

Parables

Parable – from the Greek word *parabole* = to place beside, or to throw alongside

- An earthly story with a heavenly meaning

What are the Parables?

A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. “Parable” means “to put beside something” or “to throw alongside.” A parable is a story that puts one thing alongside another thing. Jesus used parables to teach. He put the things we know about alongside things we do not know about to help us understand them.

Why did Jesus teach in parables?

Isaiah 6:6-10 Then the Lord said, “Go and tell this to the people: ‘You will listen and listen, but you will not understand. You will look and look, but you will not learn.’ ¹⁰ Make the minds of these people dumb. Shut their ears. Cover their eyes. Otherwise, they might really understand what they see with their eyes and hear with their ears. They might really understand in their minds and come back to me and be healed.”

God wants to wake us up – we have been spiritually asleep.

The same message will make some people soft, and other people become hard. (Like the sunshine on wax or on clay).

The parables are both mirrors and windows.

Mirrors help us see ourselves

Windows help us see life and see God

Principles for interpreting the parables:

- Study each parable in its context (with the verses before and after it).
- Look for the main truth the parable teaches.
- Don't try to make the parable “walk on all fours,”
- The parables were given to illustrate doctrine, not to teach doctrine.
- Ask God for spiritual understanding.

What should we do with God's truth?

- We are responsible to learn the truth
- We are responsible to live the truth
- We are responsible to share the truth

The Parable of the Sower

Matthew 13:1-9 That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. ² Large crowds gathered around him, so he got into a boat and sat down, while the people stood on the shore. ³ Then Jesus used stories to teach them many things. He said: “A farmer went out to plant his seed. ⁴ While he was planting, some seed fell by the road, and the birds came and ate it all up. ⁵ Some seed fell on rocky ground, where there wasn’t much dirt. That seed grew very fast, because the ground was not deep. ⁶ But when the sun rose, the plants dried up, because they did not have deep roots. ⁷ Some other seed fell among thorny weeds, which grew and choked the good plants. ⁸ Some other seed fell on good ground where it grew and produced a crop. Some plants made a hundred times more, some made sixty times more, and some made thirty times more. ⁹ Let those with ears use them and listen.”

Matthew 13:18-23 “So listen to the meaning of that story about the farmer. ¹⁹ What is the seed that fell by the road? That seed is like the person who hears the message about the kingdom but does not understand it. The Evil One comes and takes away what was planted in that person’s heart. ²⁰ And what is the seed that fell on rocky ground? That seed is like the person who hears the teaching and quickly accepts it with joy. ²¹ But he does not let the teaching go deep into his life, so he keeps it only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the teaching he accepted, he quickly gives up. ²² And what is the seed that fell among the thorny weeds? That seed is like the person who hears the teaching but lets worries about this life and the temptation of wealth stop that teaching from growing. So the teaching does not produce fruit in that person’s life. ²³ But what is the seed that fell on the good ground? That seed is like the person who hears the teaching and understands it. That person grows and produces fruit, sometimes a hundred times more, sometimes sixty times more, and sometimes thirty times more.”

The seed is the Word of God

1 Peter 1:23 You have been born again, and this new life did not come from something that dies, but from something that cannot die. You were born again through God’s living message that continues forever.

God’s Word has life in it. It makes spiritual fruit grow.

- Winning souls for Christ
- Practical holiness

- Sharing things we own
- Christian character
- Good works
- Praise and witness

The sower is a person who shares the Word.

It takes faith to sow seeds.

Just sow the pure Word of God.

One person sows, another person waters. (1 Cor. 3:6)

You must be patient when you sow seeds.

The soil represents the human heart

Man is made from the earth.

Our heart might be hard (Matt. 13:19)

Our heart might be shallow (Matt. 13:20-21)

Our heart might be crowded (Matt. 13:22)

Our heart might be full of fruit (Matt. 13:23)

If we do not cultivate the soil of our heart, it will start to be crowded out with weeds. The weeds take all the strength from the soil, and soon nothing will grow there.

How do we keep our heart soft? Listen to God! (Matt. 13:9)

The Parable of the Cloth and Wineskins

Luke 5:27-39 After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector named Levi sitting in the tax collector's booth. Jesus said to him, "Follow me!"²⁸ So Levi got up, left everything, and followed him.²⁹ Then Levi gave a big dinner for Jesus at his house. Many tax collectors and other people were eating there, too.³⁰ But the Pharisees and the men who taught the law for the Pharisees began to complain to Jesus' followers, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?"³¹ Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy people who need a doctor, but the sick.³² I have not come to invite good people but sinners to change their hearts and lives."³³ They said to Jesus, "John's followers often fast for a certain time and pray, just as the Pharisees do. But your followers eat and drink all the time."³⁴ Jesus said to them, "You cannot make the friends of the bridegroom fast while he is still with them.³⁵ But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast."³⁶ Jesus told them this story: "No one takes cloth off a new coat to cover a hole in an old coat. Otherwise, he ruins the new coat, and the cloth from the new coat will not be the same as the old cloth.³⁷ Also, no one ever pours new wine into old leather bags. Otherwise, the new wine will break the bags, the wine will spill out, and the leather bags will be ruined.³⁸ New wine must be put into new leather bags.³⁹ No one after drinking old wine wants new wine, because he says, 'The old wine is better.'"

Levi used to be a tax collector. He gave it all up to follow Jesus. He even got a new name – Matthew. He gave a feast at his house to celebrate his new life.

Christ's enemies criticized Jesus because He was eating and drinking with "tax collectors and sinners," (Jews who were not following the law).

You claim to be a teacher from God, but You eat and drink with people who have disobeyed God!

The followers of John the Baptist fasted. The Pharisees also fasted. But Jesus and His disciples did not fast.

Jesus used three different illustrations to explain why He had come, and what Jesus wanted to do on earth.

1. Jesus is the doctor
2. Jesus is the bridegroom
3. Jesus is the transformer

Jesus is the doctor who came for sinners. (Luke 5:27-32)

The Pharisees were offended because Jesus was eating with people who were known to be sinners.

Sharing a meal meant much more for people in Israel than it means for us today. In Israel, when you ate a meal with someone, you made a covenant with them. You were now bound to be friends – not enemies. Today, communion reminds us that we belong to Jesus, and we belong to each other.

The Pharisees saw the sinners and wanted to get away from them.
Jesus saw the sinners and wanted them to come to Him.

Luke 15:1-2 The tax collectors and sinners all came to listen to Jesus. ² But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law began to complain: “Look, this man welcomes sinners and even eats with them.”

The Pharisees did not have a message of hope for the sinners. Jesus did.

Luke 19:10 The Son of Man came to find lost people and save them.

Jesus did not look at the sinners and judge them. Jesus saw the people as sick people who needed a doctor.

Disease is often used in the Bible as a picture of sin.

Isaiah 1:5-6 Why should you continue to be punished? Why do you continue to turn against him? Your whole head is hurt, and your whole heart is sick. ⁶ There is no healthy spot from the bottom of your foot to the top of your head; you are covered with wounds, hurts, and open sores that are not cleaned and covered, and no medicine takes away the pain.

Jeremiah 17:9 More than anything else, a person’s mind is evil and cannot be healed. Who can understand it?

Sin enters us like germs. Sin comes in secretly and infects us. There is a time when your spiritual health gets worse, then fails, and suddenly you collapse from sin. If the “germs” of sin are not destroyed, they will kill you.

Romans 6:23 The payment for sin is death. But God gives us the free gift of life forever in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Some sicknesses are obvious. You can look at a person and know they are sick. Other sicknesses are not obvious – like some cancers.

The tax collectors and sinners were spiritually sick, and they knew it.
The Pharisees were also spiritually sick, but they did not know it.

The germs of sin have invaded all of us. Some sin shows, and some sin is hidden.

The Pharisees thought they were healthy. They looked at the tax collectors and sinners and thought they were sick.

Many religious people today make the same mistake. They don't ask Jesus for help because they think they're good. They think Jesus only came for the down-and-out people.

Jesus did not come to invite "good people" (Luke 5:32) because there are no good people.

Romans 3:10 As the Scriptures say: "There is no one who always does what is right, not even one."

There are all different kinds of sicknesses. There are all different kinds of sinners. The sinners in Matthew's house showed their spiritual sickness by rebelling against the Law. The Pharisees showed their sickness by being proud that they looked like they kept the Law (but they were breaking the Law in their heart).

Doctor Jesus knew exactly what kind of sin sickness the people had, and he brought the perfect cure. By His grace and power He forgives sin and gives a new heart. And Doctor Jesus paid the bill Himself! Jesus died for the patients. Salvation is a free gift because Jesus Christ paid for it when He died on the cross.

There are two kinds of patients that Jesus can't heal.

1. The person who will not admit he is sick
2. The person who will not trust Him for the cure

Jesus is the bridegroom who came to bring joy. (Luke 5:33-35)

John the Baptist was in prison because he had rebuked Herod for his sins.

Matthew 14:3-5 Sometime before this, Herod had arrested John, tied him up, and put him into prison. Herod did this because of Herodias, who had been the wife of Philip, Herod's brother. ⁴ John had been telling Herod, "It is not lawful for you to be married to Herodias." ⁵ Herod wanted to kill John, but he was afraid of the people, because they believed John was a prophet.

The Jews were only required to fast once a year, on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 23:27-29)

The Pharisees thought fasting was important, so they fasted two times each week. (Luke 18:12)

Jesus did not *command* His followers to fast. But He did *teach* them how to fast.

Matthew 6:16-18 When you fast, don't put on a sad face like the hypocrites. They make their faces look sad to show people they are fasting. I tell you the truth, those hypocrites already have their full reward. ¹⁷ So when you fast, comb your hair and wash your face. ¹⁸ Then people will not know that you are fasting, but your Father, whom you cannot see, will see you. Your Father sees what is done in secret, and he will reward you.

The Jewish rabbis had added several more fasts to the calendar. The Jewish religion became a burden instead of being a blessing. (Acts 15:10)

Religion does not bring joy. The Pharisees were very religious, but not very joyful.

A religion of rules and regulations, where people are trying to become better and get praise from others only invites people to slavery and misery.

Jesus compared Himself to a bridegroom. A wedding was a very big social event for the Jews. Weddings were times of feasting and rejoicing. The groom was treated like a king, and the bride was treated like a queen.

All the guests were expected to enjoy themselves, and to enjoy the bride and groom. If you did not show joy, it was an insult to the family.

Jesus compared salvation to marriage.

Romans 7:4 (The Message Bible) So, my friends, this is something like what has taken place with you. When Christ died he took that entire rule-dominated way of life down with him and left it in the tomb, leaving you free to "marry" a resurrection life and bear "offspring" of faith for God.

Marriage is a love relationship. Salvation is also a love relationship. God loved us and sent His Son to die for us.

But marriage takes more than love. Marriage requires commitment! "I do" for the rest of my life!

Salvation takes more than just knowing about God. You must make Him your Savior and Lord.

Marriage begins with love and leads to joy. How can wedding guests be miserable when they are sharing so much joy?

When you are married to Christ, you have joy of sins forgiven, the joy of answered prayers, the joy of fellowship, the joy of service, and the joy of growing fruit for God.

The Christian life is a wedding feast, not a funeral.

Religion can make a person miserable, but salvation brings you joy!

Jesus is the transformer: He came to bring the new, not to patch up the old (Luke 5:35-39)

Cloth in Jesus' times was not pre-shrunk. When you washed it the first few times, it would shrink.

If you used new cloth (not yet shrunk) to sew a patch on old cloth (already shrunk), both will be ruined.

Wine was kept in leather bags (wineskins). When the leather bags are new, they are soft and flexible. When they are old, they get hard and brittle (easy to break).

If you put "new wine" (grape juice that has not turned into wine yet) in an old bag, the bag will break. When the grape juice turns into wine (ferments), it makes lots of gas, and the bag will expand. New leather can expand with no problem. Old leather will not expand, it will break.

The Pharisees wanted to keep the old traditions. Jesus offered a new, living way.

Matthew and his friends had just received a new life.

John the Baptist had come as a reformer. He came to break away from the old ways, and to point the way to the new way.

Jesus came to transform lives. Jesus did not reject the old ways. Jesus taught how the old ways can become brand new.

Matthew 5:17 Don't think that I have come to destroy the law of Moses or the teaching of the prophets. I have not come to destroy them but to bring about what they said.

I can destroy an acorn (seed) two different ways:

1. I can get a hammer and smash the acorn to pieces
2. I can bury the acorn in the ground, let it die and become an oak tree.

Jesus did not come to patch up the old, worn-out Jewish religion. He came to fulfill it in His life, teaching and death and resurrection.

Jesus transformed the old by making it die and grow into the new.

Putting new cloth on old cloth would destroy both.

Putting new wine in old leather bags would destroy both.

When the Jewish people rejected Christ, they were saying, "The old is better." The book of Hebrews teaches us that the new is better!

When you trust Jesus, He does not just patch up your life: He transforms the old life so you become something new.

2 Corinthians 5:17 If anyone belongs to Christ, there is a new creation. The old things have gone; everything is made new!

We are not supposed to stay the same. We are supposed to become something new.

But something inside us does not want to change.

We might be afraid that the “fire of the Spirit” might be a false fire. True. But it is better to have a real fire than a painted picture of fire.

God expects us to live a new life!

Romans 6:4 When we were baptized, we were buried with Christ and shared his death. So, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the wonderful power of the Father, we also can live a new life.

We need a fresh experience with Jesus every day. We need the transforming power of Jesus in our lives!

Forgiveness

The parable of the two people in debt

Luke 7:36-50 One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to eat with him, so Jesus went into the Pharisee's house and sat at the table. ³⁷ A sinful woman in the town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house. So she brought an alabaster jar of perfume ³⁸ and stood behind Jesus at his feet, crying. She began to wash his feet with her tears, and she dried them with her hair, kissing them many times and rubbing them with the perfume. ³⁹ When the Pharisee who asked Jesus to come to his house saw this, he thought to himself, "If Jesus were a prophet, he would know that the woman touching him is a sinner!"

⁴⁰ Jesus said to the Pharisee, "Simon, I have something to say to you."

Simon said, "Teacher, tell me."

⁴¹ Jesus said, "Two people owed money to the same banker. One owed five hundred coins and the other owed fifty. ⁴² They had no money to pay what they owed, but the banker told both of them they did not have to pay him. Which person will love the banker more?"

⁴³ Simon, the Pharisee, answered, "I think it would be the one who owed him the most money." Jesus said to Simon, "You are right."

⁴⁴ Then Jesus turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? When I came into your house, you gave me no water for my feet, but she washed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. ⁴⁵ You gave me no kiss of greeting, but she has been kissing my feet since I came in. ⁴⁶ You did not put oil on my head, but she poured perfume on my feet. ⁴⁷ I tell you that her many sins are forgiven, so she showed great love. But the person who is forgiven only a little will love only a little."

⁴⁸ Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

⁴⁹ The people sitting at the table began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"

⁵⁰ Jesus said to the woman, "Because you believed, you are saved from your sins. Go in peace."

Luke chapter 7 records three miracles:

A *great* miracle: healing the soldier's servant (Luke 7:1-10)

A *greater* miracle: raising a young man from the dead (Luke 7:11-17)

The *greatest* miracle: forgiving and restoring a sinner (Luke 7:36-50)

It meets the greatest need in human life – salvation

We don't know why Simon the Pharisee invited Jesus to his home for a meal.

Maybe because Jesus was very popular
Maybe because Jesus was a great teacher
Maybe because Jesus was a miracle-worker
Maybe Simon was looking for a way to criticize Jesus
Maybe Simon was trying to trap Jesus some way

Today when we have a dinner party, we invite guests, and shut the door so others can't come in.

In Jesus' time, they had a different custom. The invited guests all got cushions to lie down on near the dinner table. (Today we use chairs to sit at the table. Jesus used pillows to lie down around the table).

If you were not invited, you could still come, but you did not get to be by the table, and you didn't get any of the food.

Uninvited guests could come in and visit with the guests.

Simon was probably embarrassed to have this sinful woman in his home, but Jesus used her to teach important lessons about forgiveness.

Everyone needs forgiveness. The woman was known to be a sinner. But the Pharisee was a sinner, too. Her sins were open; his sins were hidden.

The woman knew she was a sinner, and she knew she needed forgiveness.

Simon the Pharisee thought he was *not* a sinner.

Revelation 3:17 You say, 'I am rich, and I have become wealthy and do not need anything.' But you do not know that you are really miserable, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked.

We are all sinners. It does not matter if you *feel* guilty or not.

The woman was not more lost than Simon the Pharisee. Both needed a Savior.

Forgiveness is expensive.

In the parable, one person owed 500 coins (about \$59,000 in today's money). The other person owed a little less than \$6,000. When the banker forgave them, the banker had to pay their debt for them.

Jesus paid all our debts!!!

The result of forgiveness is a changed life.

The woman had faith in Christ, and her life was changed.

2 Corinthians 5:17 If anyone belongs to Christ, there is a new creation. The old things have gone; everything is made new!

New love. Love for Christ and love for others.

1 Corinthians 16:22 If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be separated from God—lost forever!

New freedom. You will be truly free.

John 8:36 So if the Son makes you free, you will be truly free.

New peace.

Romans 5:1 Since we have been made right with God by our faith, we have peace with God. This happened through our Lord Jesus Christ,

The woman *repeatedly* anointed Jesus' feet, kissed them, and wiped them with her hair. Not like kissing Grandma goodbye.

The perfume was also expensive – probably like her retirement fund. She gave Jesus a lot.

The woman was changed a lot!

Simon the Pharisee missed his opportunity for forgiveness.

Simon was spiritually blind.

Simon could only see the woman's past (she was a sinner).

Jesus saw the woman's future.

LEARNING TO CARE ENOUGH THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN

Luke 10:25-37 Then an expert on the law stood up to test Jesus, saying, "Teacher, what must I do to get life forever?" ²⁶ Jesus said, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?"

²⁷ The man answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind." Also, "Love your neighbor as you love yourself." ²⁸ Jesus said to him, "Your answer is right. Do this and you will live." ²⁹ But the man, wanting to show the importance of his question, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

³⁰ Jesus answered, "As a man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, some robbers attacked him. They tore off his clothes, beat him, and left him lying there, almost dead. ³¹ It happened that a priest was going down that road. When he saw the man, he walked by on the other side. ³² Next, a Levite came there, and after he went over and looked at the man, he walked by on the other side of the road. ³³ Then a Samaritan traveling down the road came to where the hurt man was. When he saw the man, he felt very sorry for him. ³⁴ The Samaritan went to him, poured olive oil and wine on his wounds, and bandaged them. Then he put the hurt man on his own donkey and took him to an inn where he cared for him. ³⁵ The next day, the Samaritan brought out two coins, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of this man. If you spend more money on him, I will pay it back to you when I come again.'"

³⁶ Then Jesus said, "Which one of these three men do you think was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by the robbers?" ³⁷ The expert on the law answered, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Then go and do what he did."

The Good Samaritan parable is a lot like stories in today's newspapers:

Violence, crime, racial discrimination, hatred, neglect, unconcern, love and mercy

Be careful: don't try to make *everything* in this parable symbolize something else.

Jesus taught the expert on the law that **you cannot separate your relationship with God from your relationship with all the other people in your life.**

Look at the people in this story:

The Robbers

The robbers did not see the traveler as a man created in the image of God. The robbers thought the traveler was a good person to steal from.

What's yours is mine – I'll take all you have.

God gave us *things* to use, and *people* to love.

If we start to *love* things, we will start *using* people.

Take advantage – exploit people

Jesus never takes advantage of people. He always gives more than He takes. Jesus always leaves people better than when He found them. Jesus always heals.

We must be careful to help people grow in Christ, not hurt them and take what they have.

The Priest and the Levite

They did not want to be bothered by the hurt man.

They did not want to get involved, so they walked on the other side of the road.

Maybe they thought they had already been busy serving the Lord in the temple. They thought they had already done enough.

Maybe they thought they had already been away from home for too long. They needed to hurry home back to their own families.

Maybe they thought "It's not my fault that he is all bloody."

Genesis 4:9 Later, the Lord said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" Cain answered, "I don't know. Is it my job to take care of my brother?"

If being a Christian does not make you a better person, there is something wrong with your Christianity!

Maybe they thought someone else should take care of the man – not me. Maybe the priest knew the Levite was coming down the road behind him. Maybe the Levite thought the priest didn't do anything, so why should I?

James 4:17 Anyone who knows the right thing to do, but does not do it, is sinning.

The Expert on the Law (Lawyer)

Expert on Old Testament law – trained to examine the Word of God and apply it to daily life.

The lawyer wanted to discuss eternal life – he was not ready to *do* anything about it.

- Don't let Bible study become a substitute for *doing* the will of God.

The lawyer wanted to talk about the theory of neighborliness.

Jesus changed the topic to the specific story of one man who was robbed and beaten.

The Innkeeper

Many Christians serve other people only because it is their job and they are paid to do it.

"What am I going to get out of it?"

If I serve you only because I'm paid to serve you, that means I am treating you like a customer – not treating you like a person who need love and care.

Is it the same with elders and deacons? Serving only because it is their job?

The Samaritan

The Jews refused to talk to Samaritans or have any interaction with them.

John 4:9 The woman said, "I am surprised that you ask me for a drink, since you are a Jewish man and I am a Samaritan woman." (Jewish people are not friends with Samaritans.)

A *Gentile* could become a Jew, but a *Samaritan* could not become a Jew.

The separation between Jews and Samaritans started in 722 B.C. Northern ten tribes of Israel were taken into captivity by Assyria. Jews and Assyrians married each other. They became mixed – half Jewish; half Assyrian. These Jewish/Assyrian people were called Samaritans. (They lived in an area called Samaria). The Jews from the southern tribes of Judah refused to accept the Samaritans. The Samaritans were not welcome to go to Jerusalem so worship. The Samaritans made their own temple. They made their own priests, and their own celebrations. The LAST person you would expect to help a Jew would be a Samaritan.

This Samaritan ignored racial discrimination. He ignored social barriers. The Samaritan saw the Jew as a *person* who needed help.

When the Samaritan saw the hurt man, he had compassion.

Luke 10:33 ... When he saw the man, he felt **very sorry** for him.

Greek word for very sorry (compassion) shows very strong emotions. Not something he could easily turn away from.

The School of Prayer

The Parable of the Friend at Midnight

Luke 11:1-13 One time Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his followers said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray as John taught his followers.”² Jesus said to them, “When you pray, say: ‘Father, may your name always be kept holy. May your kingdom come.’³ Give us the food we need for each day.⁴ Forgive us for our sins, because we forgive everyone who has done wrong to us. And do not cause us to be tempted.”

⁵ Then Jesus said to them, “Suppose one of you went to your friend’s house at midnight and said to him, ‘Friend, loan me three loaves of bread.’⁶ A friend of mine has come into town to visit me, but I have nothing for him to eat.’⁷ Your friend inside the house answers, ‘Don’t bother me! The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything.’⁸ I tell you, if friendship is not enough to make him get up to give you the bread, your boldness will make him get up and give you whatever you need.

⁹ So I tell you, ask, and God will give to you. Search, and you will find. Knock, and the door will open for you.¹⁰ Yes, everyone who asks will receive. The one who searches will find. And everyone who knocks will have the door opened.¹¹ If your children ask for a fish, which of you would give them a snake instead?¹² Or, if your children ask for an egg, would you give them a scorpion?¹³ Even though you are bad, you know how to give good things to your children. How much more your heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

Everything we are and everything we do for the Lord depends on prayer. Without prayer our work is useless.

Which is the most important question to ask Jesus?

1. Lord, teach me to preach
2. Lord, teach me to witness to others
3. Lord, teach me to make money
4. Lord, teach me to have peace
5. Lord, teach me to pray

Elementary School: We Must Pray

Luke 11:1 ...“Lord, teach us to pray as John taught his followers.”

Jesus was the son of God. He had a *very* close relationship with the Father. But Jesus still had to pray! How much more do we need to pray!

If you want to become a successful Christian, you *must* pray. No Christian can live without prayer. Your body needs to breathe to survive. Your spirit needs to pray to survive.

High School: We Must Pray in God's Will

Luke 11:2-4 ...'Father, may your name always be kept holy. May your kingdom come. ³ Give us the food we need for each day. ⁴ Forgive us for our sins, because we forgive everyone who has done wrong to us. And do not cause us to be tempted.'

When a child is young, it will ask for anything and everything. It usually does not get what it asks for.

When the child grows and becomes more mature, it learns to ask for things the Father wants to give him. Then the child gets what it asks for.

Prayer is a very powerful tool. Don't use prayer to get your will done in heaven. Use prayer to get God's will done on earth.

The Lord's Prayer is a model for us to follow.

Prayer starts with our relationship with God. ("*Father*") (*Matthew 6:9 ...Our Father*)

We have a relationship with other Christians, and we have a relationship with God.

Christians must learn to want what the Father wants.

Prayer involves responsibilities.

First, we talk to God about what is important to Him.

Then, we talk to God about what is important to us.

Prayer involves requests. (...*give us...forgive us...do not cause...*)

God wants to answer our prayers – if they are in His will.

Philippians 4:19 My God will use his wonderful riches in Christ Jesus to give you everything you need.

When we confess our sins, He will forgive us.

1 John 1:9 But if we confess our sins, he will forgive our sins, because we can trust God to do what is right. He will cleanse us from all the wrongs we have done.

When we pray in His will, every need is met.

College: We Must Pray as Children Coming to a Father

Luke 11:5-12 Then Jesus said to them, "Suppose one of you went to your friend's house at midnight and said to him, 'Friend, loan me three loaves of bread. ⁶ A friend of mine has come

into town to visit me, but I have nothing for him to eat.’⁷ Your friend inside the house answers, ‘Don’t bother me! The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything.’⁸ I tell you, if friendship is not enough to make him get up to give you the bread, your boldness will make him get up and give you whatever you need.

⁹ So I tell you, ask, and God will give to you. Search, and you will find. Knock, and the door will open for you. ¹⁰ Yes, everyone who asks will receive. The one who searches will find. And everyone who knocks will have the door opened. ¹¹ If your children ask for a fish, which of you would give them a snake instead? ¹² Or, if your children ask for an egg, would you give them a scorpion?

True prayer is not based on our friendship with God. It is because we are *children* of God.

In a Middle Eastern village, hospitality is very important. When a guest arrives, the whole village welcomes him. The guest is always offered food. The guest must eat the food – even if he is not hungry.

If a sleeping neighbor will meet the needs of a visitor, the Father in heaven will certainly meet the needs of His own children!

The begging neighbor would have to pay back whatever he borrowed. God does not ask us to pay Him back anything. And God keeps on giving more and more.

...ask...search...knock... really means to keep on asking, keep on searching, and keep on knocking until you have what you need. You will receive the answer because you are His children.

A loving father will never give his son anything that will hurt him.

Never be afraid to pray. Never be afraid of the answer.

Graduate School: We Must Pray for the Best Blessings

Luke 11:13 Even though you are bad, you know how to give good things to your children. How much more your heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!

Too much of our prayer is focused on *things*.

We must graduate into the highest level of praying: asking for the blessings of the Spirit of God. Then Christians will become stronger, and they will give glory to God.

Graduate school prayer helps us understand why some prayers are not answered. (give me more money, a better job, heal me). Maybe God knows we are not mature enough to handle those blessings yet. A good father would not give a young child a sharp knife or a loaded gun. Even if the child begged for it!

The greatest blessing of prayer is not getting the answers. The greatest blessing of prayer is becoming the kind of person that God can trust with the answers.

The most important part of your life is the part that only God can see. Your hidden life of prayer will give you a life of victory.

We must pray. We must pray the will of God. We must pray as children coming to a father. We must pray for the best blessings of the Holy Spirit.