



Jesus Teaches in Parables

9

Key Theme

- Jesus teaches His disciples.

Key Passages

- Matthew 13:1–23, 22:1–14

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Explain why Jesus taught in parables.
- Describe the meaning of various parables.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

Students will review the memory verse by completing the Memory Verse Review Sheet.

- Write on the board, “Why did Jesus teach using parables?”
- Print one Memory Verse Review Sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.



Studying God's Word

Jesus taught through parables in order to separate the people who loved Him and wanted the truth from the people who really didn't care about Him or what He had to say. Today you will talk about two of Jesus's parables—the parable of the sower and the parable of the good shepherd.

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.



Activity: Unpacking Parables

Students will look at the basic principles of understanding a parable.

- Student Guides
- Pencils



Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages along with this background.

One of the hallmarks of the teaching of Jesus was His use of parables. A parable is a fable or allegory to illustrate a truth or lesson. It is a story or narrative drawn from nature or human circumstances from which spiritual lessons can be made by comparison. Or to put it simply, a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. Parables help the listener to discover the deeper meaning and underlying truth of the reality being portrayed.

Depending on which ones you include, between 35 and 45 different parables of Jesus are recorded in the Gospels. Some of these were longer stories, including such popular ones as the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37), the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–32), and the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14–30). Other parables of Jesus were short, pithy statements, such as, “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened” (Matthew 13:33).

But why did Jesus teach in parables? There are two reasons given in the Bible: to conceal and to reveal.

In the Gospel of Matthew Jesus provided an answer when asked about His use of parables:

And the disciples came and said to Him, “Why do You speak to them in parables?”

He answered and said to them, “Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says:

‘Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive; For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.’

But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.” (Matthew 13:10–16)

Jesus said that He taught in parables to conceal the truth from certain people, and to reveal it to others. By resorting to parables, Jesus effectively separated the truth-seekers from the mere curious. Those seeking the truth would say, “Explain to us the parable . . .” (Matthew 13:36), while the merely curious could easily be dismissed. They would not ask and were unwilling to receive Jesus’s message. The truths were heard by unbelievers, but the meaning was hidden because they did not want to hear.

In this way, Jesus’s use of parables was a form of divine judgment. As Jesus explained in the passage above, “For whoever has [a good heart, listening ears], to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have [a good heart, listening ears], even what he has will be taken away from him” (Matthew 13:12). Then Jesus quoted from Isaiah 6:9–10 and explained that because the people’s hearts had become dull and because they had closed their ears and eyes, God was going to speak to them in a way that they would not understand. So Jesus taught them in parables. In a way only God could contrive, the very things which were useful to reveal and make clear the truths about the kingdom to those willing to hear were also used to conceal truths about the kingdom from those who would not believe.

About the middle of His ministry, after He had begun to receive much opposition from the religious leaders and had been accused of blasphemy, Jesus started teaching the crowds almost exclusively in parables. Mark tells us that He did not speak to them without a parable and that when He was alone with His disciples, He would explain the meaning of His teachings (Mark 4:33–34). However, those who had persisted in rejecting His message were left in their spiritual blindness. Although they heard the truths of the kingdom of God, they could not understand them; they were unwilling to hear. The Apostle Paul later described those blinded to the truth as “always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Timothy 3:7). They would never hear or understand the words of Jesus (Matthew 13:13). But His disciples (except for Judas Iscariot) accepted His truth and

so were given more to know, understand, and believe (Matthew 13:12).

The parables of Jesus contain great volumes of truth in very few words. The images Christ presents through them are not easily forgotten. And He has promised that for those with eyes to see and ears to hear, His truths will be revealed (Matthew 13:16).

HISTORICAL/APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND¹

When we read parables, we must be careful how we interpret their meaning. Sometimes, as in the Parable of the Sower, Jesus Himself provides the explanation (Matthew 13:18–22). However, most of the time, the hearers (and us) are left to discern the meaning.

A parable is really an extended metaphor, or an allegory. In fact, the Bible often uses allegory as a literary device. In the Old Testament God speaks of His people Israel using images of a vineyard (Isaiah 5:6–7) and a flock of sheep (Ezekiel 34). Jesus refers to Himself as a shepherd (John 10:11) and a vine (John 15:1–6). And Paul takes a historical event from the Old Testament (Hagar and Sarah) and uses it as an allegory for law and grace (Galatians 4:21–31). So while the Bible uses allegories to teach truth, we must not confuse the literary device of allegory with the hermeneutic of allegorizing Scripture; the two are not the same.

Soon after the completion of the New Testament, early Christians began interpreting the text allegorically. They proposed many symbolic meanings that neither Jesus nor the biblical authors ever intended.

It wasn't until the time of the Reformation in the 1500s that a return to a more literal, historical-grammatical method of interpretation began to take hold. Luther, Calvin, and some others criticized the excesses of allegorical interpretation, but it still remained popular among many Christian scholars and writers into the 19th century.

More recently, in the 20th and 21st centuries, there has been an increased interest in understanding the parables as the original hearers would have understood them. Interpreters started focusing on the main point of the parables—God's kingdom coming through the reign of the Messiah.

Care must be taken when interpreting these parables. Here are a few basic principles to adapt while trying to understand the parables of Jesus and interpret them properly:

1. **Determine the main point of the parable.** Most parables have one main point, though they may have a couple sub points. To get to the main point, ask yourself a few questions:

Who are the main characters? What occurs at the end? What or who gets the most consideration in the parable? To whom is the parable directed? What is the context in which Jesus gave it?

2. **Recognize standard imagery used in the parables.** For example, God is often symbolized as a master, a father, a judge, or a king. A vineyard or a fig tree usually refers to Israel. The harvest refers to the judgment. An enemy is typically the devil.
3. **Note striking or unexpected details of the parable.** Jesus's parables are filled with striking details, unexpected twists, shocking statements, and surprise outcomes. When such attention-getting components occur, pay attention because an important point is being made.
4. **Do not press every detail for meaning.** The many details in a parable are usually given to make the story memorable and interesting. Typically there is one central figure (or two) and one main point. Attempting to interpret every individual detail will lead one to an allegorical reading.
5. **Pay attention to the literary and historical context of the parable.** The authors of the Gospels often clue us to the meaning of a parable by including information about why Jesus uttered that parable or by grouping together parables on similar topics.

Jesus, the Master Teacher, used many parables in His teaching. By some accounts, about one-third of all of Jesus's words in the Gospels are parables. We are called to be diligent to handle His Word carefully as we read it, interpret it, and teach it to others.

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.

1. This material was adapted from Robert L. Plummer, "Parables in the Gospels: History of Interpretation and Hermeneutical Guidelines," *SBJT* 13.3 (2009): 4–11.



BEFORE THE THRONE

Good Shepherd, you have scattered your seeds of truth upon my heart; I praise you. Thank you for the truth of your Word. Keep my heart soft, so I will produce good fruit. And Lord, please prepare the hearts of my students so they will hear your truth, repent of their sins, trust you, and bear good fruit for your kingdom.

Review

Our last few lessons have looked at how Jesus confronted various false teachings the people of His day had heard. Following the teachings of the Jewish leaders, the people had been led astray. They had been taught to focus on outward obedience rather than obedience from a heart that loves God. We also saw Jesus rebuking the false teachers for not understanding what had been written for their instruction, even calling them out as hypocritical, foolish, and blind guides who were heading to hell and taking others with them. As Jesus spoke these rebukes, He used the emotion of anger in a holy way that defended His Father's name and honor and fought against sin and false teaching.

? Who would like to share an example of how they put the teaching from last week into practice since our last meeting? *Discuss various answers, even a negative example of how someone failed to direct their anger in a righteous way but recognized it and repented.*

In Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit, we have all that we need to strive against our flesh and direct the emotion of anger toward holy ends. Where our anger is selfish, we need to put that sinful attitude to death, knowing that we are forgiven when we fall short.

Our lesson today continues on the theme of how Jesus interacted with those listening to His teaching, especially His teaching in parables.



► Write on the board, "Why did Jesus teach using parables?"



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

Let's read Matthew 13:1–23 together and examine Jesus's teaching using parables. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? **From where was Jesus teaching?** *He taught from a boat on the Sea of Galilee while the listeners were on the shore. This provided a natural amphitheater for Him to talk to a large crowd.*
- ? **Did Jesus speak more than this one parable to the crowd?** *Matthew says He spoke many things to the crowd, so He spoke more things, but Matthew recorded only this example for us.*
- ? **How did Jesus close His parable?** *"He who has ears to hear, let him hear."*
- ? **Why did Jesus choose an agricultural analogy?** *The culture they lived in was an agricultural society, so an analogy of sowing seed would have been accessible to everyone since it was a common practice.*

- ? **What question did the disciples bring to Jesus after the teaching?** *They asked Him why He spoke to the crowds in parables.*
- ? **Who else was present according to Mark 4:10?** *Besides the twelve, there were other disciples present who accompanied Jesus through much of His travelling or were present in various cities.*
- ? **What answer did Jesus provide?** *He explained that it had been granted to the disciples to know the “mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.”*
- ? **What are the “mysteries” Jesus referred to in verse 11?** *The mysteries are the truths that had been veiled in times past. As Jesus taught and lived, these mysteries were becoming realities as the kingdom of God had come among them as Jesus was ministering (Matthew 12:28).*
- ? **How did the answer to the disciples relate to the way Jesus closed the parable to the crowd?** *Some in the crowd had ears to hear because it was granted to them to hear and understand the mysteries; others did not and would not understand the mysteries.*
- ? **How should we understand the apparently paradoxical statements “seeing they do not see” and “hearing they do not hear”?** *Rather than talking about physically seeing and hearing, Jesus is referring to the fact that they will hear the words but not be able to discern their meaning. They are physically able, but not spiritually able to receive the truths they are hearing.*
- ? **What Old Testament passage was fulfilled as Jesus taught in parables?** *Jesus pointed them to Isaiah 6:9–10.*

- ? **Who was this prophecy in Isaiah 6:9–10 originally spoken of?** *Isaiah was to announce God’s message of judgment to the people of Judah (the southern kingdom) who continued to ignore God’s warnings. However, there was a remnant who had ears to hear and obey God (Isaiah 6:13). Here we see a dual fulfillment of prophecy, which is a common theme in the New Testament.*
- ? **Why did Jesus tell the disciples they are blessed in verse 16?** *They had been granted the blessing of seeing the fulfillment of the mysteries that many had desired to see—the coming of the kingdom and the Messiah. Similarly, Jesus announced this same truth in a prayer to the Father in Matthew 11:25–30, making it clear that this understanding is given to those whom Jesus reveals Himself.*

We have been looking at the broad context of the passage, so let’s shift gears and talk specifically about the parable’s imagery and meaning.

- ? **Who is the main character in the parable?** *The sower, a person who spreads seeds.*
- ? **What does the seed represent?** *It represents the word of the kingdom—the gospel message.*
- ? **What does sowing the seed represent?** *Spreading the seed is proclaiming the gospel.*
- ? **How would you describe where the seed was scattered by the sower?** *It was scattered in many different places*
- ? **How many different soils are described?** *Four: wayside (pathway), stony, thorny, good.*
- ? **What happened to the seed that fell on the wayside (path)?** *Falling on the edges of the field where the soil was packed into a trail, the birds came and devoured it.*

- ? **How did Jesus interpret this imagery?** *The wayside represents those who have hard hearts and do not understand the gospel message, so it is snatched away by the wicked one (Satan).*
- ? **What does the seed that fell on the stony ground represent?** *This represents a seed that falls on shallow soil where there is rock underneath, preventing the roots from growing and sustaining the plant.*
- ? **How did Jesus interpret this imagery?** *The stony ground was explained as a person who gladly receives the gospel but rejects the message once trials come as a result of identifying as a follower of Jesus, so he rejects the truth and falls away.*
- ? **What does the seed that fell among thorns represent?** *Seed that falls among thorny weeds that are already established cannot compete with the mature plants and are stunted in their growth, not producing fruit.*
- ? **How did Jesus interpret this imagery?** *The thorny ground represents a person who hears the gospel yet is not willing to repent and turn away from the things of the world. This person loves sin more than forgiveness.*
- ? **What does the seed that fell on good soil represent?** *This represents seed falling on soil that has been tilled and provides a good growing environment for the seeds to flourish and bear fruit.*
- ? **How does Jesus interpret this imagery?** *The good ground is a person who hears and understands because his heart has been prepared by God for growth, and he produces fruit. Also, different people will produce different amounts of fruit.*
- ? **If you were to place yourself in this parable, which character would represent you?** *As Christians, we find ourselves in two places. First, as the sower who shares the gospel with others. Second, as the good-soil hearers to whom Jesus has revealed Himself and who are growing to bear fruit.*

Discover the Truth

From this point forward in His teaching ministry, Jesus used parables to teach. As He explained to the disciples, this was done to fulfill prophecy and to distinguish between those who were true followers and those who were not. Jesus acknowledged that the Father was hiding these truths from some (Matthew 13:11–15). Matthew explains this further in verses 34–35 saying, “All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: ‘I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world’” (quoting from Psalm 78:2). The disciples, who desired to know the truth, asked for an understanding of the parables when they did not understand. They sought truth and understanding of what Jesus was teaching (Matthew 13:36, 13:51).

? **What attribute of God do we see demonstrated as Jesus reveals truth in the parables?** *Wise—using these analogies provided truth for those who had been granted to receive it and hid it from those who would not receive it. Refer to Attributes of God Poster.*

As we think about applying this teaching to our lives today, we need to understand the parts of the parable, bringing them into our current context. As we are working as sowers, spreading the message of the gospel, we are to offer the message to all who will listen. As we do so, we should not be concerned about identifying those listening as one of the four soil types, but share the gospel with all. We know that people will respond in one of these four ways, but their response is not our responsibility. Our job is to spread the seed. God is in control from there, the Holy Spirit applying the words of truth we speak to the hearts of the hearers.

But we must be wise as we interact with people. We need to recognize how the people we share with respond and then offer more truth to them as needed. The wayside hearers are those who scoff and mock Jesus and His gospel. We can be praying that God will soften their hearts to His truth.

The stony-ground hearer today is the person who hears the gospel presented and responds to it in a way that points to life enhancement. He may have been told that accepting Jesus will make his life better, and he will find happiness and prosperity in this life. But Scripture never makes such a claim. In fact, we are told to “count the cost” before following Jesus as it will bring many trials and persecutions. We can point this person to the fact that there will be trials in this life, but salvation is about being free from sin and gives us the hope of glory in the future, not in this life (Luke 14:25–33).

The thorny-ground hearer today may be someone who hears the gospel and thinks it sounds like a great plan. But after making a superficial commitment, he gets distracted by the things of the world and forgets about the rich promises of the gospel; instead he looks to the riches of the world. The rich young ruler (Mark 10:17–22) might be an example of this type of hearer. We can point this type of person to passages of Scripture that speak of the sinfulness of sin and the righteousness of God, praying that the Holy Spirit will use that to bring them to repentance.

The good-ground hearer is the one whom God has prepared to hear and receive the words of life. The Holy Spirit has worked in his heart to bring conviction of sin, and he has responded in repentance and faith. But remember, the sower gets to claim no more credit than tossing a seed on the ground. But there is joy in seeing a seed we have planted grow to bear fruit, and in knowing that one more soul is glorifying God for His salvation.





Unpacking Parables

MATERIALS

- Student Guides
- Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

We have just looked at one parable where Jesus walked us through His analogy, helping us interpret it rightly. But many of the parables have no explanation, so we are left to interpret them by ourselves. In this activity, you are going to look at several principles that will help us rightly divide these parables drawing the truth from them that God intends for us.

In your Student Guide you will find the Unpacking Parables activity. Work through those ideas in small groups, and then we'll discuss your findings. *Have the students work in small groups to complete the activity.*

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

Let's unpack what you learned from the parables. *Discuss each of the points below reminding the students these are general guidelines, not hard rules.*

1. Parables typically convey one main point.

Read Matthew 13:33. What is the main point? Would this point change if there were eight measures of meal? Do the three measures of meal relate to the Trinity? *The main point of this parable is the spreading influence of the kingdom of heaven. The number of measures of meal used is inconsequential to the point of the parable, and we should not read too much into the parable. Look for the main point in the parable and don't press the analogy too far.*

2. When parables come in groups, they often teach the same point in different ways.

Look at the parables in Matthew 13:24–52. What is the common teaching of each of these parables? (Look at verses 24, 31, 33, 43, 44, 45, and 47.) *Each parable in this set teaches about the kingdom of heaven, using different analogies to emphasize different points. A similar group of parables comes in Matthew 24–25 to describe the last days.*

3. There are elements common to parables that are to be understood in different ways.

What does the leaven represent in Matthew 13:33? What does the leaven represent in Matthew 16:5–12? *In one example, leaven represents the influence of the*

kingdom of heaven, and in the other it represents false teaching. Leaven is often used as a symbol for sin or false teaching in Scripture, but the context needs to guide our understanding of each use.

4. Some parables have one character intended to represent God.

Read Luke 7:40–43. Which character in the parable is intended to represent God? *The creditor who forgives the debt represents God forgiving sin.*

5. There is often one character who responds rightly and one who responds wrongly.

Read Luke 18:9–14. What two responses to God are indicated in this parable? *The Pharisee represents a wrong and self-righteous response toward God while the tax collector represents an appropriate and humble recognition of God's holiness and man's sinfulness. The tax collector responds rightly to God's mercy and grace.*

6. Parables are given for a reason, and the context of the parable helps us understand the teaching.

Read Luke 12:13–21. Why did Jesus tell this parable? Is this parable a condemnation of building barns? *The parable is offered in response to*

a man who was coveting his brother's inheritance. Jesus was not condemning the building of barns; rather, He was condemning the coveting of wealth in order to live in ease. He was directing the man's thoughts from earthly things to eternal and heavenly things.

Since parables are a form of analogy, we need to be careful not to stretch the analogy further than it is meant to be taken. It was given to a particular audience in a particular setting, and we need to let the original intent of the parable stand as it is. We should never come to an understanding of a parable that the original hearers would not have understood. However, we can apply the principle of the parable to different situations.

With that in mind, there is only one interpretation of the parable that is correct, but there are many different applications of the principle of the parable. In the introductory material to this lesson in your Student Guide, you will find some more explanation of these ideas, and I would encourage you to read that at some point this week.



READ THE WORD

Let's look at one final parable together that complements the parable of the sower that we began our discussion with. In Matthew 22, we have a parable that Jesus directed to the Jewish leaders in the middle of an extended conversation just before He announced the woes we discussed last week. Let's read Matthew 22:1–14 together. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

Matthew 22:1–14

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? **Who is the king representing?** *The king is God the Father.*
- ? **Who is the king's son who is to be married representing?** *Jesus is the bridegroom.*
- ? **Who are the servants of verses 3 and 4 representing?** *The servants represent the prophets and others of old who announced God's offer of salvation.*
- ? **Who are the people invited to the feast supposed to represent?** *In the immediate context, they are the Jews who had heard the truths about God as well as any others who knew of God through the prophets. Since they reject the offer, these are the Jews who had rejected God as Lord.*
- ? **In verse 5, we see two different responses from those invited to the feast. What does this tell us about the Jews of Jesus's day?** *Some of the Jews merely rejected God's offer, especially Jesus as Messiah. Others were more strident in their rejection, even seeking to kill the messengers. In Matthew 23:29–36, Jesus made it clear that He was talking about the Jewish leaders who had persecuted God's prophets and those who would do so in the future.*
- ? **What does verse 7 portray?** *This portrays God's judgment on the Jews who rejected Jesus and His messengers.*
- ? **What did the king instruct his servants to do?** *He sent them into the highways and byways to bring as many people to the banquet as they could find.*
- ? **What types of people did the servants bring?** *Both good and bad.*
- ? **What did the king notice when He entered the banquet?** *One of the guests was not wearing a wedding garment.*
- ? **If these people were hastily gathered from various places, where did they get the wedding garments?** *The garments must have been provided by the king as the guests arrived.*
- ? **What does the provision of these wedding garments picture for us?** *Their acceptance into the banquet was accompanied by the provision of a garment. This pictures the righteousness of Christ that sinners receive in exchange for their sin paid for by Christ. The man who did not have the garment was not seen as worthy to stand before the king's son and bride.*
- ? **What insight does Isaiah 61:10 give us into the provision of the garments?** *In this passage Isaiah describes the righteousness given by God as a wedding garment and a robe of righteousness.*
- ? **Why was the man who was not wearing the garment cast into outer darkness (hell)?** *He had rejected the garment (righteousness) offered by the king, so he was cast out. We can understand this man as self-righteous—not thinking he needed the king's garment.*
- ? **How does Jesus conclude the parable?** *He wraps it all up by noting the many are called to receive God's forgiveness, but few are chosen to receive it.*

➤ It would have been customary for a wealthy man to provide garments for the guests at a wedding, so some cultural background is helpful in interpreting this parable and understanding it as the hearers would have.

Isaiah 61:10

? **What is the main point of this parable?** *The parable teaches that many will reject God's provision of righteousness through Jesus, but many will also receive it without doing anything to merit such favor. It is an indictment against the self-righteous attitude of the Pharisees and other Jewish leaders.*

Discover the Truth

The Pharisees got the point. Between this and a previous parable about the wicked tenants who killed the landowner's son, they knew Jesus was talking about them. They knew that Jesus was condemning them to hell for their rejection of Him, but they still refused to take the wedding garment to sit in the marriage feast. They hated the Son and plotted to kill Him; and they would eventually seek to kill His servants.

In this parable we have a picture of the message of the gospel and the rejection by the Jewish leaders of the Messiah who had been sent by the Father. God continues to offer salvation even to those who have rejected Him, but that offer extends far and wide, not just to those who are in a specific religious group. The Father has invited many to the feast He will hold for His Son, but only those who are willing to enter on the Father's terms will be accepted.

Those terms are pictured by the clean wedding garment, representing the righteousness of Christ that unworthy sinners receive when they respond to the gospel call—trusting Christ to cleanse them of their sin and putting on His righteousness.

I hope that each of you can see yourself seated at that wedding feast in a spotless garment and that you are also inviting others to join you, pointing them to Christ for their salvation.



Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

God's wisdom should be so clear to us today. In that wisdom God chose to communicate many spiritual truths to us through His Son. We should have hearts overflowing with gratitude for all that He has done for us and revealed to us. In these parables we find a rich depth of meaning that allows us to understand many spiritual truths in a way that is memorable.

The Bible is a very interesting book, and the parables just show us how creative God is. He could have just written an owner's manual for us with a maintenance schedule and parts diagrams, but He chose something

different. He chose to communicate with us in ways that get our attention and cause us to think and look through spiritual eyes at the words He uses.

I hope this lesson will give you a fresh look at the parables you come across, whether in the Old or New Testaments, in your personal reading in the future.

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

- ? As you think about what we learned about parables, what misconceptions do you see in how you looked at parables in the past? Or, what questions do you still have about approaching a parable to draw out its meaning? *Discuss various questions and ideas, being careful not to belittle anyone for having misunderstandings but encouraging them as they seek to grow in understanding.*
- ? In what way was the use of parables a kindness to those who rejected Jesus's teaching or did not understand it? *There is a general principle throughout Scripture that those who receive more are responsible for more. Concealing the truth from those who would simply reject it or mock it lessens the judgment they will face for that rejection.*
- ? What is the danger in approaching the biblical parables as allegories, seeking to draw out extensive ideas from the smallest details in the stories? *This can lead us to come to a conclusion that Jesus never meant to convey in the parable by stretching the analogy beyond what it is meant to teach. Some false teachers have used parables to teach ideas that are contrary to the rest of Scripture. They point to one passage and say, "Jesus taught that..." while they twist the very meaning of His words out of their context.*
- ? What does Jesus's use of parables tell us about Jesus, the Master Teacher? What can we learn and apply from His example? *Discuss various answers.*
- ? How could using the parables of Jesus be a helpful evangelism strategy with those who are unsaved? *Using these stories might be a way to engage someone who has misconceptions about the Bible. If they think the Bible is just a rule book that Christians follow, talking through a parable could help them see the richness of the Bible and lead to a fruitful discussion of the gospel.*



MEMORY VERSE

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."



GROUP PRAYER TIME

Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.

- Thank God for giving ears to hear and eyes to see the truth of His Word.
- Praise God for His infinite wisdom in dealing with men.
- Ask God for wisdom and discernment to understand and apply the parables found in Scripture.