

## Jesus' 46 Parables in Chronological Order

### Christian Bible Study ~ Introduction and 26 Lessons

The parables of Jesus embody much of his fundamental teaching. They are quite simple, memorable stories, often with humble imagery, each with a single message. Jesus, for example, likened the Kingdom of God to yeast (an image usually meant as corruption) or a mustard seed. Like his aphorisms, Jesus' parables were often surprising and paradoxical. The parable of the good Samaritan, for example, turned expectations on their head with the despised Samaritan proving to be the wounded man's neighbour. The parables were simple and memorable enough to survive in an oral tradition before being written down years after Jesus' death.

Most Bible scholars say that Jesus parables appear only in the three synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). However, if we broaden our view a bit, it seems that Jesus' three-part story about the sheep, gate, and shepherd in John 10 can also be considered a parable especially as it chronologically falls right after the related parable of the lost sheep in Matthew 18:12-14.

**The chronological order of the parables** that I have used comes from the very excellent NIV *Narrated Bible in Chronological Order* (hardcover) and *Daily Bible in Chronological Order* (paperback) by Dr. F. LaGard Smith of Pepperdine University, published by Harvest House. There is another list of the parables in chronological order floating around on the web, but it lists only 35 parables and does not cite a source for the chronology.

**The chronology is quite a lesson by itself.** You can see that the first group of parables focuses on the fact that there's a new story being told, that it's not to be hidden, and it serves as a foundation for what's coming next. We then have the very important Parables #12 (sower and four types of soil) and #13 (weeds among good plants). This is followed by a group of "Kingdom of Heaven" parables (growing seed, yeast, valuable pearl, etc.). Now that the foundation has been built, Jesus gets into the behavior parables—how he would have you act as a Christian in different situations as a disciple, worker, or tenant. He then moves into using your talents well, remaining watchful, and finally into judgement. Basically it's the progression of a Christian life. Unfortunately, it's a progression we miss out on when we read the parables in the order they appear in Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

**If you plan to lead a group** in studying Jesus' parables, I strongly recommend you look over and allow yourself some time to delve into the leader's notes from the first lesson (Parables Introduction) before you get going. Also, print out the entire list of parables and give everyone in your group a copy that they can refer to as your study progresses.

I've found with my groups that each lesson or discussion takes about 45 minutes to go through. I've also found that people can get passionately involved in these lessons and they can easily run much longer if the leader doesn't keep things moving along.

The discussion questions are slightly different from traditional Bible studies in that they **emphasize the application of the scripture to your life today**. Unlike some of my other studies, there are Leader's Guides for only about one-half of the lessons. Many of the questions are designed to be a springboard to further discussion and there is often no truly right or wrong answer. If you have questions or comments, please use the "Contact Me" button on the menu below. I guarantee that I will read your comments, however, as this web site gets more than 3,000 visitors per day, I can't possibly answer every one.

In response to your requests, **these studies are in Adobe PDF format**, so they can easily be printed out. The first page provides the NIV scripture verses, the second is the discussion questions. Pages 3 and higher are notes for leaders. For the Bible studies that I lead, I print the scripture verses on one side of a sheet and the discussion questions on the other side. However, if saving paper is not a consideration, print them on two sheets so people can refer to both the verses and the questions without excessive flipping over. If you cannot read PDF files, click to [download Adobe Reader](#).

Some discussion questions are borrowed or adapted from the book *New Testament Lesson Maker* from NavPress (ISBN 0-89109-688-4). I highly recommend this book, which is available from CBD as well as most large Christian bookstores. The image above is a painting simply called *Parables* By James Christensen. James says, "I worked closely with my friend Robert Millet, Professor of Ancient Scripture at Brigham Young University, in selecting these twelve and we feel that each conveys a special aspect of Jesus' teachings." Reproductions of the image are available from many web sites.

Dave Ahl — July 2020

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- Parables Introduction Definitions, parable, fable, analogy, count of parables
  - List of Parables in Order Brief descriptions and scripture references for all 46 parables.
  - Parables #1-2-3-4 New cloth, New wine. Lamp on a stand. Wise & foolish builders.
  - Parables #5-6 Moneylender forgives unequal debts. Lamp on a stand (2nd time).
  - Parables #7-8 Rich man builds bigger barns. Servants must remain watchful.
  - Parables #9-10 Wise and foolish servants. Unfruitful fig tree.
  - Parable #11 Sower of seeds into four types of soil.
  - Parable #12 Weeds among good plants. "Kingdom of Heaven".
  - Parables #13-15 Growing seed. Mustard seed. Yeast. "Kingdom of Heaven".
  - Parables #16-19 Hidden treasure. Pearl. Fishing net. Owner of a house. "Kingdom of Heaven".
  - Parables #20-21 Lost sheep. The sheep, gate, and shepherd.
  - Parables #22-23 Master and his servant. Unmerciful servant.
  - Parables #24-25 Good Samaritan. Friend in need.
  - Parables #26-27 Lowest seat at the feast. Invitation to a great banquet.
  - Parable #28 Cost of discipleship.
  - Parables #29-30 Lost sheep (sheep as sinners). Lost coin.
  - Parable #31 Lost (prodigal) son.
  - Parable #32 Shrewd manager.
  - Parable #33 Rich man and Lazarus.
  - Parable #34 Workers in the vineyard, early and late.
  - Parables #35-36 Persistent widow and crooked judge. Praying: Pharisee and tax collector.
  - Parable #37 King's servants given minas.
  - Parables #38-39 Two sons, one obeys, one does not. Wicked tenants.
  - Parable #40 Invitation to a wedding banquet.
  - Parables #41-42 Signs from a fig tree. Wise and foolish servants.

- Parables #43-44 Wise and foolish virgins. Servants must remain watchful.
- Parable #45 Three servants given talents.
- Parable #46 Sheep and goats will be separated.