

Viewing parables through a first-century lens

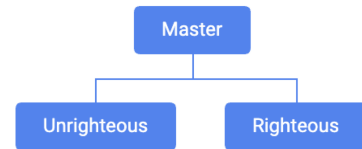
Parable means to “cast or lay aside.” A short fictional story is used to compare a larger truth. Scholars have calculated between 30 and 40 unique parables of Jesus.

“Parables enable the listener to see things the way God sees them.” (Brad H. Young)

“Jesus used parables as the rabbis used them: to make the complex simple.” (Daniel Lancaster)

Parables compare at least one of three key topics (Craig L. Blomberg):

1. The Graciousness of God (a **master** or king figure)
2. The Demands of Discipleship (a **righteous** servant)
3. The Dangers of Disobedience (an **unrighteous** servant)



Use these three guardrails to prevent over-allegorizing (Blomberg and Amy-Jill Levine):

1. A parable’s interpretations should contain **at least one discipleship action** - Jesus’ disciples DO things with His teachings. Often the action is implied, not stated (cf. the Rock vs. Sand parable).
2. Meaning must be **relatable to Jesus’ original audience** - reject anachronisms (time errors) and anti-semitism. Instead of “Israel/Jews (bad) vs. the Church/Gentiles (good),” focus on “hearers only vs. doers” of His Words.
3. **Only as many meanings as there are key topics**. Most often, there will be three. Not every ancillary element in a parable has to have allegorical symbolism.

Memory Verse #24: But _____ are your eyes, because they _____; and your ears, because they _____ (Matthew 13:16)

Walking in His Dust: Talmidim _____. But prove yourselves _____ of the _____, and not just _____ who _____ themselves (James 1:22).

Lesson notes & questions:

Lesson Reflections (review before Apply nights):

- What is at least one new thing I learned about loving God or my neighbor?
- Which topics would I like to know more about or need clarification?
- How does the Holy Spirit want me to apply the lesson’s Scripture to my discipleship?



“Go make disciples...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Mt 28:19-20)

Word Wednesday Lesson 24 – Parables I - *Matthew 12:46-13:23; Mark 4:21-22*

APPLY!

- Share any “Lesson Reflections” with the group. Recite this lesson’s memory verse and discuss what it means to you.
- **Mother and Brothers: Matthew 12:46-50**
 - In what ways is a church family like or unlike an earthly biological/foster/adoptive family?
 - Contrast the Bible’s focus on community with our society’s focus on individualism.
 - Have you ever had to prioritize loyalty to Jesus or other believers over your earthly family?
 - What hurts or hangups from your childhood have you shed, or might you need to shed, in order to improve your church family?
- **The Sermon on the Boat: Matthew 13:1-3a**
 - What do we learn about Jesus as He incorporates the geographic world around Him (lakes, boats, roads, birds, rocks, etc.) into His teaching practices?
 - Review “Viewing Parables through a first-century lens” on the reverse side of this handout. In what ways do these thoughts help your understanding of Jesus’ parables?
- **The Sower and Four Soils: Matthew 13:3-9; 18-23**
 - What can we learn and apply from each soil?
 - In your own words, what is the main message of this parable?
 - Instead of soil, what are various references from our modern world that could describe each type of person who hears Jesus’ words?
- **“Why do you speak in parables?” Matthew 13:10-17, 34-35**
 - In your own words, why *DOES* He speak in parables?
 - What exactly did the prophets long to see and hear (v. 17)?
 - What is Jesus proclaiming (v. 35)?
- **The Lamp on the Lampstand - Mark 4:21-22**
 - To what is Jesus comparing a lamp that is either hidden or displayed?
 - How would you summarize the three parables we studied (Soils, Firm Foundation, Lamp on its Stand)?
 - Explain whether or not you believe Jesus is saying the same things in each parable. If so, why might He use different stories to say the same thing?
- **Spend the last five minutes in prayer pairs**
 - Praise for answered prayers, growth, and how God is working in your life
 - Petitions for specific challenges and intercessions for others