

PARABLES

1. DISCUSS THIS

Matthew 13

Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable.

¹⁰ The disciples came to him and asked, “Why do you speak to the people in parables?”

¹¹ He replied, “Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. ¹² Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. ¹³ This is why I speak to them in parables:

*“Though seeing, they do not see;
though hearing, they do not hear or understand.
¹⁴ In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah:*

*“‘You will be ever hearing but never understanding;
you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.
¹⁵ For this people’s heart has become calloused;
they hardly hear with their ears,
and they have closed their eyes.
Otherwise they might see with their eyes,
hear with their ears,
understand with their hearts
and turn, and I would heal them.’ [Isaiah 6:9-10]*

Blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear.

2. DISCUSS THIS

How did using the teaching methodology of speaking in parables help Jesus to get across to His difficult audience?

Professor William Barclay put it. “The parable conceals truth from those who are either too lazy to think or too blinded by prejudice to see. It puts the responsibility fairly and squarely on the

individual. It reveals truth to him who desires truth; it conceals truth from him who does not wish to see the truth.”

3. DISCUSS THIS

Are Christians totally open to the truth of God? Are non-Christians totally closed to the truth of God?

I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. John 16:12

4. DISCUSS THIS

“Jesus’s method of cloaking of the truth in mystery, His speaking in a hidden way, in riddles, was actually His best bet at getting through to people.”

Why is that?

What was our example with the cockroaches and the light switch?

“Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do they may trample the pearls under their feet and they will turn and tear you to pieces. Matthew 7:6.

If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town and shake the dust off your feet. Matthew 10:14.

5. DISCUSS THIS

Why is it so difficult for us to come to understand what Jesus taught? Is this simply an intellectual problem on our part?

6. DISCUSS THIS

Truly, You are a God who hides Himself. Isaiah (45:15).

“The presence of mysteries in the divine text is hardly accidental . . . The struggle to understand them is one of the divinely appointed means for bringing believers to maturity.” - said Origen

Why is God a hidden God?

Blaise Pascal, “perfect clarity would help the mind, but harm the will.”

“God has arranged things such that there is enough revealed so that those who want to see can see, and enough concealed so that those who do not want to see, are not forced to see.”

7. DISCUSS THIS

He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Be careful how you hear.

Why did Jesus often say these things?

8. DISCUSS THIS

Jesus intentionally said things in very bizarre and shocking ways. Paradoxically. Why is that?

9. DISCUSS THIS

What was the overall purpose of Jesus in His teaching? What was the main thing He was trying to accomplish?

LOVE

10. DISCUSS THIS

Why did God delegate the care of the world to humanity?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

11. DISCUSS THIS

“God did not make you for His benefit. He made you for your benefit.”

12. DISCUSS THIS

What is love?

1 Corinthians 13. “If I speak in the tongues of men or angels but do not have love, and so on.”

13. DISCUSS THIS

Why is it that love is not something that you are able to turn on and off, like opening and closing a sink tap?

What was our battery and flashlight example?

14. DISCUSS THIS

People will say of their spouse, when they are thinking of splitting, “I just don’t love him anymore.”

What is the problem with that thought process?

- Why is chasing a feeling an inadequate solution to the problem?
- Why is managing unhelpful thoughts an inadequate solution to the problem?
- Why is behavior management an inadequate solution to the problem?

What solution would you recommend to someone who expresses this to you?

15. DISCUSS THIS

What is the fundamental problem with the world, with humanity?

16. DISCUSS THIS

Given that the inside of our cup is not yet all the way washed, what should we do with unhealthy thoughts, behavior, and feelings...as a temporary stop gap?

17. DISCUSS THIS

What practical steps does someone need to take in order to actually become a loving person?

18. DISCUSS THIS

Love comes from God. 1 John 4:7

Of what significance is the fact that God is not only a being of pure love, but also is Himself the source of all love that exists in the universe?

19. DISCUSS THIS

What is the connection between our being *partakers of the Divine nature* and our learning to love?

Leviticus (11:45) and 1 Peter (1:16) read, Be Holy for I am Holy.

Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven.

Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matthew 5:48).

*Since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, **which is being renewed** in knowledge **in the image of its Creator** Colossians 3:9-10*

21. DISCUSS THIS

What is the significance of the fact that Jesus was Love incarnate?

THE LAW OF LOVE

20. DISCUSS THIS

What is the Law of Love?

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” Mark 12:20-31.

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not covet,” and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law. Romans 13: 8-10.

In what way does love fulfil all the demands of the Law?

21. DISCUSS THIS

Of what benefit are rules, laws, and consequences?

What limitations do they have?

Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. (Matthew 19:8)

T.S. Eliot said “They constantly try to escape from the darkness outside and within by dreaming of systems so perfect that no one will need to be good.”

Why did it seem like Jesus was always breaking rules?

Why didn’t Jesus give us a list of rules to follow?

“Rules are for the hardhearted. Lovers don’t need rules.”

(END OF AUDIO SEGMENT ONE)

WISDOM

22. DISCUSS THIS

Why do people have a tendency to reduce the teachings of Jesus to simplistic commands?

23. DISCUSS THIS

Why did Jesus give illustrations of what Kingdom living typically looks like, instead of a set of rules, to His followers?

24. DISCUSS THIS

If His teachings are not simple commands that are to be followed in each and every situation, then can we know what it means to apply a given teaching of His to a particular area of our life?

Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." Luke 14:12-14

1. First, look under the surface of the teaching to find the Kingdom principal in it.
2. Second, apply that Kingdom principal to the situations that you face in your own life.

25. DISCUSS THIS

How do we know what is the correct application of the Law of Love to the various situations that we face in our lives?

26. DISCUSS THIS

Can you love without wisdom?

Can you have knowledge without wisdom?

Can you have wisdom without knowledge?

This is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best. Philippians 1:9

27. DISCUSS THIS

What are three practical steps we can take to grow in wisdom?

1. _____

As a dog returns to its vomit, so fools repeat their folly. Proverbs 26:11

Do not be wise in your own eyes. Proverbs 3:7

2. _____

If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. James 1:5

The Spirit of truth will come and guide you in all truth John 16:13.

3. _____

Whoever fears God will avoid all extremes. Ecclesiastes 7:18.

28. DISCUSS THIS

What is the difference between “praying” and “saying?”

“The wise application of the law of love, in the power of the Spirit, is what is truly, and sorely needed in our churches, in this world.”