

JESUS AT THE CENTER OF OUR STORY

LOVING OUR ENEMIES

May 19, 2024

DIGGING DEEPER

This message series is based on parables in the New Testament.
For further direction on interpreting parables, see page 2 of this guide.

Use the questions below by yourself or with friends as you seek to know God.
To find a group, visit brookwoodchurch.org/groups.

Words and phrases in this study guide are based on language from the New International Version (NIV).

Read Luke 10:25-37.

Insight: The ancient Greek word for *tested* isn't necessarily mean or evil. This may have been a sincere question from a sincere seeker.

1. What does it mean to *love your neighbor as yourself*?
2. Why did the expert in the law feel the need to justify himself?
3. Why do you think Jesus chose a priest and a Levite to contrast the Samaritan (rather than a widow or tax collector, for example)?
4. What excuses could the priest and Levite have used for not helping the wounded man?

Insight: According to the Jewish way of thinking, a Samaritan would have been the last person in the world who would do the right thing, much less help a Jew. Since the time of exile (about 500 years before the time of Christ), Jews despised Samaritans because they vigorously opposed the rebuilding and restoration of Jerusalem. Hatred between Jews and Samaritans was fierce and long-standing.

5. How often do you spend time with people who have different backgrounds and beliefs? Why do you think that is?
6. How was the Samaritan like Jesus?
7. What other passages of Scripture support the main idea of this parable?
8. What are some things you've had to work on internally to develop a heart for others?
9. According to this passage, how would you describe a *neighbor*?
10. Based on your response to the previous question, who is *your* neighbor? Write down a couple of names and consider how you can care for them this week.
11. Pause and ask God what He wants to say to you.

True compassion means not only feeling another's pain but also being moved to help relieve it.

Daniel Goleman

SIMPLE GUIDE TO INTERPRETING PARABLES

A parable is literally something *cast or thrown alongside* something else. It's a simple story used to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson. A parable often compares two (usually seemingly unrelated) things, and is commonly understood as an *earthly story with a heavenly meaning*.

Jesus spoke in parables...

Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. This is why I speak to them in parables:

*“Though seeing, they do not see;
though hearing, they do not hear or understand. Matthew 13:11,13 [NIV]*

1. **To reveal truth** to those seeking to understand the mysteries of the kingdom.
2. **To conceal truth** from those who remain blind or are unwilling to listen and learn.

AS YOU SEEK TO UNDERSTAND...

Consider the context. Who is Jesus talking to in the story? What events happened before He told the parable? Are there introductory words that set up the story?

Look for two things being compared or contrasted (*e.g.*, righteousness and sin, good and evil, generosity and greed, forgiveness and love, etc.). How are these two related? What major themes emerge as you read?

Don't get distracted by the details. While it's important to take note of particular words and phrases, don't get so bogged down in the tiny details that you miss the point.

Focus on Endings, Not Beginnings. The end of the story often provides a clue or ties things up. The accent commonly falls on the last person mentioned, the last deed or the last saying.

Seek to summarize the main point. Boiling down the parable in a sentence or two might help reveal the central message.

Look for parallels in Scripture. Some concepts and imagery occur repeatedly. Look for those cues when reading parables, as they may offer insight in understanding what the parable is saying. For example, a master, king or judge in a parable usually signifies God. Sheep, servants or workers are usually used to illustrate the followers of God.

Consider a practical application. Parables usually provide a simple lesson for daily life.

Beyond study, the goal is to deepen intimacy with God.
A central question to ask is, *God, what do you want to say to me?*
Trust that He will direct your heart and mind as you seek Him.