the main point. Boiling down the parable in a sentence or two might help reveal the central message.

Look for parallels in Scripture. Some concepts and imagery occur repeatedly. Look for those cues when reading parables, as they may offer insight in understanding what the parable is saying. For example, a master, king or judge in a parable usually signifies God. Sheep, servants or workers are usually used to illustrate the followers of God.

Consider a practical application. Parables usually provide a simple lesson for daily life.

Beyond study, the goal is to deepen intimacy with God.
A central question to ask is, *God, what do you want to say to me?*
Trust that He will direct your heart and mind as you seek Him.