

JESUS AT THE CENTER OF OUR STORY

STEWARDSHIP

April 21, 2024

DIGGING DEEPER

This message series is based on parables in the New Testament.
For further direction on interpreting parables, see page 2 of this guide.

Use the questions below by yourself or with friends as you seek to know God.
To find a group, visit brookwoodchurch.org/groups.

Words and phrases in this study guide are based on language from the New International Version (NIV).

Read Luke 12:13-21.

Insight: Someone in the crowd challenged Jesus to make a decision on a point of Jewish law. Jesus did not engage the man. Instead, He turned to the disciples and gave them one more thing to add to the list of what to fear: greed.

1. Jesus gives a strong command: *Watch out!* (vs. 15). Why is it so tempting to want more?
2. What are the damaging effects of greed?
3. What did Jesus mean *life does not consist in an abundance of possessions* (vs. 15)?
4. What drove the man to hoard his possessions rather than give them away?
5. What does it mean to be *rich toward God* (vs. 21)?
6. What's a simple way to summarize this parable?

Read Luke 12:22-34.

Insight: The parable of the rich man flows right into the following passage where Jesus tells His disciples not to worry. It presses into our fears and doubts about God's desire to care for us.

7. How is greed related to worry?
8. When have you worried about not having what you need?
9. What impact has worry had on your relationship with God over the years?
10. What did Jesus mean when He said, *where your treasure is, there your heart will be also* (vs. 34)?
11. When are you most generous?
12. If everyone at Brookwood gave as you do, what would we experience together?
13. God's care for the birds and flowers gives us reason to trust God's provision and care. Read slowly through Luke 12:22-34 and reflect on how valuable you are to God.
14. Pause and ask God what He wants to say to you.

He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose.

Jim Elliot, from *Shadow of the Almighty*

SIMPLE GUIDE TO INTERPRETING PARABLES

A parable is literally something *cast or thrown alongside* something else. It's a simple story used to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson. A parable often compares two (usually seemingly unrelated) things, and is commonly understood as an *earthly story with a heavenly meaning*.

Jesus spoke in parables...

Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. This is why I speak to them in parables:

*“Though seeing, they do not see;
though hearing, they do not hear or understand. Matthew 13:11,13 [NIV]*

1. **To reveal truth** to those seeking to understand the mysteries of the kingdom.
2. **To conceal truth** from those who remain blind or are unwilling to listen and learn.

AS YOU SEEK TO UNDERSTAND...

Consider the context. Who is Jesus talking to in the story? What events happened before He told the parable? Are there introductory words that set up the story?

Look for two things being compared or contrasted (*e.g.*, righteousness and sin, good and evil, generosity and greed, forgiveness and love, etc.). How are these two related? What major themes emerge as you read?

Don't get distracted by the details. While it's important to take note of particular words and phrases, don't get so bogged down in the tiny details that you miss the point.

Focus on Endings, Not Beginnings. The end of the story often provides a clue or ties things up. The accent commonly falls on the last person mentioned, the last deed or the last saying.

Seek to summarize the main point. Boiling down the parable in a sentence or two might help reveal the central message.

Look for parallels in Scripture. Some concepts and imagery occur repeatedly. Look for those cues when reading parables, as they may offer insight in understanding what the parable is saying. For example, a master, king or judge in a parable usually signifies God. Sheep, servants or workers are usually used to illustrate the followers of God.

Consider a practical application. Parables usually provide a simple lesson for daily life.

Beyond study, the goal is to deepen intimacy with God.
A central question to ask is, *God, what do you want to say to me?*
Trust that He will direct your heart and mind as you seek Him.