

The Parables

The challenge of discipleship

The Parables

Class 1: **What is a Parable?**

Class 2: **Why Parables?**

Class 3-4: **Jesus' Parables**

The coming kingdom of God

Class 5-6: **Jesus' Parables**

The grace of God's reign

Class 7-8: **Jesus' Parables**

The challenge of discipleship

The Parables

Theme 1: The coming kingdom of God

The mustard seed

The growing seed

The leaven

The sower

The weeds among the wheat

The fishnet

The Parables

Theme 2: The grace of God's reign

The workers in the vineyard

The two sons

The two debtors

The Pharisee and the tax collector

The lost sheep

The lost coin

The prodigal son

The great feast

The wedding garment

The Parables

Theme 2: The grace of God's reign

Tax collectors & sinners

- Religious & social outcasts
- Included thieves, adulterers, those holding dishonest occupations, unclean

Self-righteous & powerful

- Religious & social elite
- Included priests, scribes, elders, Pharisees etc.

The Parables

Thematic Groupings

The coming reign/kingdom of God (6 parables)

The grace of God's reign/kingdom (9 parables)

The challenge of discipleship (11 parables)

The call to repentance (7 parables)

Why Parables?

Jesus' answer

(Mark 4:23–25 ESV)

“If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.” And he said to them, “Pay attention to what you hear: with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you. For to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.””

The Parables

Thematic Groupings

The coming reign/kingdom of God (6 parables)

The grace of God's reign/kingdom (9 parables)

The challenge of discipleship (11 parables)

The call to repentance (7 parables)

The Parables

Theme 3: The challenge of discipleship

The treasure; The pearl

The tower builder; The warring king

The dishonest steward; The master and servant

The friend at midnight; The persistent widow

The unforgiving servant; The good samaritan

The two builders

The Parables

Theme 3: The challenge of discipleship

(Matthew 13:44–46 ESV) The treasure; The pearl

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.”

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Theme 3: The challenge of discipleship

(Proverbs 2:1–5 ESV)

“My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, **if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures**, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.”

The Parables

Theme 3: The challenge of discipleship

(Matthew 13:44–46 ESV) The treasure; The pearl

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(1 Corinthians 1:22–25 ESV)

“For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”

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Theme 3: The challenge of discipleship

(1 Corinthians 1:27–29 ESV)

“But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, **even things that are not**, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.”

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Summary: The treasure; The pearl

- The treasure and pearl carry on an Old Testament theme of the unmatched value of God's word (wisdom).
- Contrasts between the man and the merchant illustrate perhaps varied paths to the gospel, or the universal value of the kingdom of God.
- Initially there seems to be a lack of disclosure in these business transactions, but their paradoxical nature underscores the spiritual value hidden from natural perception.

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Theme 3: The challenge of discipleship

Application: The treasure; The pearl

- Do I really believe in the unsurpassable value of the kingdom of God?
- What do I truly value in this life? Does my life reflect what I profess to value?
- What am I willing to give (or give up) for the kingdom of God?

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Theme 3: The challenge of discipleship

(Luke 14:28–33 ESV) The tower builder; The warring king

“For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.”

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Theme 3: The challenge of discipleship

(Acts 2:42 ESV) Counting the cost of discipleship

“And they devoted themselves to **the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.**”

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Theme 3: The challenge of discipleship

(Romans 6:17–18 ESV) Counting the cost of discipleship

“But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, **have become slaves of righteousness.**”

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Theme 3: The challenge of discipleship

(James 1:12 ESV) Counting the cost of discipleship

“Blessed is the man who **remains steadfast under trial**, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.”

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Theme 3: The challenge of discipleship

(Proverbs 4:14–15 ESV) Seeking peace

“Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of the evil. Avoid it; do not go on it; turn away from it and pass on.”

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Theme 3: The challenge of discipleship

(1 Timothy 6:11 ESV) Seeking peace

“But as for you, O man of God, **flee these things**. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.”

(2 Timothy 2:22–23 ESV) Seeking peace

“So **flee youthful passions** and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels.”

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(1 Peter 5:5–7 ESV) Seeking peace

“Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for **“God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”** Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.”

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Theme 3: The challenge of discipleship

Summary: The tower builder; The warring king

- Success for the builder lies in completing the tower, emphasizing the need to count the cost of discipleship before committing; which includes the opportunity cost of devotion, and the endurance of trails of faith.
- The warring king's success is negotiating favourable peace terms when the adversary is too strong, highlighting the importance of proactively avoiding temptation, and humbling oneself before God, who opposes the proud.

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Theme 3: The challenge of discipleship

Application: The tower builder; The warring king

- Am I devoted to the apostles' doctrine, the breaking of bread and prayer? Do I reserve time and mental capacity for these things?
- Have I/am I experiencing any of the expected trials to my faith/devotion? Am I failing to identify and struggle with trials?
- When I lose battles with my nature/temptation, could I have avoided them in the first place?

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Theme 3: The challenge of discipleship

(Luke 16:1–8 ESV) **The dishonest steward**

“He also said to the disciples, “There was a **rich man** who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his possessions. And he called him and said to him, ‘What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your management, for you can no longer be manager.’ And the manager said to himself, ‘What shall I do, since my master is taking the management away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. I have decided what to do, so that when I am removed from management, people may receive me into their houses.’ So, summoning his **master’s debtors** one by one, he said to the first, ‘How much do you owe my **master**?’ He said, ‘A hundred measures of oil.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.’ Then he said to another, ‘And how much do you owe?’ He said, ‘A hundred measures of wheat.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill, and write eighty.’ The **master** commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light.”

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(Luke 16:9–13 ESV) The dishonest steward

“And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.

“One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in that which is another’s, who will give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.””

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Theme 3: The challenge of discipleship

(John 15:14 ESV)

“You are my friends if you do what I command you.”

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(Luke 17:7–10 ESV) The master and servant

“Will any one of you who has a servant plowing or keeping sheep say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come at once and recline at table’? Will he not rather say to him, ‘Prepare supper for me, and dress properly, and serve me while I eat and drink, and afterward you will eat and drink’? Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded? So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.’”

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Theme 3: The challenge of discipleship

Summary: The dishonest steward; The master and servant

- The dishonest steward presents a worldly analogue of repentance - he changes his dishonest behaviour in order to secure his future. How much more should we heed the gospel and repent, thereby having hope in our eternal future.
- We must enact the spiritual lesson of the steward, truly repenting, serving one master. Through which we have friendship with the host of heaven, and the whole body of believers.
- The attitude of the disciple is that of a selfless servant.

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Theme 3: The challenge of discipleship

Application: The dishonest steward; The master and servant

- Am I living a repentant life, seeking my eternal well-being?
- Who am I befriending with my behaviour? Who am I being a friend to?
- Am I faithful in the little things? Am I trying to serve two masters?
- Where does my confidence in my eternal wellbeing come from?

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