

ALL CHRISTIANS' FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL

Study to show "The Way of True life,"

Bible Study Outline

TOPIC: Parable of the Sower

TEXT: *Matthew 13:1-23*

Instructions: *Let the above passages be read to enable everyone to participate fully. The teacher should provide additional background information on certain follow-up questions. Always try to use relevant but brief Bible references to illustrate your points, and be careful not to dominate the discussion.*

Introduction: Have you ever wondered why the same book or the same sermon will produce strikingly different results in different people? How is it, for instance, that some people seem unable to grasp the simplest and most obvious spiritual truths while others are transformed by them? Jesus' most important parable tells why.

I call it his "most important" because it provides more clues than any other parable as to the nature of parables and how they should be interpreted. The parable is followed by Christ's own interpretation and discussion of its contents. It is an excellent place to begin our study of the parables.

1. Why are some people more open to spiritual things than others?
2. Read Matthew 13:1-23. How was this parable well-suited to the personal experiences of the crowds gathered around Jesus (w. 1-9)?
3. In verse 10 the disciples ask Jesus, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?" How would you summarize his answer (w. 11-16)?
4. How do parables help Jesus' followers understand his kingdom but hinder the understanding of those who don't follow him closely (w. 12-17)?
5. In verses 18-23 Jesus explains the meaning of this parable to his disciples. The seed is the message of the kingdom (v. 19). Who is the farmer, and who is the soil?
6. Satanic "birds" destroyed the value of God's word for the first group of people. Why? What did these hearers lack (v. 19)?
7. What can we do to help people understand God's message?
8. Verses 20-21 describe the kind of person referred to as stony or rocky soil. What examples have you seen of people who respond this way?
9. How can we avoid this in our own lives and discourage it in the lives of others?
10. What kind of person does the third type of soil describe (v. 22)?
11. How can we avoid being choked by the weeds and thorns Jesus mentions (v. 23)?
12. Which of the four kinds of soil do you most identify with? Explain.
13. What are some practical examples of how we can become "good soil" (v. 23)?

ALL CHRISTIANS' FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL

Study to show "The Way of True life,"

Bible Study Outline

TOPIC: The Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin and the Lost Son

TEXT: *Luke 15:1-32*

Instructions: *Let the above passages be read to enable everyone to participate fully. The teacher should provide additional background information on certain follow-up questions. Always try to use relevant but brief Bible references to illustrate your points, and be careful not to dominate the discussion.*

Introduction: If people really knew me, they would reject me." To avoid this risk, we often wear masks we think people will like. We hide who we really are, putting ourselves under constant strain. We often feel this same way about God. We think we are rejected and condemned rather than welcomed and loved. We do our best to please him but feel that we never measure up. In these three parables Jesus sets us straight about God's attitude toward sinners. The result is a startling picture of God.

1. In each of the following pairs of words, which one more accurately describes your image of who God is? Somber or joyous? Searching or waiting? Welcoming or judging? Explain your answers.
2. Read Luke 15:1-32. What bothered the Pharisees and teachers of the law (the Jewish religious leaders), and why (w. 1-2)?
3. When do you find yourself bothered by other Christians in a similar way today?
4. When reading stories or parables, it helps to imagine the sights, sounds, smells and feelings. What comes to mind when you read the parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin (w. 4-10)?
5. Who is represented by the central characters (or objects) in each of the three parables?
6. How do you account for the intense reactions of the shepherd, woman and father to their losses and to their finds?
7. Describe an incident when you lost or misplaced something valuable to you. How did you feel?
8. Let's look more closely at the third parable. How might the Pharisees and teachers of the law have felt about each of the actions of the younger son (w. 13-16)?
9. How might they have expected the father to respond when the son returned home?
10. What do the details in verses 20-24 reveal about the feelings of our Father in heaven?
11. How can this portrait of God help us to feel fully accepted by the Father—in spite of our sin?
12. Instead of concluding the story in verse 24, Jesus goes on to describe the reaction of the older son (w. 25-32). What additional point do you think Jesus wants to make to the Jewish leaders, and why?
13. How can this parable motivate us to seek those who are lost?

ALL CHRISTIANS' FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL

Study to show "The Way of True life,"

Bible Study Outline

TOPIC: The Good Samaritan

TEXT: *Luke 10:25-37*

Instructions: *Let the above passages be read to enable everyone to participate fully. The teacher should provide additional background information on certain follow-up questions. Always try to use relevant but brief Bible references to illustrate your points, and be careful not to dominate the discussion.*

Introduction: What makes a neighbor? Geographical proximity? Community of race or religion? Sharing the same social or economic level? In this parable Jesus overturns our traditional definitions and shatters our stereotypes of what it means to be a neighbor to those around us.

1. Do you feel guilty when you see pictures of starving people on TV or in magazines? Should you? Explain.
2. Read Luke 10:25-37. Do you think the law expert's first question was sincere? Why or why not?
What about his second question? Explain.
3. In what sense did the expert in the law "correctly" answer his own
4. Legalists are sometimes defined as people who try to scale down God's law to justify their own behavior. Do you think the expert in the law is guilty of this (v. 29)? Why or why not?
In what ways have you discovered this tendency in yourself?
5. The situation described in verse 30 was common on the dangerous road from Jerusalem to Jericho. In what situations today is non-involvement seen as a wise choice?
6. Why do you suppose Jesus picked a Samaritan, someone from an ethnic group Jews detested, as the "hero" of the story (w. 31-33)?
7. Describe the Samaritan's actions from the point of view of (a) personal inconvenience, (b) financial cost and (c) risk (w. 34-35). How big a factor is each of these in discouraging your own neighbor's actions? Any examples?
8. Christ's question (v. 36) was not intended to prove that Samaritan could be better neighbors than Jews. What was he getting at?
9. "Go and do likewise" (v. 37). What exactly was Jesus telling the expert in the law to do?
10. In what practical ways can we "go and do likewise" today?

ALL CHRISTIANS' FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL

Study to show "The Way of True life,"

Bible Study Outline

TOPIC: The Unforgiving Servant

TEXT: *Matthew 18:15, 21-35*

Instructions: *Let the above passages be read to enable everyone to participate fully. The teacher should provide additional background information on certain follow-up questions. Always try to use relevant but brief Bible references to illustrate your points, and be careful not to dominate the discussion.*

Introduction: It seems to be true (at a psychological level anyway) that a critical, unforgiving person tends also to be a guilt-prone person. And vice versa. People who struggle with guilt feelings are usually critical of others and tend to harbor resentment. In this parable Jesus teaches the consequences of unforgiveness with brutal clarity. Unforgiveness in someone who has never experienced God's forgiveness may be understandable. But what can we say about an unforgiving Christian?

1. Why do you think people who struggle with guilt are usually critical and resentful?
2. Read Matthew 18:15, 21-35. What is the ultimate goal we should have when we approach a brother who has sinned against us?
3. In verse 21, do you think Peter's problem is actual or merely theoretical? Explain.
4. What view of forgiveness does Peter's question reveal?
5. Jesus tells Peter to forgive his brother seventy-seven times (v. 22) What is Jesus' point?
6. Ten thousand talents (v. 24) was equal to several million dollars The king's intended action (v. 25) represented contemporary justice If you were the man, how would you have felt before and after the king canceled your debt (w. 25-27)?
7. How real to you is (a) your indebtedness to God? (b) the man of your escape from justice? Explain.
8. A hundred denarii (v. 28) is a trivial amount compared to ten thousand talents. What lesson do you think Christ intends by the sum?
How should the comparison of the two sums affect our view of the sins of others?
9. Think of someone you have had difficulty forgiving. How would it help to compare their actions to what God has forgiven you for?
10. What can we conclude about those who profess the faith yet do not forgive?
11. What happens to our spiritual freedom and our fellowship with God when we are critical and unforgiving (w. 34-35)?
12. Take time to thank God for his forgiveness. Ask his help in forgiving those who have hurt or mistreated you.

ALL CHRISTIANS' FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL

Study to show "The Way of True life,"

Bible Study Outline

TOPIC: The Widow and the Judge

TEXT: *Luke 18:1-8*

Instructions: *Let the above passages be read to enable everyone to participate fully. The teacher should provide additional background information on certain follow-up questions. Always try to use relevant but brief Bible references to illustrate your points, and be careful not to dominate the discussion.*

Introduction: Today many people are suffering from a disease known as "lottery fever," the gambling craze sparked by million-dollar lotteries. Week by week two or three winners are interviewed on TV, keeping the fever high. Yet logically a person's chances of winning are very small, that you would think people would soon get discouraged. "Yet millions go on playing the lotteries unsuccessfully all their lives. They never lose hope. But Christians who pray often do. Why? What makes us give up when the answer delays? Why do many of us stop expecting anything when we pray, using "Thy will be done" as an excuse for unbelief? In this parable Jesus tells us why we should always pray and never give up.

1. Is there as much excitement and expectancy in your prayers now as there was when you first became a Christian? Why or why not?
2. Read Luke 18:1-8. In your opinion, what are the key words
3. The characters in the parable are drawn sketchily but vividly. What images come to mind when you think about the widow? The judge?
4. Why do you think the widow is so persistent?
5. What finally motivates the judge to act (w. 4-5)?
6. What we believe about God and how we *feel* about him when we pray may not be the same. For example, I may believe God cares for all my needs, but I may feel resentful that he hasn't helped me get a job. In what ways do your feelings and beliefs sometimes conflict when you pray?
7. Use your imagination to fill in the details about those praying to God in verses 6-8. How would you describe them and their circumstances?
8. Are your prayers as desperate as those described here? Why or ^ not?
9. In what ways can we expect God to do far more for those in v 7 than the judge did for the widow?
10. Jesus told this parable to show us that we should always pray not give up (v. 1). How would you explain the uncertainty of his question in verse 8?
11. When are you most tempted to give up praying about someone or something?
12. How can this parable encourage you to keep on praying?
13. Think of one or two areas where you are discouraged and to give up praying. Ask God to help you to be persistent in prayer.

ALL CHRISTIANS' FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL

Study to show "The Way of True life,"

Bible Study Outline

TOPIC: The Wheat and the Weeds

TEXT: *Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43*

Instructions: *Let the above passages be read to enable everyone to participate fully. The teacher should provide additional background information on certain follow-up questions. Always try to use relevant but brief Bible references to illustrate your points, and be careful not to dominate the discussion.*

Introduction: We all wish God would remove evil from the world. But put yourself in God's place for a moment: if by a simple word of power you could snatch evil doers away from earth, what complications might arise from your decision? As one person has said, "If God were to destroy all evil at midnight, who would be left at one o'clock?" In this parable Jesus tells us why God allows good and evil to coexist in the world.

1. Have you ever been frustrated by the fact that God has not yet removed all evil from the world? Explain.
2. Read Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43. What crisis occurs at the beginning of the parable (w. 24-26)?
3. The owner's servants offer to pull up the weeds (v. 28). What alternative does the owner propose, and why (w. 29-30)?
4. According to Jesus, what do the key elements of the parable stand for (w. 37-39)?
5. What does the enemy's activity in this parable tell us about devil's plan and influence in the world?
6. In what sense are non-Christians "enemy agents"?
How should this affect our attitude toward them?
7. How does Jesus interpret the weeds being pulled up and burned in the fire (w. 40-43)?
Who is given this responsibility (w. 41-42)?
8. Like the owner's servants, how have Christians sometimes offered to pull up the weeds prematurely?
What have been some of the consequences of this misguided concern?
9. Christians have often misinterpreted the field as the church rather than the world. How would interpreting the field as the church alter the meaning of the parable?
10. How does this parable help you understand God's patience and plan for dealing with evil?
11. What hope does the parable offer us as Christians?

ALL CHRISTIANS' FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL

Study to show "The Way of True life,"

Bible Study Outline

TOPIC: The Parable of the Vineyard Workers

TEXT: *Matthew 19:16—20:16*

Instructions: *Let the above passages be read to enable everyone to participate fully. The teacher should provide additional background information on certain follow-up questions. Always try to use relevant but brief Bible references to illustrate your points, and be careful not to dominate the discussion.*

Introduction: You deserve the best." "Demand your rights." "I'm worth it." People today want everything that's coming to them, and they want it *not* Convinced of our own worth, we demand higher paying jobs, better working conditions and more fringe benefits. If these are denied, ^ feel we have been treated unfairly—and perhaps our feelings are justified. But what happens when we treat God like a divine employer? In this passage Jesus challenges our human concepts of fairness and worth He shows us that kingdom values are often the opposite of what we expect.

1. In your opinion, what factors should determine a person's wage or salary?
2. Read Matthew 19:16-30. Before answering the young man's question (v. 16), Jesus asks a question of his own (v. 17). Why?
3. Jesus replies, "If you want to enter life, obey the commandments" (v. 17). If the New Testament teaches that we cannot be saved by obeying the law, then what does Jesus mean?
4. The young man implies that he has kept all ten commandments (v. 20). How do verses 21-22 make plain that that he hasn't and expose his true spiritual condition?
What value would you see in following Jesus' model here as you present the gospel to non-Christians?
5. In biblical times people thought wealth was a reward for righteousness. How does Jesus challenge this view (w. 23-26)?
According to this passage, what hope do people have of being saved?
6. Read 20:1-16. How does this parable arise out of the discussion over the rich young man (see especially 19:27-30 and 20:16)?
Imagine that you had "borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day" yet were paid the same as those who only worked an hour. How would you feel, and why?
7. How do the landowner's wage policies compare with contemporary management policies?
How might modern union officials react to it?
8. Although the landowner's actions *seem* unfair, he claims the not (w. 13-15). Why aren't they unfair?
9. The landlord clearly represents God. How do his values as seen in this parable conflict with society's values? Why is it so hard to live by these values of God?
10. How does this passage place our service to God in proper perspective?
11. Spend time thanking God for his fairness and generosity.

ALL CHRISTIANS' FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL

Study to show "The Way of True life,"

Bible Study Outline

TOPIC: The Wise and Foolish Virgins

TEXT: *Matthew 24:36—25:13*

Instructions: *Let the above passages be read to enable everyone to participate fully. The teacher should provide additional background information on certain follow-up questions. Always try to use relevant but brief Bible references to illustrate your points, and be careful not to dominate the discussion.*

Introduction: The Mexican government was aware that an earthquake o happen, but preparations were not made. The Columbian government knew a volcanic eruption was imminent, but thousands lost their when the eruption came.

Christ's second coming is spoken of with joy from many pulpits for many it will be a catastrophe of unparalleled magnitude. Why do human beings unthinkingly play Russian roulette with possible disaster? This parable helps us to understand.

1. Give an example of a warning you may have ignored. Did ignoring the warning get harder or easier as time went on? Explain.

2. Read Matthew 24:36—25:13. How will the coming of the S< Man be similar to the days of Noah (w. 36-41)?

3. Christ's main point is not to warn against "eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage" (v. 38 and also v. 49). What then is he emphasizing?

4. Jesus compares his coming to a thief breaking into a house (w. 42-44) and a master returning home (w. 45-51). What does each story emphasize about (a) the nature of the Lord's return and (b) our responsibility?

5. If the Lord returned today, what would he hope to find us doing (w. 45-46)?

6. In the verses we've just looked at (w. 36-51), would you say Christ's illustrations about his coming were joyful or fearful events? Explain.

7. In biblical times the bridegroom would come to the bride's home after dark where the bridesmaids (virgins) were also waiting, and then would take her (and them) in procession to his home for the wedding feast. What are the similarities between the wise and foolish virgins 0 1-5)?

8. How did the bridegroom's long delay reveal the differences between the wise and foolish virgins (w. 6-12)?

9. According to this parable what constitutes wisdom in relation Christ's return?

10. It has been nearly two thousand years since Jesus promised to return (note v. 5). What negative effects might this have on us?

11. What can we do to overcome these negative effects and Christ's warnings more seriously?

ALL CHRISTIANS' FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL

Study to show "The Way of True life,"

Bible Study Outline

TOPIC: Parable of the Talents

TEXT: *Matthew 25:14-30*

Instructions: *Let the above passages be read to enable everyone to participate fully. The teacher should provide additional background information on certain follow-up questions. Always try to use relevant but brief Bible references to illustrate your points, and be careful not to dominate the discussion.*

Introduction: Men are *not* born equal—or women either. We live in an imperfect world. And sometimes the inequalities can seem unfair. Our sense of injustice arises from two related sources. First, as children we may fear that our parents love our brothers and sisters more than us. Then we enter a fiercely competitive world where people admire the successful. We may feel it unfair that we have fewer gifts or opportunities than those who wind up more famous or rich than we. This parable gives us a glimpse of the issues of inequality and fairness in God's kingdom.

1. If someone loaned you a million dollars and you had to pay it back in ten years, what would you do with it?
2. Read Matthew 25:14-30. A talent was not a personal ability but a measure of money equal to thousands of dollars. How and why does the master entrust his money to these servants (w. 14-15)?
3. If you had been the third servant, how would you have felt; receiving only one talent when the others had more?
4. How might our envy or resentment of other Christians inhibit faithful execution of our responsibilities?
5. Compare the reaction of the master to the first and second se (w. 19-23). What matters to him, and what does *not* matter?
6. As you look at the statements of the three servants (w. 20, 22, 24, 25), what can you infer about their relationships with their master. How might their relationships have affected their actions in verses 18?
7. Think of people you have done jobs for. What bearing relationship with them have on your attitude toward the job?
8. How is the master like God and unlike God?
9. How does our relationship with God affect our attitudes toward what we do?
10. Do you think of yourself as a five-talent person, a two-talent person or a one-talent person? Explain.
11. How can you faithfully handle the responsibilities God has given you?

ALL CHRISTIANS' FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL

Study to show "The Way of True life,"

Bible Study Outline

TOPIC: The Pharisee and the Tax Collector

TEXT: *Luke 18:9-14 P*

Instructions: *Let the above passages be read to enable everyone to participate fully. The teacher should provide additional background information on certain follow-up questions. Always try to use relevant but brief Bible references to illustrate your points, and be careful not to dominate the discussion.*

Introduction: Prayer is a kind of litmus test of our relationship with God. prayers reveal who and what is most important to us. They expose innermost feelings about ourselves and about God. In this parable overhear the prayers of two men. If we listen closely, we can discern not only how God views their prayers but ours as well.

1. What does your mind focus on when you pray?
2. Read Lk 18:9-14. How would you describe those for whose benefit Jesus tells this story (v. 9)?
3. The Pharisee addresses God, but to what extent does God occupy his attention? Explain.
4. On what positive and negative facts about himself does the Pharisee depend (w. 11-12)?
What does this reveal about his attitude to himself and to God?
5. How many times does the Pharisee compare himself with others (v. 11)?
What does it do to you when you compare yourself with those you look down on?
6. How does the way the tax collector views himself (v. 13) contrast with the Pharisee?
7. Notice the positions, postures and gestures of the Pharisee and the tax collector. What conclusions can we draw from these contrasts in their body language?
8. What different positions have you adopted when praying?
What differences have you noticed while praying in these positions
9. In the first century, Pharisees were viewed with great respect, tax collectors were despised as traitors. Why then was the tax collector justified rather than the Pharisee (v. 14)?
10. In what ways are we tempted to exalt ourselves today?
11. How can we humble ourselves in our attitudes and actions

ALL CHRISTIANS' FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL

Study to show "The Way of True life,"

Bible Study Outline

TOPIC: Parable of the Rich Fool

TEXT: *Luke 12:13-21*

Instructions: *Let the above passages be read to enable everyone to participate fully. The teacher should provide additional background information on certain follow-up questions. Always try to use relevant but brief Bible references to illustrate your points, and be careful not to dominate the discussion.*

Introduction: The last parts of us to be converted are our pockets and purses. Many of us are so secretive about our feelings on the subject of money that we have concealed them even from ourselves in our unconscious minds. Unconsciously we yearn for more material things, while consciously we think we want Christ's kingdom. This parable illustrates a tension in the heart of every Christian, a tension affecting poor and rich alike. How do we resolve the conflict between our desires for earthly and heavenly treasure, earthly and heavenly security, kingdom values and the values of the world?

1. Why do you think people place such value on money and material possessions?
2. Read Luke 12:13-21. People often asked rabbis for decisions about disputed points of law. Describe everything we know or can infer about the man who comes to Jesus (w. 13-15).
3. What should our attitude be toward greed, and why (v. 15)?
4. How would you evaluate the *actions* of the rich man in verses 16-18?
- 5- How would you evaluate his *altitude* in verse 19?
6. During times of prosperity, why is it easy to feel secure and at
7. How does God expose the man's false sense of security (v. 20)
8. How does this parable illustrate that "a man's life does not c in the abundance of his possessions"?
9. Is Jesus condemning material prosperity in this parable (v. 21)? Explain.
Do you think it is possible to be prosperous without being greedy? If so, how?
10. What does it mean to be "rich toward God" (v. 21)?
11. What could the man have done to increase his spiritual wealth?
12. What practical steps can you take to become spiritually rich?

ALL CHRISTIANS' FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL

Study to show "The Way of True life,"

Bible Study Outline

TOPIC: The Rich Man and Lazarus

TEXT: *Luke-16:19-31*

Instructions: *Let the above passages be read to enable everyone to participate fully. The teacher should provide additional background information on certain follow-up questions. Always try to use relevant but brief Bible references to illustrate your points, and be careful not to dominate the discussion.*

Introduction: Have you ever been embarrassed by Karl Marx's statement that religion is the opiate of the people? True religion is not the opiate of the people, since it demands that we feed the hungry and clothe the poor. Nor does true religion teach passive suffering in the face of injustice and oppression. Yet this parable reminds us all that pain and suffering in this life *can* be replaced by bliss in the next—and this hope need never embarrass us. It also teaches that wealth and power in this life do not guarantee them in the next.

1. Have you ever been accosted by a panhandler? How did you react
2. Read Luke 16:19-31. How does this parable reveal the rich man lack of concern for Lazarus (w. 19-21)?
3. How would you account for his indifference toward Lazarus?
How do some rich people explain the poverty of the poor?
4. How do you feel when you are low on money and when you are flush with cash?
5. How does the parable contrast the state of the two men before their death, at their burial and after their death?
6. Does this parable teach that Lazarus experienced heavenly bliss *because of his* earthly poverty? Explain.
Likewise, did the rich man experience torment simply because he had been wealthy on earth? Explain.
7. Contrast the rich man's accessibility to Lazarus in life and death (w. 20, 23, 26).
8. What is the one thing Abraham asks the rich man to do (v. 25)?
Think of a past mistake you deeply regret. How does the memory affect you?
9. Why does God not send messengers from the dead to warn us (v. 3D)?
10. Why did Jesus' resurrection fail to convince people of his day, and why does it still fail to convince people today?
11. If we choose to listen (v. 31), what are Moses, the prophets and this parable saying to us?