

"SECRETS OF THE KINGDOM" (The Parables of Jesus)

WEST OLIVE CHURCH OF CHRIST – Wednesday PM Bible Class – Rich Howell

C-HOW TO STUDY JESUS' PARABLES

INTRO: Bible passages that use figures of speech or symbols are fertile ground for misinterpretation and misapplication. People READ IN to the parables many fanciful ideas and wishful thinking. Our goal, however, should be to DRAW OUT of each parable the very message Jesus BREATHED IN. We want to know exactly what Jesus said, what He meant and what it means to us today. We want to handle these parables correctly (2 Tim 2:15), so we can respond to them correctly. Here are some helpful hints for studying Jesus' parables.

1. A FEW THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT PARABLES:

- a. The CLOSER you are to the Lord, the BETTER you'll understand the parables! (Matthew 13:10-12; Mark 4:11; John 15:12-15; Psalm 25:14)
- b. The main parables are found in Matthew, MARK & LUKE.
- c. Some parables are found in more than one Gospel.
- d. An element that is interpreted as ONE thing in one parable, does not necessarily mean the SAME thing in a different parable.
- e. Be careful not to over-EMPHASIZE minor elements of a parable as this may violate the "core message" and distort the truth of Jesus. (In other words, don't major in minors or minor in majors!)
- f. Avoid using non-interpreted, figurative speech from a parable to ESTABLISH doctrines or practices that are not ESTABLISHED elsewhere in Scripture.
- g. Don't over-ANALYZE a parable. Remember, those who understood Jesus' message were common, less educated folk, while the scholars of the day completely missed Jesus' simple, powerful messages! (Mat 11:25-28)

2. FIND THE "CORE MESSAGE"

In most of the parables, Jesus reveals ONE main "secret of the Kingdom". Our study of parables should be like "Journey to the Center of the Earth". We may encounter many fascinating things on the way down, but let's not stop short of the objective - getting to the very "core message" of the parable. In other words, keep your EYE on the BALL!

3. A STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH: What follows is a method for getting to the heart of a parable. Try it yourself on a parable of your choosing!

ONE: DETERMINE THE _____: The audience? The occasion? The circumstances? The place? Is there a stated reason for the parable? Read the scriptures before and after the parable, and if found in other gospels, read those accounts too.

TWO: OBSERVE THE _____: We can't know what it means until we really know what it says. Be an observant, objective reader - don't let anything get by you!

THREE: GET THE _____: Parables are visual, so make sure you visualize the whole scenario before getting into the details of the story.

FOUR: _____ THE PARABLE: Identify each visual, verbal or conceptual element of the parable - each "piece of the puzzle". Write these down IN SEQUENTIAL ORDER. If you don't know exactly what a word or object or picture means, look it up in a Bible dictionary or Bible study app. (If you don't get the picture, you won't get the point!)

FIVE: _____ EACH ELEMENT: What does each element refer to? (If applicable) Start by using any interpretive information given in the parable itself. Some elements, by their very nature, will be easy to identify, while others will be more challenging.

SIX: _____ THE "CORE MESSAGE": Jesus sometimes states the "core message;" sometimes He doesn't. Sometimes, it's obvious and sometimes you have to spend a lot of time with it before it yields its "jewel" (2 Tim 2:7) In some cases, the "core message" is more like a "punch-line" than a "moral to the story".

SEVEN: _____ APPLICATIONS: Start with any application Jesus Himself gives (commandments are a common application). If not, suggest ways we might apply the parable, consistent with the "core message".

And, whenever you're reading and studying any part of God's Word, remember to always _____ on _____ (Matthew 7:7-8; Proverbs 2:6; James 1:2-3) and _____ on _____! (2 Timothy 2:7; Joshua 1:7-9)!

ON YOUR OWN: Do your very own parable analysis of Jesus' parable of the "Weeds & the Wheat" in Matthew 13:24-30 & 36-43. If that seems too hard, try the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37. Want a real challenge? Try the Growing Grain in Mark 4:26-29!

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B-PARABLE ORGANIZER – MASTER LIST

	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE
KINGDOM GROWTH PARABLES			
The Sower	13:3-8,18-23	4:3-8,14-20	8:5-8,11-15
The Wheat & the Weeds	13:24-30,36-43		
The Net	13:47-50		
The Mustard Seed	13:31-32	4:30-32	13:18-19
The Yeast	13:33		13:20-21
The Growing Grain		4:26-29	
The Unfruitful Fig Tree			13:6-9
KINGDOM VALUE PARABLES			
Salt & Light*	5:14-16		
The Lamp*		4:21-23	8:16; 11:33-36
Hidden Treasure	13:44		
Pearl of Great Value	13:45-46		
The Householder	13:52		
The Lost Sheep	18:11-14		15:4-7
The Lost Coin			15:8-10
The Lost Son (Prodogal)			15:11-32
The Moneylender			7:40-43
The Rich Fool			12:16-21
The Great Banquet			14:16-24
Counting the Cost			14:25-33
The Dishonest Steward (Manager)			16:1-13
The Rich Man & Lazarus*			16:19-31
The Talents	25:14-30		
KINGDOM AUTHORITY PARABLES			
Wise & Foolish Builders*	7:24-27		6:46-49
Two Sons	21:28-32		
Wicked Tenants	21:33-44	12:1-11	20:9-18
Wedding Banquet	22:2-14		
The Minas (Pounds)			19:11-27

	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE
KINGDOM CHARACTER PARABLES			
New Patch/New Wine*	9:16-17	2:21-22	5:36-38
The Unmerciful Servant	18:23-24		
The Vineyard Workers	20:1-16		
The Good Samaritan			10:25-37
A Friend at Midnight			11:5-8
Seating Arrangements			14:7-11
Humble Hospitality			14:12-14
Unworthy Servants*			17:7-10
The Persistent Widow			18:1-8
Two Men Praying			18:9-14
Faithful & Wise Servant	24:45-51		12:42-48
Watchful Servants*		13:32-37	12:35-40
Ten Bridesmaids	25:1-13		
The Sheep & the Goats*	25:31-46		

* Not always classified as a "parable"