

JESUS AT THE CENTER OF OUR STORY

INVITATION

May 26, 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 14:15-24.

Insight: In an age before the clock, the date of a banquet would have been announced long before, but the exact time wouldn't have been announced until the very day. This means that, in this parable, many accepted the invitation when it was first given, yet when the actual time of the banquet came, some decided not to come. *To accept the invitation beforehand and then to refuse it when the day came was a grave insult.* – William Barclay

1. The man in this parable was rich and generous. It would've been a great honor to be invited to a banquet like this! How is having a relationship with God like being at a feast? Have you ever experienced this? Describe.
2. What do you notice about the people's excuses for why they could not attend the banquet?
3. Why are so many people resistant to God? What obstacles are often in the way?
4. Have you said *Yes* to God's invitation? How has that decision changed your life? If you haven't received the invitation, what are your questions and doubts?
5. Have you ever sensed God inviting you into a deeper relationship, but you kept a distance? Explain.
6. Have you ever felt like the servant who invited people to have a relationship with God, but they refused? How did you respond?
7. What practices, behaviors or choices help you say *Yes* to God each day?
8. The man was determined that his house *be full* (vs. 23). He invited the poor, disabled and marginalized to fill his home. Jesus' message is that ALL are invited to the heavenly banquet! How can you help outsiders feel welcome?
9. After inviting many to the banquet, the servant told his master, *there is still room*. What a great promise! Who will you invite?
10. How would you summarize this parable?
11. There are countless stories of feasting and celebration in the Bible. Here are a few passages for further reflection: Isaiah 25:6-9; Luke 13:29; Revelation 19:6-9.

The central basis of Christian assurance is not how much our hearts are set on God, but how unshakably His heart is set on us.

Tim Keller

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.