

Introducing Parables

Learning

Introducing Parables (some example content you can engage with to prep and/or as a group)

- 35% of Jesus' teaching is in parables and 33-60 depending on the exact definition of what counts. They are not entirely new, at least ten in the OT (most famously Nathan to David 2 Sam. 1-4).
- Read Matt. 13:1-17 (cf. Mark 4:1-12, Luke 8:4-10, but **whenever possible we will use Matthew!**)
- *Introduction video* on Parables by the [Bible Project](#) (use for prep, share in advance, or watch)
- **Importance of Story:** "Jesus was the master creator of story, and nothing is so attractive or so compelling as a good story. Children (and adults) do not say, "Tell me some facts"; they want a story. Stories are inherently interesting. Discourse we tolerate; to story we attend. Story entertains, informs, involves, motivates, authenticates, and mirrors existence. By creating a narrative world, stories establish an unreal, controlled universe. The author abducts us and—almost god-like—tells us what really exists in this narrative world, what happens, and why." Klyne Snodgrass
- **More than stories... defining parables** (printable or shareable on the next page):
 - "At its simplest, the parable is a metaphor or simile drawn from nature or common life, arresting the hearer by its vividness or strangeness, and leaving the mind in sufficient doubt about its precise application to tease it into active thought" C.H. Dodd
 - "Parables are imaginary gardens with real toads in them" Marianne Moore
 - "An allusive narrative which is told for an ulterior purpose" David Stern
 - Parables are a form of indirect communication intended to "deceive the hearer into truth." Soren Kierkegaard
 - "Biblical parables reveal the kind of God that God is and how God acts, and they show what humanity is and what humanity should and may become" Snodgrass

Dialogue Questions (some example questions for this content above)

- What strikes you about *The Parable of the Sower*? What is the emphasis? Explore different views by focusing on the Sower, the seed, the soil, the harvest?
- What strikes you about Jesus' explanation of why he speaks in parables? (see verses above)
- What did you learn about parables from the video or these quotes?
- What do you think of Kierkegaard's idea of deceiving into truth? Can indirect communication be better than direct communication? Especially, when the listener already thinks they understand or know the answers!

Implication Questions (some example questions/challenges that engage real life now)

- Challenge people to not assume they know the meaning already!
- Why is our culture obsessed with making things clear? Why do you think Jesus was ok being obscure at times? What is good and bad about each?
- Can you think of a time you needed to be 'deceived into truth'? Share the story.

What is a Parable?

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