




DOWN TO EARTH



**HOW JESUS' STORIES
CAN CHANGE YOUR
EVERYDAY LIFE**

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APPENDIX

The Parables of Jesus

PEOPLE DEBATE EXACTLY how many parables Jesus told. How you define a parable will depend on how many you end up with on your list. Here is a list of Jesus' twenty-nine parables with references from the Bible so you can consider even more of these "riddles thrown alongside" your life.

The Barren Fig Tree	Luke 13:6-9
The Budding Fig Tree	Matthew 24:32-35; Mark 13:28-31; Luke 21:29-33
The Dishonest Manager	Luke 16:1-9
The Friend at Night	Luke 11:5-8
The Good Samaritan	Luke 10:29-37
The Hidden Treasure	Matthew 13:44
The Lost Coin	Luke 15:8-10
The Lost Sheep	Matthew 18:10-14; Luke 15:3-7
The Mustard Seed	Matthew 13:31-32; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-19

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The Net	Matthew 13:47-50
The Pearl of Great Value	Matthew 13:45-46
The Persistent Widow	Luke 18:1-8
The Pharisee and the Tax Collector	Luke 18:9-14
The Prodigal Son	Luke 15:11-32
The Rich Fool	Luke 12:16-21
The Rich Man and Lazarus	Luke 16:19-31
The Sheep and Goats	Matthew 25:31-46
The Sower	Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23; Mark 4:1-9, 13-20; Luke 8:4-8, 11-15
The Talents	Matthew 25:14-30; Luke 19:11-27
The Ten Bridesmaids	Matthew 25:1-13
The Tenants	Matthew 21:33-44; Mark 12:1-11; Luke 20:9-18
The Two Debtors	Luke 7:36-50
The Two Sons	Matthew 21:28-32
The Unforgiving Servant	Matthew 18:23-35
The Unjust Judge	Luke 18:1-8
The Great Banquet	Matthew 22:1-14; Luke 14:16-24
The Wedding Feast	Luke 14:7-14
The Weeds	Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43; Mark 4:26-29
The Yeast	Matthew 13:33; Luke 13:20-21

QUESTIONS FOR SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSION AND PERSONAL REFLECTION

CHAPTER 1: JESUS' MOST MISUNDERSTOOD PARABLES

1. Why do you think we tend to view ourselves as the merchant or the man in these stories rather than the pearl or the treasure?
2. Do you think of God's love as something you need to earn or as something God has already given to you apart from anything you have done? Why?
3. Of the four stages of spiritual development outlined by Bernard of Clairvaux, where do you see yourself currently? Why?

CHAPTER 2: A FRESH CHANCE FOR A FRESH START

1. Which of the two sons do you most relate to in this parable? Why?
2. What fresh choice is God inviting you to make as an act of getting in the wheelbarrow or going to the vineyard? Will you do it?

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3. Who do you know who is still beating themselves up for pasts that are no longer true of them? What step can you take to share this parable of hope with them?

CHAPTER 3: THE STARTLING FORGIVENESS OF GOD

1. Have you asked for and experienced God's forgiveness for the debt you owe him for your sins? Why or why not?
2. If so, has that changed how you interact with others? Why or why not? How?
3. As a result of hearing this story, is there anyone God brings to mind that you are being invited to forgive in light of being forgiven?

CHAPTER 4: THE SECRET TO A STRONGER PRAYER LIFE

1. How does it change what Jesus is saying when you see that he is contrasting, not comparing, God with the neighbor?
2. The pagans viewed their gods as indifferent, bothered, or worn down by humans' disturbing prayer. Jesus came to give the true view that God is a loving, good, and generous Father, ready and willing to hear our prayers. Prior to hearing this parable, would you say your prayers reflected more of the pagan view of god or Jesus' view of God? Why?
3. What is one prayer request you have that you'd like the group to pray for this week? Or if doing this alone, what is something you would like to speak to God about, trusting that he will hear you? Go ahead and pray about that now.

QUESTIONS FOR SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSION & PERSONAL REFLECTION

4. Jesus concludes this parable by saying that we can even ask God the Father to give us his Holy Spirit. Have you ever simply taken Jesus at his word and asked to be given the Holy Spirit? If not, why not? I invite you to pray that simple prayer now, trusting in God's willingness to hear and respond to your request.

CHAPTER 5: MAXIMIZING WHAT YOU'VE BEEN GIVEN

1. What God-given talents do you believe (or have others told you) you have?
2. How does this parable make you feel when it comes to using the talents you've been given? Excited to jump in or afraid to make a mistake? Why?
3. In the parable, the faithful servants begin right away. What is something you can immediately do with the talents God has delegated to you for the sake of God's Kingdom and the good of others? Will you actually now go do it? Why or why not?

CHAPTER 6: THE SUREFIRE WAY TO ENSURE YOUR UNHAPPINESS

1. On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being "none" and 10 being "a lot"), how much gratitude marks your everyday life? Why did you select that number?
2. Comparison is the thief of gratitude and joy. Is there anywhere in your life that you tend to compare yourself or your situation to others? How can you begin to change that pattern?

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3. What is one thing you can do to limit the amount of negativity that comes your way, whether through the news, social media, or a chronically pessimistic person in your life?
4. Have you ever considered all the ways that life has been unfair in your favor? Take a moment to make a list of those ways.

CHAPTER 7: DOING FIRST WHAT MATTERS MOST

1. What are some regrets you have heard from people? What are some regrets you have realized about your own life?
2. What are some ways that God can redeem a person's past regrets?
3. How might Jesus' telling us this parable now be considered an act of grace?
4. What is God bringing to mind for you to do now so you do not regret *not* doing it later?

CHAPTER 8: THE JOY OF SPENDING SOMEONE ELSE'S MONEY

1. What is the most challenging part of this parable for you? Why?
2. Jesus did not warn people not to have money, but he did tell us not to serve money. What is the difference? As you take an honest look at your life, do you serve money?
3. What do you make of the owner commending the shrewd manager? Does that bother you or inspire you?

QUESTIONS FOR SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSION & PERSONAL REFLECTION

4. What is one thing you can do with the resources God has assigned to you, based on the message of this parable? Will you do it?

CHAPTER 9: WHY EVIL EXISTS NOW BUT WON'T FOREVER

1. Do you find comfort in the doctrine of divine judgment of evil? Why or why not?
2. What evil are you facing that you need to entrust to God's justice?
3. What evil do you need to pray for protection and deliverance from?
4. As you read this parable, does God bring to mind any evil that you are involved with that he is now calling you to stop and turn away from? If so, do that now.

CHAPTER 10: RISING HOPE IN TROUBLED TIMES

1. On a scale of 1 to 10 (with 1 being low and 10 being high), how hopeful of a person are you? What is one thing you can do to increase the amount of hope you experience each day?
2. How does having hope for the future affect your reality now?
3. Jesus told parables to encourage his listeners. Who is one person God may be asking you to encourage this week with a message of hope rooted in these parables?

CHAPTER 11: HOW TO BE A HERO

1. Jesus made a Samaritan the hero of the story that he told a group of people who generally hated Samaritans. Why

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do you think he did that? How would you respond if Jesus exchanged the word *Samaritan* for any group that you are apt to dislike?

2. When it comes to loving your neighbor, do you find fear, time pressures, or skepticism to be your biggest obstacle to overcome? Why?
3. What is one thing you can do to love your neighbor through some tangible act? Will you do it?

CHAPTER 12: WELCOME HOME!

1. Which character do you most identify with in Jesus' parable? Why?
2. How has your view of God as the Father been influenced by your own father, stepfather, or other father figure?
3. What is God asking you to do or change as a result of this parable?
4. What is one thing you can do to be active, present, and merciful in the life of someone you love this week to reflect God's heart toward him or her?

CHAPTER 13: THE CREATIVE POTENTIAL OF A SOFT, DEEP, UNCLUTTERED HEART

1. Which of these four soils do you most relate to? Why?
2. Based on the soil that you selected, what do you think God is inviting you to pray about and do as a result of reading this parable?

QUESTIONS FOR SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSION & PERSONAL REFLECTION

3. God's Word is a seed to be planted in our hearts. What is one verse from the Bible that you are willing to memorize as a way of welcoming it into your heart? If you need some help thinking of one, try John 3:16, Ephesians 2:8-10, or Philippians 4:6.
4. Those who follow Christ are called to be sowers of God's Word. Who is God now prompting you to share his Word with? Will you do it?

CONCLUSION: A WINDOW, A MIRROR, AND AN INVITATION

1. Which of the fifteen parables did God most use to speak to you? Why?
2. What did you learn through these parables that surprised you the most when you think about the Kingdom of God? Why?
3. Of the list of Jesus' twenty-nine parables, which one are you most interested to read next? Why?

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