

Why Jesus Told Parables

Bible References:

Hebrews 4:12; Matthew 13:10-17; Ephesians 4:18; James 1:5; James 1:22-25

Bible Memory Verse:

“For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” Hebrews 4:12 ESV

Teaching Concept:

Parables are stories Jesus told to teach us important lessons about the Kingdom of Heaven.

Family Game: Round Robin Storytelling

Have your family sit in a circle. Tell a story as a group, with each person adding a sentence or two at a time. You or your child may start, then the person on the left adds to what you started. The rules are: you have to use the characters and places already introduced in the story. Don't go adding crazy characters and places without using the ones already in the story. Keep the story on track. You want an introduction, a problem, the problem gets solved, and the characters celebrate at the end. Be respectful of the story parts others add! Nothing is “stupid.” Laugh if it's funny, but don't judge what others add. The point is to stretch your creativity and get your family thinking about stories. If you have younger children, you can sit in a circle and retell a familiar story, like the Three Little Pigs, with each student adding what happens next in the sequence of events.

The Lesson

Open in prayer.

Then say, Who likes stories? What are some of your favorite kinds of stories to read and listen to? Why do you think we like stories so much? Stories are fun! We get to use our imaginations and learn new things through stories. We also have an easier time remembering things we learn when we learn them through a story. Stories stick with us.

Did you know that Jesus told stories, too? Jesus is a really great teacher. He taught important lessons in a lot of different ways. One of the ways he used a lot was through telling stories. Can you say what we call the stories Jesus told, which are written down in the Bible? The stories Jesus told in order to teach us important things are called **parables**. Today we are going to start learning about some of the parables Jesus told. We won't look at every parable Jesus told, because there are a LOT of them, but we will study many stories over the next several weeks. You may have heard some of these stories before, and that's okay. The word of God is alive and powerful. It says so in Hebrews 4:12. It says, "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart." This means that even if we read the same Bible stories over and over, there is always something new to learn and apply to our lives. Even grownups learn new stuff when we read familiar stories from the Bible!

Sometimes the parables can be difficult to understand. We may hear a good story, but not be sure how that parable is supposed to change our lives. Jesus told us in the Bible why parables are so hard to understand sometimes.

Let's read that together in Matthew 13:10-17.

The Purpose of the Parables

¹⁰Then the disciples came and said to him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" ¹¹And he answered them, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. ¹²For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. ¹³This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. ¹⁴Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says:

""You will indeed hear but never understand,
and you will indeed see but never perceive."

¹⁵ For this people's heart has grown dull,
and with their ears they can barely hear,
and their eyes they have closed,
lest they should see with their eyes
and hear with their ears
and understand with their heart
and turn, and I would heal them.'

¹⁶But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. ¹⁷For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

So why, based on the passage we just read, did Jesus choose to teach in parables? Jesus was a well-known man. Lots and lots of people came to listen to what he had to say. But not all of these people were really interested in learning anything from Jesus. Some of the people came to listen to Jesus because they were hoping to see him do a miracle, or because they wanted to see this man who everyone was so excited about. Then there were the religious leaders, the scribes and Pharisees, who didn't want to learn from Jesus at all. They just wanted to try and catch him saying something wrong so they could arrest him. So all sorts of people came out to hear Jesus, but only the people who were really interested in learning about the Kingdom of Heaven and salvation were able to understand the stories. No one else could understand what Jesus was teaching in his parables because their hearts were hardened towards God.

What do we need to do to understand the Word of God? We need to have an open mind that is willing to learn from God. To be willing to change the way we think about things so we can think like Jesus does. We need to be willing to change the way we feel about people and the world so we can feel like Jesus does. **So in order to understand the parables, we have to keep an open mind, excited to learn new things about God and the Kingdom of Heaven, and we have to have humble hearts, willing to change the way we feel and act around people and situations in our lives. We also need to ask God to help us understand the Bible. We ask God for help by praying.**

Prayer:

Heavenly Father,

You used the simple, everyday things to teach your followers the truth about who you are and what your kingdom is like. Open our eyes and ears to understand so that we will turn to you and know you fully. In Jesus name, Amen.

Family Activities

* Learn and sing this song to help your family memorize Hebrews 4:12.

[Hebrews 4:12](#)

* Here is a sword for kids to print off and color to use as a bookmark for your Bible.

[Hebrews 4:12 sword picture](#)

* Click on the link to do a word search online of the words from Hebrews 4:12. Or print the one below. Once you find all the words, find and write the Bible verse.

[Hebrews 4:12 word search](#)

Hebrews 4:12

H	I	I	T	G	A	I	I	N	O	T	S	S	N
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ACTIVE
HEART
PIERCING
TWO-EDGED
INTENTIONS
THOUGHTS
SOUL
WORDOFGOD
JOINTS
SHARPER
SWORD
DISCERNING
DIVISION
LIVING
MARROW
SPIRIT

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