

TALK IT OVER

Stories Jesus Told

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Icebreaker: What is a story that you remember from a long time ago?

Matthew 13:34 (NLT) Jesus always used stories and illustrations like these when speaking to the crowds. In fact, he never spoke to them without using such parables.

Parable = Greek *parabole* - cast alongside of – a story ‘cast alongside of’ a truth being taught.

Parable – earthly story with a heavenly meaning

Matthew 13:10 (NLT) His disciples came and asked him, “Why do you use parables when you talk to the people?”

Matthew 13:11-13a (NLT) He replied, “You are permitted to understand the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven, but others are not.

secrets = Greek *mustérion*, (where we get our English word mystery) = something that was once hidden but now revealed in the Gospel.

Matthew 13:12-13a (NLT) To those who listen to my teaching, more understanding will be given, and they will have an abundance of knowledge. But for those who are not listening, even what little understanding they have will be taken away from them. That is why I use these parables...

Two Types of Listeners

✓ Those who listen

- more understanding will be given
- they will have an abundance of knowledge
- Kingdom of God will no longer be a mystery

Matthew 13:16 (NLT) But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear.

✓ Those who don't listen

- what little understanding they have will be taken away from them

Matthew 13:13b (NLT) For they look, but they don't really see. They hear, but they don't really listen or understand.

Interpreting Parables

1. Context - that which surrounds the text

What prompted this story?

- this is what the kingdom of heaven is like.
- *Luke 18:9 (NLT) Then Jesus told this story to some who had great confidence in their own righteousness and scorned everyone else.*

2. Observation – what is the story about?

Ask Questions:

- Who are the character and who do they represent
- What challenge is presented
- Look for code words and key phrases

3. Interpretation – what did the story mean to the original hearers?

- Don't treat parables like an allegory, where every detail has symbolic meaning
- Look for one basic, central meaning and evaluate details that support that meaning

4. Application - principles from that apply to us today

- Check application against scripture
- *John 12:49 (NLT) I don't speak on my own authority. The Father who sent me has commanded me what to say and how to say it.*
- *Mark 4:9 (NLT) Then he said, "Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand."*

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think Jesus spoke in parables so often?
2. What is one of your favorite parables and why?
3. Why do you think it's important to have a process to understand Jesus' parables?
4. How can you grow in your understanding of parables?