

JESUS AT THE CENTER OF OUR STORY

UNITY ISN'T OPTIONAL

April 7, 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 12:22-37 (refer also to Mark 3:20-35).

1. What does it look like for a kingdom to be divided against itself?
2. In all the Old Testament, only David was able to exorcise a demon (1 Samuel 16: 14-23). Jesus came representing the same power (see vs. 22-23). Jesus was ushering in the kingdom of God in its fullest sense! What does this passage in Matthew teach you about the kingdom of God?
3. If it's true that the kingdom of God has come, empowered by the Holy Spirit, then vs. 30-32 follow as an inevitable conclusion. How were the Pharisees working against the kingdom of God?
4. What does it look like to live for the kingdom of God?
5. Where else in Scripture do you see unity and disunity?
6. Describe a time you felt divided in your heart toward God.
7. What's the main accusation Jesus makes against the Pharisees (vs. 33-37)?
8. What do your words reveal about the motives and attitude of your heart? Think of an example, and ask God what He wants you to learn about yourself.
9. What's a simple way to summarize this passage?
10. Is there a key verse in this passage you want to remember?
11. How does this parable impact your story?
12. Pause and ask God what He wants to say to you.

*Surely the most deeply-rooted need of
the human soul, its purest aspiration, is
for the closest possible union with God.*

- Albertus Magnus

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** to those who remain blind or are unwilling to listen and learn.

AS YOU SEEK TO UNDERSTAND...

Consider the context. Who was Jesus talking to? 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.