

HOW TO TEACH PARABLES TO OTHERS

If you want to teach the Bible, the parables are a great place to start. Parables are short stories that teach great lessons. Jesus did all the work for us. We just need to retell them to the new audience.

WHO CAN WE TEACH PARABLES TO?

Parables are great for younger audiences because they teach deep important ideals in a simple way. The stories make it easier for kids to follow along. Can we teach parables to adults as well? Jesus did. We might think that parables are only for kids, but the lessons are just as important for adults.

THE KEY TO UNDERSTANDING AND TEACHING PARABLES:

Always understand the parable before trying to determine or teach the interpretation. If we don't have a complete understanding of the events, we can attribute a wrong interpretation. When you teach the parable to others, abide by this same rule. Teach the story first, and then explain what it means.

HOW TO PREPARE TO TEACH A PARABLE:

This section will help you gather a sufficient understanding of the parable so you can teach it to others.

The Context: First, get an understanding of the context. Try to figure out whom Jesus is teaching, why he is teaching them, when in His career is He teaching them, etc.

- Jesus speaks differently to His disciples, Pharisees, unbelieving Jews, and multitudes. Determine whom Jesus is speaking to before reading parable.
- Jesus always teaches a parable for a reason. Sometimes His disciples have questions, and other times the Pharisees accuse Him. You can imagine that this will greatly influence His message. Try to determine what causes Jesus to teach this parable.
- If Jesus is teaching early in His career, He will be giving simple morals. Later in His career He starts to accuse the Pharisees of sin more harshly. Try to determine if the timing influences His message.
- We can't always determine the context, but spend sufficient time trying to understand it. The context will greatly help us understand how to interpret His message.

The Parable: Second, get a complete understanding of the parable. Understand the events in the parable alone. Do not begin to interpret.

- Read the parable from beginning to end.
- Divide the parable into sections according to breaking points in the story. It is challenging to explain the parable as one. It is easier to explain the parable little by little. Divide the parable into sections so you can teach it section by section. The sections shouldn't be much more than five verses.
- Have a complete understanding of all the events, characters, and figures in the parable.

The Moral: Third, look for the moral of the parable.

- Usually Jesus ends His parables with a sentence that explains the point of His lesson. The moral should be the guiding principle of how we interpret the parable.

Application: Fourth, see if Jesus gives an application to the parable, and determine an appropriate application for us today. If Jesus' gives an application, let this be a guide to your determining interpretation later.

- Sometimes Jesus applies the parable to the audience after telling it. This application will greatly help us understand and interpret the parable. All interpretations must fit the application. If our interpretation contradicts His application, then our interpretation is most likely incorrect.
- Determine an application for us today. Jesus' messages are timeless. He taught this lesson to a specific audience long ago, but determine what value it has for us today.

The Interpretation: Fifth, have a clear understanding of the interpretation of the parable.

- Look to see if Jesus interprets His parable. Sometimes Jesus explains the parable Himself. If so this will be your guidance of understanding the meaning of the parable.
- If Jesus doesn't explain the parable, you're on your own, but don't worry. Parables are meant to be simple. If you can't figure it out by yourself, ask someone who would know for help.
- Determine what the figures represent, or whom the characters represent. Remember, not everything represents something. Use the moral as a guideline of how to determine what the figures represent. If you need help, ask for help.
- Have a complete understanding of the interpretation of the parable. If you aren't sure of everything, ask for help. If you think you have it right, tell it to someone else who knows, and see if they agree.

HOW TO TEACH A PARABLE:

After having a complete understanding of the parable and interpretation, you should be ready to teach it to others. This section will give you a simple guideline of the best way to teach a parable. You will teach the parable in a very similar fashion as you prepared it.

The Context: First, discuss that context. Tell why or to whom Jesus is teaching this parable. Once the audience knows the context, it can help them understand the parable as it's being taught.

The Parable: After the audience understands the context of the parable, you can begin reading it with them.

- Have volunteers read the designated sections of the parable.
- After each section is read, review to make sure the audience had a complete understanding of all the events and characters in the verses.
- This is a good time to get audience participation. Ask the audience questions regarding the events. Who are the characters? What are they doing? If there is an important detail
- Remember, only focus on the story. DO NOT BEGIN TO INTERPRET. If people in the audience begin to interpret, try to focus it back on the events alone.
- After every section has been read, make sure that the audience completely understands the story. Ask to see if anyone has any questions.

The Moral: Read the moral with the class.

Make sure the audience knows that this moral explains what the parable is about.

The Interpretation: Now you will begin to explain what the parable means.

- First, explain what the most significant figures represent. If there are main characters, explain what they represent.
- Once the audience understands who the main characters represent, reread the parable (using the same sections as before), and explain what the parable means with the interpretation.
- Eventually you will get back the moral again. By this time, everyone in the audience should understand what the moral has to do with the parable.

Application: After the audience understands the parable and interpretation, focus on how the parable affects us today.

- Tell what the original application of the parable (if the original application is different from a modern application).
- Then relate the lesson to our own lives.
- Try to convey what the audience needs to do, or how the audience should feel.