

JESUS AT THE CENTER OF OUR STORY

THE GIFT OF PARENTING (FAITHFUL STEWARDSHIP)

May 12, 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 25:14-30.

Insight: The meaning of this parable extends far beyond financial stewardship. God has given each of us a wide variety of gifts (skills, abilities, family connections, social positions, education, experiences and more). He calls us to faithfully steward these gifts while we await Jesus' return.

1. Like the three servants, we've all been given different gifts in varying amounts. Make a list of gifts God has given you. How can you use (manage, view, steward) those gifts in ways that honor God and build His kingdom?
2. What do you think motivated the first two servants to be faithful with what they'd been given?
3. Why did the third servant bury his treasure? In what ways can you relate to him?
4. Why was the master angry with the third servant?
5. Do you think the master was being fair? Why or why not?
6. If you've been entrusted with children, how have you treasured them?
7. How can you help your children grow in faith like the servants grew their master's money?

Insight: In Bible times, going to a far country could mean a trip of up to one or two years. When a person was going to be gone that long, he would entrust his servants with his personal and business matters. How the servants managed their master's assets while he was away revealed the character of his servants.

8. The master was gone for a long time (vs. 19). How can you be a more faithful steward as you await Jesus' return?
9. How can you see stewardship (including parenting) as a gift rather than an obligation?
10. Pause and ask God what He wants to say to you.

When a man becomes a Christian, he becomes industrious, trustworthy and prosperous.

John Wesley

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.