

JESUS' FAVORITE STORIES

THE PARABLES OF JESUS



Dear Community Group Leaders,

Thank you so much for opening your homes, hearts and lives to minister to the precious people of Destiny Church! More than ever, I believe we are **partners** together in the Grace of God. I thank God for you every day and feel privileged to serve along side of you in Jesus' Church on Jesus' Mission.

I wanted to highlight several resources that have been helpful for me in my study of Jesus' parables. First, I want to give honor where it is due. Some of the material in this discussion guide and devotional has been adapted from these resources. Secondly, I wanted to recommend them to you as I believe they will bless you in your continued studies.

- The NIV Application Commentary
- ESV Study Bible
- Stories with Intent (Klyne R. Snodgrass)
- Parables: The Mysteries of God's Kingdom Revealed Through the Stories Jesus Told (John MacArthur)
- The Parables of Jesus (James Montgomery Boice)
- The Parables of Our Lord (Marcus Dods)

I also want to thank the members of the Destiny Research Team: Josiah Hodgett, Stephanie Escobedo and Benjamin Gongora. It is through their faithful study and research that this discussion guide was produced. On the next page there is a brief bio on each of them.

I couldn't be more excited about this series and how God is going to use it to help us bear good fruit in His Kingdom for His glory! Thanks for coming on this journey.

In Christ,



Pastor Matt Bell

About The Authors



MATT BELL is the Lead Pastor of Destiny Church in San Antonio, TX. He studied at International Bible College then earned an AA degree in communications. He completed his Biblical studies with a BA from Texas University of Theology.

He enjoys teaching the Bible and spending time with his wife Heather and their four children.



JOSIAH HODGETT is a bi-vocational minister serving in Shell Lake, WI. He serves as a volunteer pastor at Shell Lake Full Gospel Church and manages the home office of the International Ministerial Association (IMA). Vocationally, Josiah is a Data & Technology Specialist for the Shell Lake Public School System.

Josiah is married to Adelle (Fredrickson) Hodgett, and they have three girls - Aria (4), Adalynn (2) and Amelia who was born in July.



STEPHANIE ESCOBEDO is a former member of Destiny Church in San Antonio, TX. She graduated from Kings Bible Institute (KBI) in 2017. She has a BA in Psychology and completed her Master of Business Administration in March of 2018.

She currently resides in Monterey, CA where she works full time and is an active member of Calvary Chapel.

She spends her free time outside enjoying the mountains and the ocean.



Additional collaboration and supplemental content provided by **BENJAMIN GONGORA**. Benjamin has a BA in Criminal Justice from Campbell University and graduated Kings Bible Institute (KBI) in 2015.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

JESUS' FAVORITE STORIES

Week of February 17, 2019

The Sower, the Seed, and the Soil

Matthew 13:1-23

1. Read Matthew 13:1-23

2. What do you think about Jesus' explanation for why He teaches in parables? Do you find it surprising, shocking or a little disturbing? How does this help shape our understanding of Jesus?
 - Jesus' explanation offends our sensibilities. The idea that Jesus would hide the truth from someone because of their sin of unbelief, seems too harsh or severe. What it shows us is that we don't truly understand how severe the sin of unbelief and rejecting Christ is. This shows us how seriously God takes sin. We too should seek to root up all unbelief in our own hearts.
3. From Jesus' explanation of the parable, what is the seed and who is the sower?
 - The seed being sown is the Word of God
 - The sower is anyone who shares the Word of God.
4. In this parable, what has the power to produce the harvest?
 - The power (life) is in the seed, the Word of God.
5. Have you ever experienced a time when you shared God's Word, but it did not produce a harvest? Instead, it fell to the wayside, fell on a stony place, or fell among thorns? How can we keep our hearts from discouragement when the seed isn't sown into the good ground?
 - Galatians 6:9 says "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."
 - We need to remind ourselves that the power is in the seed, God's Word. The results are not up to the one who sows. We must faithfully share God's Word, knowing that it does have the power to change lives.
6. The good soil represents true believers who have truly received God's Word in faith. Additionally, in verse 8, we see that there were different amounts of harvest. Why do you think that is?
7. What kind of harvest is God producing in your life? What are some things you can do to increase the fruitfulness of God's word in your life?
 - We need to manage our hearts well and not let "weeds grow up in our garden" that can choke out God's Word in our lives.
 - These weeds can be things we consider insignificant, but if left unchecked, they will overgrow and ruin what God wants to do through our lives.

JESUS' FAVORITE STORIES

Week of February 24, 2019

The Hidden Treasure

Matthew 13:44-46

1. Read Matthew 13:44-46

- This parable is teaching that the kingdom of heaven is more valuable than anything else we can have, and a person must be willing to give up everything to obtain it.
- 2. Have you ever found a really great deal on a purchase you were making? What was that experience like? How did it make you feel?
- 3. This parable **does not** suggest that we can earn our salvation. The Bible is very clear, salvation is a free gift of God's grace that we receive through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9). However, **it is** teaching that following Jesus will come at a cost. Has following Jesus ever cost you something?

***Matthew 16:24-26** - 24 Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 25 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. 26 For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?"*

- 4. What does it mean to deny yourself and take up your cross?
- 5. What are some other things that we have to give up to follow Jesus?
 - The #1 thing we give up when we decide to follow Jesus is sin. But in the course of a lifetime following Christ, there are many more things that may be required. Examples are relationships, career, comfort, financial security, getting our own way. Following Jesus as a lifestyle requires constant self-sacrifice.
 - We must realize that we are no longer our own. We have been bought with a price. Jesus is not only our savior. He is also our lord. (1 Corinthians 6:20)
- 6. In both parables, why were both people so eager to give up everything they had to purchase what they had found?
 - They realized the supreme value of what they had found. They saw clearly that it was worth more than every possession they had.
- 7. What was the emotional response of the man who found the treasure in the field?
 - He was filled with joy.
- 8. Why was he so happy?
 - He had gotten an incredible deal! The deal of his life! We need to realize that whatever we have to give up to follow Jesus, it's worth it. There is no price to pay that is too high. We have found the deal of a lifetime!

JESUS' FAVORITE STORIES

Week of March 3, 2019

The Prodigal Sons

Luke 15:11-32

1. Read Luke 15:11-32

- This whole chapter is about valuable things that are lost. First a lost sheep, then a lost coin, and finally a lost son. In the last parable, we see the love of God the Father, represented in the love of the earthly father.
- 2. Of all the events in this parable, which do you find the most intriguing or surprising?
- 3. Which of the two brothers would you most identify with? The free spirited younger brother, or the rule keeping older brother?
- 4. What does this parable teach us about God's love for lost people?
- 5. How can having a greater understanding of God's love help us when we're ministering to those who are lost?
- 6. What caused the transformation in the life of the younger brother? What produced the change in him? Have you had a similar experience?
- 7. Why do you think the older brother was so upset?
- 8. The older brother was very upset when the father choose to bless the younger brother. Have you ever been upset when someone you thought was undeserving received a blessing from God?
- 9. What does the older brother need to do to have his relationship restored with the father?
 - Just as the younger brother needed to return to his father in humility, repenting of his sin, so also the older brother must humble himself and repent of his attitude.
 - Repentance, humility, and faith are the keys to a restored relationship with God.

JESUS' FAVORITE STORIES

Week of March 10, 2019

The Workers in the Vineyard

Matthew 20:1-16

1. Read Matthew 20:1-16

- This is a parable about salvation. Jesus is teaching His disciples that they should not look down upon those who become Christians later in life. Jesus **IS NOT** teaching that we earn our salvation. Even those who worked in the field all day received considerably more than the standard wages for that type of work. The master was being gracious with all the workers.
- 2. Jesus started and ended the story with the phrase, “Many who are now first will be last, and the last first.” How is this idea illustrated in this story?
- 3. When you hear this story, what is your reaction? Do you think it was wrong of the master to give all the workers equal pay?
- 4. Imagine you were one of the early risers. How would you feel at first when the latecomers were given an equal wage?
- 5. Have you ever felt jealous about how the Lord reward someone else?
- 6. Would this be a practical way to run a business every day?
 - Absolutely not! This parable does not teach lessons about running a profitable business. This parable teaches us about God’s Kingdom and how He is gives out unmerited favor (grace) to all who come to Him in faith.
- 7. Who do you identify with in the story - the early risers? the late comers? Why?
- 8. What was the mistake that the first group of workers made? How can we avoid falling into the same trap?
 - They should have been grateful. Instead they compared themselves to the other workers. Comparison is a trap of the enemy. The Bible teaches us to not compare ourselves to others (Galatians 6:4).
- 9. How can comparing ourselves to others rob us of our joy?
- 10. What do you think Jesus’ intent was in telling this parable?
 - Jesus’ 12 disciples were always jockeying for position. They were very preoccupied with who was the “greatest” among themselves. Jesus knew that this attitude must change for the church to be successful. He told this parable to show that those who would come to faith later, share in the same rewards as those who had joined Jesus early on.
- 11. How can you put this this truth into practice your life?

JESUS' FAVORITE STORIES

Week of March 17, 2019

The Wedding Feast

Matthew 22:1-14

1. Read Matthew 22:1-14

- This is a parable about the Jewish people rejecting their Messiah, Jesus. Jesus is teaching that salvation will be offered to both Jew and Gentile.
2. It may be helpful to begin the discussion with who each of the characters represent.
- The king - **God the Father**
 - The son for whom the banquet is thrown - **Jesus, Son of God**
 - The servants who invite the guests - **Old Testament Prophets & New Testament Preachers**
 - The first invitees (vss. 1-4) - **The Jewish People**
 - The city burned by the King's soldiers - **Jerusalem, destroyed in 70 AD**
 - The second set of invitees - **Gentiles**
 - The guest without a wedding garment - **Those who would try to enter on their own righteousness. The wedding garment speaks of being clothed in Christ's righteousness.**
3. Jesus begins by likening the Kingdom of Heaven to a wedding banquet. What does that tell us about the Kingdom of Heaven?
4. The king responds to the rejection of his invitations in two ways (verses 7-10). What are they? What do these responses teach us about God?
- First, that God is patient and merciful.
2 Peter 3:9 - The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.
 - Second, that God is a God of justice. There will come a day where all who reject Jesus, will be judged by God for their sin.
5. What do you make of the king's instructions to his servants in verse 9: "Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find"? If the wedding represents God's kingdom, what kind of people will be part of God's kingdom according to this this verse?
6. What is the "darkness, where there will be weeping and the gnashing of teeth"? (verse 13). What's implied by "weeping"? By "gnashing of teeth"?
- This is speaking of Hell. God's justice and judgement against those who refuse to repent and have faith in Christ.
7. What do you think Jesus wanted to accomplish by telling this parable?
8. How are you going to respond to this truth? Will you reject Jesus, or receive him as savior and Lord?

JESUS' FAVORITE STORIES

Week of March 24, 2019

The Pharisee and the Tax Collector

Luke 18:9-14

1. Read Luke 18:9-14

- This is a parable about two different ways to approach God: 1) On the basis of your good works or deeds; 2) On the basis of repentance and faith.
2. Who do you think Jesus had in mind when he taught this parable?
 3. Why do people who trust in themselves tend to treat others poorly?
 4. Do you think that self-righteousness is as much a problem today as it was in Jesus' day? Why or why not?
 5. Why is pride and self-righteousness so destructive to our relationship with God and our relationships with other?
 6. What stands out to you about the tax collector's prayer?
 7. How can we grow in righteousness, yet guard ourselves from becoming self-righteous?
 8. In James 4:10 we are instructed to "humble ourselves." What are some ways that you can humble yourself?

JESUS' FAVORITE STORIES

Week of March 31, 2019

Parable of the 10 Virgins

Matthew 25:1-13

1. Read Matthew 25:1-13

- This is a parable about the second coming of Christ. It teaches that there will be two groups of people when Jesus returns: those who are ready and those who are not.
 - In this parable the bridegroom represents Jesus. His delay is the time period between his first and second coming. Those who had oil represent those who are true believers and remain faithful to the Lord. The wedding feast represents Heaven.
2. The parable says that the bridegroom was delayed and during the delay the virgins became drowsy and slept. Are you looking forward to the return of Christ? How often do you think about His return?
3. Why did those who had oil not share their oil with the others? What does this teach us about salvation?
- The oil represents the eternal life we have in Christ. It's not that they wouldn't share their oil, it's that they couldn't. The life of Christ is not transferrable. I will not make it into heaven based on someone else's faith, salvation, or relationship with God. Each person must have their own, personal faith and relationship with Jesus.
4. What happened to those who were not ready when the bridegroom arrived? What does this tell us about what it will be like when Jesus returns?
5. In verse 2, what words does Jesus use to describe the 10 virgins?
6. What does mean that they all fell asleep?
- Many Christians today have put their walk with the Lord on cruise control. Where once they had a passion that was white hot, now they are complacent.
7. What can we do to get ready (or stay ready) for Christ's return?

JESUS' FAVORITE STORIES

Week of April 7, 2019

The Rich Fool

Luke 12:13-21

1. **Read Luke 12:13-21**

2. After reading this parable, what is it that immediately captures your thoughts or attention?

3. God calls the rich man a fool. What was it that the rich man did that made him a fool?

4. What was wrong about the rich man's attitude?
 - The rich man thought he was responsible for his prosperity. He failed to realize it was God who had blessed him.

5. Is it possible for Christians today to fall into the same trap as the rich fool?

6. What can we do to safeguard ourselves from foolish thinking about money and possessions?

7. What does this parable teach us about putting our hope in our wealth or possessions?

8. What wisdom can we learn from this parable about how we are to spend our money?

9. What does it mean to be rich toward God?

JESUS' FAVORITE STORIES

Week of April 7, 2019

The Lamp

Matthew 5:14-16

1. Read Matthew 5:14-16

- Supplemental Scriptures used in sermon: John 1:4-5, 1:9-13, 3:19-21, 8:12, 9:5.
2. Jesus said that we as Christians are to be lights in the world. Have you ever thought of yourself as a light?
 3. Through what do we shine the light of Jesus?
 - Through our words and our actions.
 4. Most people find it easier to shine through one or the other, through their words or actions. What do you find it easier to do, show practical acts of kindness and love, or share the gospel message with your words?
 5. Why is it important that we do both?
 - First, because this is the example that Jesus gave us. He not only loved people practically, but He spoke the truth in love, calling people to repent of their sins. If we are Christ followers, we must be willing to do the same.
 6. What would be the result if we only performed acts of mercy and kindness, but never shared the gospel message with our words?
 - No one would ever be saved. (See Romans 1:16 & 10:17)
 7. What would be the result if we only preached the Gospel, but never demonstrated God's love in a tangible way?
 - We would undermine the Gospel by our lifestyle. We must not only tell people God loves them. We must show people God's sacrificial love.
 8. Jesus said the end result of us shining His light would be that God is glorified. How do we make sure that God gets the glory and not us?

JESUS' FAVORITE STORIES

Week of April 28, 2019

The Good Samaritan

Luke 10:25-37

1. Read Luke 10:25-37

- Supplemental Scriptures used in sermon: John 3:16, 11:25-26, 4:14, 5:24, Galatians 3:16, Romans 3:30
2. Jesus was a famous teacher. Many people asked him questions. Suppose you met a famous teacher like Jesus and could ask him one question. What would the question be?
 3. What was wrong with the lawyer's questions of Jesus?
 - We see that he was not genuine, but was only wanting to test Jesus.
 4. What does it mean in verse 29 when it says the lawyer was trying to "justify himself"? What are some ways that we might be guilty of doing the same thing?
 5. Why do you think the two Jews walked away from the injured man?
 6. Is it more difficult to help some people than others? What do you think would help us to be more comfortable helping those we may feel uncomfortable with?
 7. The Samaritan "saw the man in need." What are some reasons we don't see others needs? How can we be more sensitive to seeing what others need?
 8. What do you think the lawyer learned from this encounter with Jesus? What have you learned from this parable

JESUS' FAVORITE STORIES

Week of May 5, 2019

The Faithful & Unfaithful

Matthew 25:14-30

1. Read Matthew 25:14-30

- Supplemental Scriptures used in sermon: 1 Corinthians 4:2, 6:19-20
2. Why has God entrusted us with gifts and talents? How are we to use them?
3. In this parable, there was one servant who buried his talent. Have you ever done that? If so, why?
4. Why does God entrust some with more and others with less?
5. What is the master returning a picture of?
 - It is a picture of the return of Christ.
6. What will happen when Christ returns? What will he expect to find from His people?
7. What kind of account will we give to God with the talents He has given us?

JESUS' FAVORITE STORIES

Week of May 12, 2019

The Merciless Servant

Matthew 18:21-35

1. Read Matthew 18:21-35

- Supplemental Scriptures used in sermon: Ephesians 4:32, Matthew 6:14-15.
2. Why do you think Jesus told this story to Peter? What did he want to happen in Peter's life?
 3. If this story represents God's kingdom, it implies that Jesus believed people owe a great debt to God that he is willing to forgive. What debt would people owe to God that would need forgiveness?
 4. Based on what you learned from this story, would you say God's forgiveness of us is limited or unlimited? Conditional or unconditional?
 5. How about our forgiveness of others?
 6. What are the alternatives practiced by people who do not forgive?
 7. Why do you think Jesus wants us to forgive others for the wrongs they have done for us?
 8. What effects does not practicing forgiveness have on our lives?

JESUS' FAVORITE STORIES

Week of May 19, 2019

The Return of the King

Luke 12:35-40

1. Read Luke 12:35-40

- Supplemental Scriptures used in sermon: 2 Peter 3:1-4, 8-13
2. What is the main point that Jesus is communicating with this parable?
- That He is returning and we must be ready.
3. When does Jesus say he will be returning?
- He doesn't say when, only that it will catch many off guard and take many by surprise. (Luke 12:40)
4. Do you think many people today are anticipating Christ's imminent return?
- Why or why not?
5. Does the return of Jesus excite you or scare you?

6. Read 2 Peter 3:1-4, 8-13

7. In the passage in 2 Peter 3, what explanation is given for Jesus delaying His return? (2 Peter 3:9)
8. In verse 11, Peter asks a question. How would you answer that question? What is he saying by asking this question?
9. Jesus' main point is that we need to be ready for His return. What is the only way to be ready?
- The only way to truly be ready for the Christ's return is to have our sins forgiven through repentance and faith in Him. The Bible says today is the day of salvation. This is not something that we can afford to put off until tomorrow, as we do not know what tomorrow brings.
 - For those of us who have had our sins forgiven through faith in Christ, part of how we stay ready is to continue to share our faith and tell people about Jesus' soon return.



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