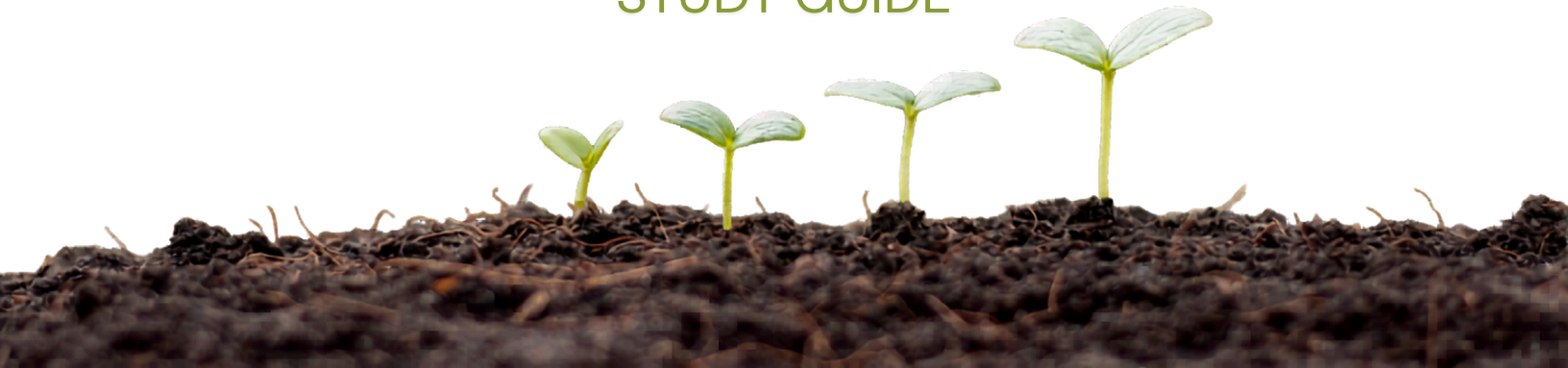


small stories,

BIG SHIFT

PARABLES OF JESUS
STUDY GUIDE



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About This Study

Parables are heavenly truths wrapped in short stories to bring us under the wonderful reign and rule of Christ, which will lead to big shifts in our hearts and lives. As Jesus tells these stories, we are invited to place ourselves in the story and wait for our presuppositions to be challenged, and our obedience (or lack thereof) be clarified. Jesus' kingdom is one of upside-down morality, in which the powerful serve; inside-out morality in which the externally righteous see their dirty souls; backward-forward perspective in which the final feast refocuses today.

In our study of the parables of Jesus, we will see how small stories can bring big shifts if we allow these truths from Jesus to sink deep and transform us.

How to Use This Guide

Interact with God and the Scriptures for each week using the "Personal Daily Study" and "Study Questions" associated with the main Scripture for each week. Then in your 3Ds, use the discussion guide to spend time with God and each other in Life, Bible, and Prayer. We suggest doing the 3D group discussions after hearing the sermon for the given section per week.

Refer to the Resources page in the back for recommend tools to help you dig deeper into each parable.

Personal Daily Study

Spend the entire week on the given section, slowly reading and rereading it in order to deeply, and accurately, interact with God. Also consider the below supplemental questions per each given week (You can also check out our other simple guides online for additional Bible study resources at thewellsilverspring.org/resources.)

What Does It Say?

First, we ask: *"What does this say?"*

Read the passage a few times and carefully observe the words; give full attention to what it says. The purpose is to saturate in the content of the passage.

Look for things such as: important words (what's being talked about), conjunctions (how is one idea connected to another), admonitions (something being commanded), contrasts, comparisons, illustrations, repeated phrases/ words, mood, and grammatical construction (verb tenses, prepositional phrases, etc.).

Linger here, listening to what God is saying in the detail of His words. Write down questions that the passage raises for you, things you don't understand, ideas you'd like to pursue further.

What Does It Mean?

We now ask ourselves: *"What does it mean?"*

Use the observations you just gathered, the context of the section, and other passages of scripture to get at the meaning of what you have read.

Consider using [a commentary](#), the [GROW](#) or [SOAP](#) Bible study tools, the [ESV Study Bible](#) notes, or other resources to help.

Next, summarize the main truth you heard from God in His word.

Consider writing out the synthesized truth in your own words. Outline, diagram, draw, or flowchart the line of thought or main idea of the passage. What jumped out?

So What?

After meeting God in His word, we cannot ignore, or walk away unchanged. Why does the truth you heard matter to you today?

Is there something new to believe, cling to, or a sin to confess?

Is there something for you to do (or not do) in response to what you have read?

Is there someone with whom to share this truth (believer or nonbeliever)?

Do not forget to apply the gospel for your forgiveness, and as the reason compelling your obedience:

Christ is the ultimate _____

Christ as forgiven you for _____

Christ is the reason why we _____

Week One

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

Parable of the Sower



QUESTIONS

Follow the below process that can be applied to any parable. This will take you longer than one sitting with God in His word in this passage.

What is the context?

Who are the characters?

Write out the story line.

What is the main problem?

What is the main point and corresponding principle?

How am I to obey or apply this parable?

What are the four soil types and what do they represent?

Why are the conditions of the soil so different?

SO WHAT?

Where do you see lies, hard times, or things you love in this world currently distracting you from listening to and obeying God in your life?

How does Jesus and the gospel give you hope over Satan, hard times, and the world? How has Jesus forgiven you in these areas?

List out people who you are praying would receive Christ. What soil conditions characterize their lives?

Spend time responding to God in prayer.

Week Two

Matthew 13:44-46

Parable of the Hidden Treasure and Pearl



QUESTIONS

Follow the below process that can be applied to any parable. This will take you longer than one sitting with God in His word in this passage.

What is the context?

Who are the characters?

Write out the story line.

What is the main problem?

What is the main point and corresponding principle?

How am I to obey or apply this parable?

How is the Kingdom of God described in this passage?

What lengths do the man and merchant go to to acquire what they find? What would make someone go to those lengths?

SO WHAT?

What would it take you to sell all you had?

Have you had moments where the Kingdom of God caused you to react in a similar way? Why or why not?

What needs to shift in your thinking or obedience for you to value the Kingdom in this way?

Spend time responding to God in prayer.

Week Three

Luke 15:11-32

Parable of the Prodigal Son



QUESTIONS

Follow the below process that can be applied to any parable. This will take you longer than one sitting with God in His word in this passage.

What is the context?

Who are the characters?

Write out the story line.

What is the main problem?

What is the main point and corresponding principle?

How am I to obey or apply this parable?

Describe the relationship between the younger brother and the father.

Describe the relationship between the older brother and the father.

SO WHAT?

What does Jesus reveal about God's heart? What is important to him?

Is the above answer important to you?

Which character most marks where you are right now? What changes do you need to make in light of these truths?

Spend time responding to God in prayer.

Week Four

Matthew 13:31-33

Parable of the Mustard Seed and Leaven



QUESTIONS

Follow the below process that can be applied to any parable. This will take you longer than one sitting with God in His word in this passage.

What is the context?

Who are the characters?

Write out the story line.

What is the main problem?

What is the main point and corresponding principle?

How am I to obey or apply this parable?

How is the Kingdom of God described in this passage?

Describe the before and after effect described in these stories.

SO WHAT?

What new awareness, insight, or truth about the Kingdom of God do you take away from this passage?

What new awareness, insight, or truth about God do you take away from this passage?

What might need to change in your faith or your obedience as a result of these truths?

Spend time responding to God in prayer.

Week Five

Luke 16:19-31

Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus



QUESTIONS

Follow the below process that can be applied to any parable. This will take you longer than one sitting with God in His word in this passage.

What is the context?

Who are the characters?

Write out the story line.

What is the main problem?

What is the main point and corresponding principle?

How am I to obey or apply this parable?

Read Luke 16:14-17. How does this passage inform your reading of the parable?

How does the warning in verse 31 summarize the parable?

SO WHAT?

How do you identify with the rich man? What things are you loving to the detriment of your understanding and embrace of the gospel?

How is Jesus and the good news of who he is and what he has done impact the truths of this parable?

How would you describe your relationship with God and how you are reflecting Him in your work, family, friends, life?

Spend time responding to God in prayer.

Week Six

Luke 18:1-8

Parable of the Persistent Widow



QUESTIONS

Follow the below process that can be applied to any parable. This will take you longer than one sitting with God in His word in this passage.

What is the context?

Who are the characters?

Write out the story line.

What is the main problem?

What is the main point and corresponding principle?

How am I to obey or apply this parable?

What do you learn about God's heart from this parable? What does he long for?

Is there value in 'wearing God down' with the requests, or is it something else?

SO WHAT?

Are there personal experiences in your own life that cause you to doubt the truths of this parable?

Are there any Scripture passages or personal experiences in your life that confirm or affirm these truths?

What practical principles do you learn from this parable?

Spend time responding to God in prayer.

Week Seven

Matthew 25:1-13

Parable of the Ten Virgins



QUESTIONS

Follow the below process that can be applied to any parable. This will take you longer than one sitting with God in His word in this passage.

What is the context?

Who are the characters?

Write out the story line.

What is the main problem?

What is the main point and corresponding principle?

How am I to obey or apply this parable?

Read Matthew 7:21-23. How does this passage inform your understanding of this parable?

What blessing is given to the wise virgins? What punishment is given to the foolish virgins?

SO WHAT?

What does it look like to be prepared for Jesus' return?
To faithfully wait?

In what ways can we encourage the foolish virgins in our life (those who profess to be Christians but who are not prepared for Jesus' return) to be wise?

How does the confidence we have of Jesus' return influence our waiting?

Spend time responding to God in prayer.

Week Eight

Luke 10:25-37

Parable of the Good Samaritan



QUESTIONS

Follow the below process that can be applied to any parable. This will take you longer than one sitting with God in His word in this passage.

What is the context?

Who are the characters?

Write out the story line.

What is the main problem?

What is the main point and corresponding principle?

How am I to obey or apply this parable?

Why is it significant that the Samaritan is the 'hero' of the story? Why is it significant that the Priest and Levite were not?

List all the ways you think this act of kindness cost the Samaritan.

SO WHAT?

To whom do you need to step closer to, enter into relationship with, or hear their story and needs? How does this parable help you with that?

Where does Jesus act like the Good Samaritan?

Who is your neighbor? What implications does this have for your life right now?

Spend time responding to God in prayer.

Week Nine

Luke 12:13-21

Parable of the Rich Fool



QUESTIONS

Follow the below process that can be applied to any parable. This will take you longer than one sitting with God in His word in this passage.

What is the context?

Who are the characters?

Write out the story line.

What is the main problem?

What is the main point and corresponding principle?

How am I to obey or apply this parable?

What essentially was 'wrong' with the rich fool's actions? Was there anything 'right' in his actions?

Where is Christ reflected, hinted at, anticipated, or foreshadowed in this passage?

SO WHAT?

How do you identify with the rich fool? What possessions, things, circumstances, or positions do you seek after to find life?

How has Jesus shown himself as a greater Savior than the things that fuel your deep desires.

How can you share this parable as good news with your neighbors, coworkers, and friends?

Spend time responding to God in prayer.

Week Ten

Mark 12:1-12

Parable of the Wicked Tenants



QUESTIONS

Follow the below process that can be applied to any parable. This will take you longer than one sitting with God in His word in this passage.

What is the context?

Who are the characters?

Write out the story line.

What is the main problem?

What is the main point and corresponding principle?

How am I to obey or apply this parable?

Jesus quotes Psalm 118:22-23. How does this Psalm impact your understanding of the parable?

Who are the “others” that the master will give the vineyard to in verse 9?

SO WHAT?

How is the Master very generous and patient in the story?

What have been the “servants” God has sent in your life to get your attention about Himself that you may have rejected?

How has God shown He is overwhelmingly generous, and provisional through the person and work of Christ?

Spend time responding to God in prayer.

Week Eleven

Matthew 18:21-35

Parable of the Unforgiving Servant



QUESTIONS

Follow the below process that can be applied to any parable. This will take you longer than one sitting with God in His word in this passage.

What is the context?

Who are the characters?

Write out the story line.

What is the main problem?

What is the main point and corresponding principle?

How am I to obey or apply this parable?

Why do you believe Jesus responds to Peter's question in verse 21 with this parable?

How does the Gospel influence your reading of this parable?

SO WHAT?

How does your view of the cross shape how you view yourself and others?

Read John 13:12-17. How does this passage fit into this discussion of the parable?

List one or two relationships in your life right now that you need to extend grace, mercy, or forgiveness to. Now list **what** you need to do to reconcile with them and **when** you will put it into action.

Spend time responding to God in prayer.

Week Twelve

Luke 14:12-24

Parable of the Great Banquet



QUESTIONS

Follow the below process that can be applied to any parable. This will take you longer than one sitting with God in His word in this passage.

What is the context?

Who are the characters?

Write out the story line.

What is the main problem?

What is the main point and corresponding principle?

How am I to obey or apply this parable?

What characterizes the two different types of guests?
Why is it significant that one group declines the invitation and the other accepts?

How is life with Jesus like a great banquet?

SO WHAT?

What excuses (v. 18) do you tend to make that prevents you from enjoying the joyful party Jesus invites you into?

Do you find that your life generally reflects the joy of a great party, or of a funeral?

How do you need to receive Jesus' invitation into a joyful party? Whom and how might you extend the invitation to this party to others?

Spend time responding to God in prayer.

Together With Your 3D Group

You'll find the specific supplementary questions for the scripture passages in the above schedule. You can also find the full details for 3D discussion in our [3D Meeting Guide](#). Here's a summary:

Bible

First, discuss the Bible passage from the week:

What does the passage say? What jumps out to you? What key ideas, commands, promises, words, ideas, etc, struck you this week?

How would you summarize the main truth from the section? How might this inform your thinking and shape the way we are to live?

Where is the gospel connected to this truth? What does this highlight about who we are, or about who God is?

Life

Share about how this truth impacts your life today:

For you today, why does this specifically matter?

Is there something God calling you to obey in response to His word?

Is there something you need to do or not do? Something to believe, promise to cling to, or a sin to confess?

Is there someone to share this truth with?

Prayer

Pray throughout your time together.

Offer praises to God when something encouraging is shared; ask for help from God as challenges are shared.

Close in prayer. Spend time responding to God's truth in the scriptures and from your conversation. Praise Him. Confess sin to Him. Thank Him. Ask Him for His power and provision.

Resources

Here are some good resources to consider when getting to know God and growing to live for Christ.

Recommended Resources

[The Parables: Understanding the Stories Jesus Told](#) by Simon Kistemaker
In this book, all of Jesus' parables are explained and interpreted from an evangelical perspective. Careful attention is given to the historical and cultural setting of each story, offering practical insight into Jesus' words. This is a very accessible resource.

[Stories with Intent](#) by Klyne Snodgrass
This is a more robust and comprehensive guide to Jesus' parables. Snodgrass explores in vivid detail the historical context in which these stories were told, the part they played in Jesus' overall message, and the ways in which they have been interpreted in the church and the academy.

[Parables of Jesus: Short Stories, Timeless Truths](#) by Tyler Van Halteren
Ideal for children, this is a fully illustrated and faithful retelling of 26 parables of Jesus. This book aims to lead families deeper into the heart of Jesus' teaching.

[Listen Up: Ten-Minute Family Devotions on the Parables](#) by Marty Machowski
This thirteen-week family devotional is designed to help families explore the parables that Jesus taught through reading selected parables, activities, discussion questions, and fun facts. Each five-day session includes Bible reading, discussion questions, a fun activity, and songs

[Seek First: How the Kingdom of God Changes Everything](#) by Jeremy Treat
Many of the parables teach on the Kingdom of God. This book offers a vision of the Kingdom that impacts every facet of your life.

Bibles & Commentaries

English Standard Version (ESV) Study Bible | esv.org
The ESV Study Bible is a great resource - everyone should own one. Short commentary on each book of the Bible.
You'll love this Bible for the passages above.

[The Gospel Coalition Commentaries](#) | thegospelcoalition.org/essay/introduction-to-the-parables
TGC has put together a collection of wonderful, accessible, and free digital commentaries. This essay helps us to understand the role of parables and how to read them.

Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible
Online pdf is free and solid.

Online Media

BibleProject | bibleproject.com/guides/how-to-read-the-bible-the-parables-of-jesus/
This video does a great job on equipping someone on how to read and interpret the parables of Jesus. Check out the rest of the Bible Project for wonderful videos, articles, podcasts that aim to equip us to be better readers of the bible.

SOAP

SCRIPTURE

Read a short passage in the bible each day. Pick up tomorrow where you left off today (*If reading the bible is new for you, start in one of the gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John. Consider purchasing an ESV Study Bible, which is packed with great resources*). Read a paragraph, or even a full chapter. As you read, take note when God's words jump out to you. Talk with Him in prayer, ask Him to speak to you through His word.

OBSERVE

Consider writing down the ideas that God brings to mind. Listen intently to get to know Him in His word. Use some or all of the below prompts to help guide you. Listen for what God is saying in this passage.

1. What words, themes, or phrases stick out?
2. Does the passage present a specific command or promise?
3. What questions does the passage raise for you?
4. What is the surrounding context of the passage, how does this impact what you have just read?
5. Summarize, in a sentence or two, the main idea/principle of the passage.

APPLY

Write down what difference this makes in your life. Use some or all of the below prompts to guide you. Listen for how God wants to reveal Himself, change you, compel you, in light of what you have heard from Him.

1. How does the passage connect with your life right now?
2. Why does this matter for your relationship with God, or your relationship with others?
3. Is there something for you to believe that you didn't believe before? Is God prompting you to do (or not do) something in response to His words? Is God compelling you to share this truth with someone?
4. Write, specifically, a way to respond to what you just read.

PRAY

Now spend a few minutes talking to God. You may want to write down a short prayer. Use some or all of the following prompts to guide you.

1. Praise Him for who He is, thank Him for specific ways He has shown His faithfulness in your life.
2. Talk transparently with God about any frustrations, fears, doubt, joys, praises, or confusion. Ask Him for further clarity, and the power to obey. Talk to Him, and ask Him for whatever comes to mind.
3. Confess where you fall short, especially consider what you have just read.
4. Thank Him for Jesus, who loves you, has forgiven you, is with you, and who's Spirit dwells in you.

GROW

GET IN IT: PRAY, REFLECT, OBSERVE

Read + Observe Everything Within the Passage - What Does it Say?

1. Before you start reading spend time being still. Ask God to show you what's on your heart and mind. Prayerfully ask Him for a desire to know and love Him more. Ask Him to meet you in this time with Him in the Bible and to change you to be more like His Son.
2. Read the passage a few times and carefully observe the words; give full attention to what it says. The purpose of *observation* is to saturate yourself completely with the content of the passage. Look for things such as: important words (what's being talked about), conjunctions (how is one idea connected to another), admonitions (something being commanded), contrasts, comparisons, illustrations, repeated phrases/words, mood, and grammatical construction (verb tenses, prepositional phrases, etc.). Linger here, listening to what God is saying in the detail of His words.
3. Ask questions. This is the bridge between *reading* the passage and *understanding* it. Don't rush this step (even if think you know the answers). Ask yourself many *questions for understanding* such as: Who is writing? Who are the characters? What's the meaning of...? I wonder why...? What's the relationship between...? What is written before and after the passage (context is everything)? What is unexpected in this passage? What rubs me wrong about this passage? How does this fit into the grand story of the scriptures (Creation, Fall, Redemption, Culmination)? What do I learn about myself from this passage? What do I learn about God in this passage? What is the definition of...? Etc.

RESOURCES: PRAY, INTERPRET, ANSWER

Tools to Help You Answer Your Questions - What Does it Mean?

The goal here is to use resources to help unleash the meaning. You want to be careful not to bring your own assumptions, perspectives, thoughts, background, and experiences to the text. Though our experiences are helpful, presuppositions can also result in an incorrect, shallow, or unbiblical meaning. Interpreting the passage flows out of your previous questions for understanding (above). Use some of these tools below to help you. Aim to discover the author's purpose in writing.

1. Use the passage and surrounding context: Look before, after, and in your passage to answer as many questions for understanding as possible. Allow scripture to interpret scripture. Context is everything.
2. Pray. Reading the Bible is your conversation with God. Remember to keep talking with Him. Ask Him for clarity and answers; wrestle with Him over hard truths. Confess, rejoice, seek Him.
3. Define words: Look in a dictionary to discover the meaning of key words.
4. Compare translations: Read the passage in several translations to hear it afresh.
5. Study cross-references: Use the footnotes to find similar verses. We recommend the ESV Study Bible.
6. Concordances: A concordance is an alphabetical topical index of Bible passages. You may have one in the back of your Bible. Look up the topic of your passage to find parallel verses. You can find three great concordances here: <http://www.biblestudytools.com/concordances/>.
7. Discuss it with others: Share observations and questions with other believers (3D's). How do others understand this passage? What can you learn from their questions and answers?



8. Commentaries/Bible Atlas/Bible dictionary: These are very helpful in providing background to the geography, history, and culture of biblical times (particularly for harder passages)
9. Check out www.bestcommentaries.com. We recommend the NIV Application Commentary Series, Matthew Henry Commentary (Free Online) and God's Word for You Series.
10. Online Study Tools: www.blueletterbible.org | www.esvbible.org | www.bible.org | www.biblestudytools.com
11. Sermons + Articles: www.desiringgod.org | www.thegospelcoalition.org | www.monergism.com

OUTLINE IT: PRAY, SUMMARIZE, SYNTHESIZE

Ways to Write Out What You Are Learning - What is the Main Idea/Truth?

Now you're ready to clarify what you've learned about God and yourself in this passage. You've taken it apart; now put it back together. Choose from these helpful ways to synthesize what you've just read.

1. Outline the text; capture the specific flow of the argument or story.
2. Write the passage in your own words. Make sure to capture the main idea.
3. Illustrate, draw, paint, what is happening in the passage.
4. Journal about what stood out to you in the passage, and pray through it.
5. Diagram or flowchart the key concepts in the text.

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE? PRAY, APPLY, TRANSFORM

Obey God's Word in Your Life Today - How Do I Respond?

Knowing God in His word is a core piece of your life-changing relationship with Him. It is crucial to stop and decide to respond to God in obedience. He loves you. You can trust Him, believe in Him, and obey Him.

1. *What am I to believe?* – Did I learn something new about God or myself? Is there any important teaching on which I need to build my faith? Is there truth to understand about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, grace, mercy, sin, forgiveness, hope, eternal life, suffering etc.?

Remember the Gospel: How is this passage good news to me because of Jesus?

2. *What am I to do?* – How does my faith translate into specific action? Is there something I am compelled to do? Is there sin I must confess to God or someone in my life? To confess sin, go below surface actions to the "why" motivation. How does the gospel offer what my sinful motivation does not provide? How does Jesus motivate my faith to obey in specific action?

Remember the Gospel: How did Jesus do all I did not, forgive me, empower me to obey?

3. *Whom can I tell?* - Is there a person who knows Christ who can help me obey? Is there someone (Christian or not) who might be encouraged, challenged, or resonate with this truth? Does this passage create questions or doubts I can investigate with other believers?

Remember the Gospel: How does God's grace to me in Christ spill over to others?