

# Bible Lessons



*All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.*

—Matthew 13:34-35

**Volume 57, No. 2**  
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*Quarterly Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People*

# Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People

Volume 57

April • May • June

No. 2

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*Publishing Bible truths in the interest of Jesus Christ and His Church.*

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## *Jesus' Parables*

Jesus was a wonderful storyteller. His stories, or parables, were a perfect way for His hearers to relate to the truths He taught them. Because emotions are one of the main triggers of memory, others throughout history have also used this same method, using verbal illustrations in simple, everyday language that people relate to and emotionally connect with.

Jesus' parables were presented in such a way that the audience inserted themselves into the story and became part of the narrative. The people understood that each story, or parable, was about their everyday lives. The result was they never forgot what Jesus taught them.

Scripture tells us that Jesus ***always*** used a story to illustrate His points. *"All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world"* (Matthew 13:34-35).

By the Lord's help, we will look into most of the parables recorded in the first three gospels. Jesus taught so much from them. May God help us to glean spiritual good from them today!

—Bro. Clifford Cole

APRIL 6, 2025

### NEW CLOTH, NEW WINE, AND SIGNS OF THE FUTURE

**Luke 5:33** And they said unto him, Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and likewise *the disciples* of the Pharisees; but thine eat and drink?

34 And he said unto them, Can ye make the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them?

35 But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.

36 And he spake also a parable unto them; No man putteth a

piece of a new garment upon an old; if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was *taken* out of the new agreeth not with the old.

37 And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish.

38 But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved.

**Matthew 24:32** Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer *is* nigh:

33 So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, *even* at the doors.

34 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

35 Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

**MEMORY VERSE:** A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. —**Ezekiel 36:26**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Jesus explained to John’s disciples why His disciples did not fast often, as did John’s and the Pharisees. The Old Testament law mandated many things, including fasting. The old law was a “schoolmaster” intended to prepare the way for a better day, the gospel dispensation Jesus brought. Jesus’ disciples were among the first to partake of the gospel and were joyful in the presence of their Master. The time would come, however, when their Lord would be taken from them; then they would need to mourn and fast.

Jesus used the examples of new cloth patches on old garments and new wine destroying old bottles. In both instances, the old was not able to receive the new; but, rather, would be destroyed if the new was put with, or into, the old. So it is with the gospel. The old system of rituals and laws could not receive, nor was it able to contain, the glad news of the gospel—the force and power of the gospel must be put into a “new heart” made soft and pliable by the love of God.

In the parable of the fig tree, Jesus gives an analogy referable to His second coming and the end of time.

## WORD DEFINITIONS

Luke 5:36 **“A piece of a new garment”**: The new cloth referred to here had never been wet, shrunken, or made flexible. If new cloth was patched into a garment that had been washed several times, the new cloth would shrink when the garment was next washed, thus tearing out the seams of the patchwork (*Clarke*).

Luke 5:37-38 **“New wine” and “old bottles”**: new wine, not yet fermented, would expand older goat skin containers too much because the old skins were no longer elastic enough to stretch (*Clarke*).

## LESSON BACKGROUND

In the scriptures just prior to the two passages in this lesson, Jesus laid the groundwork for the parables we are studying today.

In Luke 5:27-32, Jesus and His disciples attended a great feast in the home of the tax collector-turned-disciple, Matthew, otherwise known as Levi. The scribes and Pharisees found great fault with Jesus and His disciples “eating with publicans and sinners.” Jesus told them, “They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Luke 5:31-32). Jesus conducted His ministry in an entirely different manner than what the religious elite thought proper.

In Matthew 24:1-31, Jesus warned His disciples of the pending destruction of Jerusalem and of His promised return—when He would come again to receive His bride to Himself. The disciples were naturally curious about the timeframe of His second coming.

## DISCUSSION:

1. After having kept Old Testament rituals, how different must the new teachings of Jesus have felt to the disciples when they seemingly contradicted the customs that had been so “normal”?
2. The long list of laws, rituals, and man-made customs the scribes and Pharisees had kept for generations included multiple fasts, handwashing and vessel washing rituals, various sacrifices and ceremonies, etc. How did the religious rulers twist the commandments given by God to give them power over the people?

3. How threatened did the scribes and Pharisees feel when Jesus taught the gospel of love and forgiveness that changed the heart of man, rather than strict observation of outward forms?
4. The ways of the scribes and Pharisees can be represented by the old cloth and old wine skins. How did the new doctrine that Jesus brought stretch to the limit the old thinking and ways of the Pharisees?
5. In Matthew 24 Jesus disclosed to His disciples what it would be like before the overthrow of Jerusalem and what it would be like before the end of time. How difficult might it have been for Jesus' disciples to comprehend the information regarding these two events?
6. History tells us that all the true Christians remembered Jesus' warnings and fled to the mountains before Rome destroyed Jerusalem. What happened to those who either did not receive Jesus' warning or ignored the warning?
7. What will be the fate of those who ignore Jesus' warnings regarding the end of time?

### **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

My wife and I recently purchased an old home. We knew it needed some repair, especially after the inspector finished his examination and sent us a full report. During the process of repair work, our contractor discovered a problem in the floor below the bathroom vanity. His crew removed the vanity and found the floor below rotted beyond repair. After removing that small section of flooring, they discovered that the divider wall between the vanity and bathtub was not secure to the floor due to the rot. After removing the subfloor in most of the bathroom, they then discovered the subfloor below the bathtub was compromised also, so we decided to also remove and replace the bathtub.

After removing the bathtub, they found the main floorboards below the bathtub were also rotted. While disconnecting the bathtub faucet connections, which had been hidden in the wall, they discovered the water connections were only finger tight; water had sprayed from these connections every time the bathtub was used. Over time, the moisture from this persistent leak rotted the whole floor of the bathroom.

At the time of this writing, all the bathroom subfloor and main floorboards have been removed, leaving only the floor joists. We are now discovering that the entire bathroom floor slopes toward the east wall because of the water damage.

The solution? The contractor will dig five piers in the ground below the bathroom and install steel columns to properly lift and support the floor joists before installing new floor decking and subfloor. You can be sure the connections to the bathtub will be double-checked to make sure they are properly tightened this time!

Our first plan was to leave the awkward bathroom layout as it was and to install new flooring over the top of the existing floor covering. Had we done so, all of the problems in the flooring would not have been discovered as easily. Fortunately, we had decided to move the vanity to another location. After it was removed, we started seeing the floor problems, which quickly escalated to the point where the floor and fixtures have now all been removed.

In the same way, the power of the gospel exposes all sin and corruption. God removes all the old “support system” of our former life and gives us a new inner being so we can have a proper foundation for a new life in Christ. Sadly, well-meaning people try to patch up the old way of life in sin, hoping to gradually renovate it to a state of satisfactory operation. God knows, however, that the “leaky pipes and rotten floor” of the old way of life must be removed and replaced, otherwise, the end result is more decay and, ultimately, complete failure. Praise God for the “new heart” He gives us in His perfect plan of salvation and sanctification!

*“Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for the new heart you give us when you save us from all sin! Thank you for your infinite wisdom in not pouring your Spirit into leaking, rotting vessels of carnality and selfishness. Amen!”*

## REFLECTIONS

The parable that Jesus spoke to the people about the “new wine” and “new cloth” was simply to reinforce His answer as to why His disciples were not entering into fasting and praying. Jesus' answer was simply to convey the thought that He was with them on a daily basis and was ever-present to minister to them and to instruct them when they needed instructions.

The parables Jesus told were to appeal to the common sense and core knowledge of the people. The concepts that He referred to with the wine and cloth was something everyone understood at that time. The people were conditioned to accept that God was afar off and difficult to appeal to, but Jesus tried to drive the point home to them that HE, God in the flesh, was present with them at that very moment. He also was saying to them that the gospel cannot be contained within the rituals of the Old Testament law. The gospel was designed to affect a change of heart, and the residence of God was to be within the NEW MAN and not just in the temple.

The parable of the fig tree once again appealed to the common knowledge of the region and age in which the people of that time lived. Just as the leaves of the fig tree corresponded with the season that they were in. The signs that Jesus gave the people would correspond with the future unfolding of events.

By the time you are studying this lesson, my pasture will be greening up and the foliage on the trees, bare at the time of this writing, will be budding. The woods will also be changing from brown to green. I will know by looking out the window that spring is here.

—Bro. Dan Adams

**APRIL 13, 2025**

### **SALT OF THE EARTH and LAMP ON A STAND**

**Matthew 5:13** Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

**Luke 8:16** No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth *it* under a bed; but setteth *it* on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light.

17 For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither *any thing* hid, that shall not be known and come abroad.



**Luke 11:33** No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth *it* in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light.

34 The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when *thine eye* is evil, thy body also *is* full of darkness.

35 Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness.

36 If thy whole body therefore *be* full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.

**MEMORY VERSE:** And he said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick? —**Mark 4:21**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** God intended His people to be “salt,” or an appealing seasoning, to the world to attract lost, hurting souls to Him. In like manner, God’s people are to be a welcoming beacon light to souls lost in darkness. We do not generally “hide” a light because light has a single purpose—to illuminate what was formerly in darkness.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

Matthew 5:13 **“Salt”**: a seasoning and preservative for food; a symbol of lasting concord in oriental customs; wisdom and grace exhibited in speech (*Thayer*).

Luke 11:34 **“Single”**: undivided affection or purpose.

### LESSON BACKGROUND

The word “salary” is derived from the Latin word “salarium argentum.” Roman soldiers were sometimes paid in salt. In ancient times and in many regions, salt was often used as currency. When a Roman soldier proved to “not be worth his salt,” his wages were cut. Isn’t it amazing how ancient phrases like this are still used and understood today? Our modern word “salad” also comes from the practice of Romans salting their leafy greens to make them more palatable.

Ancient civilizations used salt to preserve food. A little salt also helps food taste better and is also necessary for our health, since our blood is approximately 0.8% salt. Athletes take great care to ensure they keep their electrolyte levels in balance, including certain forms of salt, as well as other necessary minerals.

By repeated use, animals often wore paths in the ground to salt licks. Mankind later followed the same paths to the salt, which then widened with time, later becoming roads. Using some of these same roads, salt trade became global. Roads used later by the Roman empire developed ruts from the wheels of their military chariots making it necessary to standardize the spacing for all wheels to avoid breaking axles on these roads. Horse-drawn trams, followed later by steam powered-trains, kept the same wheel spacing, which later became known as the standard rail gauge. About 55% of the modern world has adopted this spacing, which is 4'-8 1/2".

While there is no direct link to salt and the modern railroad wheel gauge, it is interesting to look back in history and note the effect of simple things. Salt is indeed at the beginning of a lot of history.

Parable about the candlelight: The first means of man-made light and warmth was fire. "Lighting a candle," and "lighting a fire" meant to create a fire for the purpose of light or warmth.

When Jesus said, "a city that is set on a hill cannot be hid," He was pointing out that the light from a single candle can be seen from a great distance. Without the aid of magnification, the human eye can see light from a candle 1.6 miles away. Jerusalem is situated on a hill. At night, travelers could look up and see the lamps and candles of the city as they ascended. With the multiplication of many lamps and candles, Jerusalem would have been visible for miles. What a cheering sight!

## **DISCUSSION:**

1. Why did Jesus say, "Ye are the salt of the earth"?
2. How disappointing would it be to use salt that had somehow lost its saltiness?
3. Why do non-believers expect Christians to act and believe a certain way?
4. What happens when non-believers become disappointed in someone who claims to follow Christ?

5. What is the main purpose of light?
6. How are Christians compared to light? Why?
7. What affect does the light of a true Christian have on others?
8. How is it possible to “hide our light under a bushel”?
9. How can we let our light shine even in extremely difficult circumstances?

## **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

Years ago I observed an interesting episode in the living room of my grandparents’ home. One of my uncles was sitting in the living room. One of my aunts came in with a bowl of vanilla ice cream and presented it to my uncle. Naturally, my uncle was pleasantly surprised that his sister went out of her way to bring him ice cream. It had been a wonderful Thanksgiving meal, and a nice bowl of hand-delivered ice cream was the perfect end to the meal!

I casually watched as my uncle took his first bite of ice cream. All of a sudden, he started sputtering and gasping as “ice cream” flew everywhere! I was puzzled as I knew my uncle loved ice cream, but what could be wrong? After calming down a little, my uncle started laughing—along with my giggling aunt. Then I learned the truth. My aunt had used an ice cream scoop to put mashed potatoes in a desert bowl. It looked like ice cream and it was served at a time when ice cream was expected. My uncle was fully expecting to taste one thing, but got another. What a shock! There was nothing wrong with the mashed potatoes, as my uncle had eaten his fair share of them earlier. He loved mashed potatoes—but NOT when he was expecting ice cream!

When people expect someone to behave or talk in a certain way, but then observe something completely different, disappointment results. The person that disappoints may not be aware they are hurting anyone because their actions or words seem normal and proper from their perspective. However, if someone is expecting or hoping for a certain action or word, shock or dismay is the most likely the result.

If the person that disappoints is someone looked up to, the hurt is much deeper than if the offense came from a peer. For example, children expect adults to “act as adults.” When adults behave inappropriately, children observing or experiencing the errant

behavior are emotionally hurt. Physical harm sometimes accompanies the emotional wounding. If a child gets in a conflict with another child, it is painful, but usually not to the same level as in a hurtful adult-child relationship.

Jude 1:13 speaks of “wandering stars” that came in as false teachers and caused much harm among the believers. Starting with verse 3, Jude speaks of the errant ways of these influential individuals and the harm they brought because they did not “have salt” in themselves; their “light” or example was not as it should have been.

*“Dear Lord, help me to “salt the world” with a godly example. Help me to let your light shine through my life so that others will be encouraged in you rather than discouraged. Amen!”*

## REFLECTIONS

To be the salt of the earth” and “light of the world” is a very big place to fill in the universe. Men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. Who wants to be a light when people in the culture are turned against light?

Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord (Genesis 6:8). He was a light and he helped preserve the earth. Elijah stood on Mount Carmel in defiance of false gods, but Brother Lot’s light seems to have been dimmed by the surrounding culture when he offered his two daughters to the men of Sodom (Genesis 19:8). Abraham’s light was obscured when he said, “She is my sister,” and he was rebuked by Pharoah (Genesis 12:18). God help us when the wicked begin to rebuke the righteous with a brighter light. We don’t want to be wandering stars (Jude 1:12-13), nor do we want to be reprobate silver (Jeremiah 6:30).

“They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever” (Daniel 12:3). Are you willing to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world?

—Bro. E. E. Gracey

**APRIL 20, 2025**  
**PARABLES OF THE WISE AND FOOLISH**

**Matthew 7:24** Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

26 And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

**Luke 12:42** And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom *his* lord shall make ruler over his household, to give *them their* portion of meat in due season?

43 Blessed *is* that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

44 Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath.

45 But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken;

46 The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for *him*, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.

47 And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not *himself*, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many *stripes*.

48 But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few *stripes*. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

**Luke 16:1** And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods.

2 And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this

of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward.

3 Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed.

4 I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.

5 So he called every one of his lord's debtors *unto him*, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord?

6 And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty.

7 Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore.

8 And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.

**Matthew 25:1** Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

2 And five of them were wise, and five *were* foolish.

3 They that *were* foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:

4 But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

5 While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

6 And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.

7 Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.

8 And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.

9 But the wise answered, saying, *Not so*; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.

11 Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

12 But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.

13 Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

**MEMORY VERSE:** But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. —**James 1:22**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Jesus said that all who hear and do His word are wise. Those who hear and choose to not do His word are foolish.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

Matthew 25:1 **Virgins:** “Denoting the purity of the Christian doctrine and character. In this parable, the bridegroom is generally understood to mean Jesus Christ. **The feast:** the state of joy and fulfillment of being in close relationship with God to which He has promised to raise his genuine followers. **The wise/prudent virgins:** those who truly enjoy salvation and serving God. **The foolish virgins:** those who only profess the purity and holiness of his/her religion. **The oil:** the grace and salvation of God, or that faith which works by love. **The vessel:** the heart in which this oil is contained. **The lamp:** the profession of enjoying the burning and shining light of the gospel of Christ. **Going forth:** the whole of their sojourning upon earth” (*Adam Clarke*).

### LESSON BACKGROUND

Before the great flood that destroyed all but the occupants of the ark, a home could be built just about anywhere without much forethought or preparation. It had never rained; therefore, floods were nonexistent. It never got very cold, and it never got hot enough to be uncomfortable. Scholars believe the earth was shrouded with a greenhouse type envelope that kept the temperature stable, shielded earth’s inhabitants from the harsh rays of the sun, and kept the moisture in the air to sufficient levels to eliminate the need for rain. It was a perfect environment in which to live; however, sin changed all that. After the great flood, permanent dwellings needed

a foundation strong enough to withstand the much harsher environment, including torrential rains that would sweep away anything not built upon a strong foundation.

Stewards, referenced in Jesus' parable in Luke 16, were men in positions of responsibility. Cain, the first child born to Adam and Eve, was, in a sense, "steward" of his younger siblings. Had he taken his role seriously, he would have led by example in offering the proper sacrifice to God. Instead, he chose to offer what was convenient for him, even after being warned of God to change his ways. After killing his brother in a fit of jealous rage, God sought him out, asking him where his brother was. Cain's response was, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

Jesus' parable of the ten virgins referenced the practice of a bridegroom preparing a home for his bride. When all was ready, he would come to take his bride to the home he had made ready. The wedding celebration, which took place before the bridegroom took his bride away, usually took place at night, beginning at the rising of the evening star. In the case of this parable, however, the bridegroom came at midnight, catching the five foolish virgins in slumber (*Clarke*).

## **DISCUSSION:**

1. What can happen when a person believes, "I will not suffer the same consequences others do"?
2. How firm is the foundation of own opinion, even if well thought out?
3. How do we ensure we are building our lives "on the Rock" and not on an unstable foundation?
4. If a person believes they will not be caught and punished for harming others, how can that tempt them to wrong actions?
5. What are some of the main differences in attitudes between wise and foolish people regarding their relationship with God and other people?
6. What did Jesus mean when He said, "The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light"?
7. In God's eyes, what kind of life is equated with a "wise virgin"?



## COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Emily Dickinson once said, “If you take care of the small things, the big things will take care of themselves.” There is a lot of wisdom in this statement. Small things and big things touch every aspect of our lives—time, finances, health, attitudes, habits, and our spiritual walk with God are a few of the several categories in which it is wise to “mind the small things.”

Successful people grasp the value of every minute, making the most of the time God lends them. By prioritizing properly, they manage to fit in an incredible list of accomplishments every day. They realize that wasted minutes can grow into wasted hours that are never regained.

The saying, “A penny saved is a penny earned,” speaks of care taken with smaller amounts of money, often translating into larger savings in the long run. Warren Buffet, the billionaire investment tycoon, lives in a home he purchased in 1958. He never buys a new car and is frugal with meal purchases and clothing.

If a person allows God to help them with the little attitudes that try to creep in when minor annoyances happen, it is much easier to have the right attitude when major events happen.

A good habit starts with a desire, then a decision to act on that desire. The next is paraphrased from Stephen Covey. “The number one habit of highly successful people is being proactive. Being proactive is about realizing, ‘I am not a product of my circumstances, (but rather), I am a product of my decisions’.” Proactive people don’t blame circumstances, conditions, or conditioning for their behavior”. ([franklincoveme.com/habit-1](http://franklincoveme.com/habit-1)). <https://franklincovey.mt/habit-1/>

The most important possession we have is our soul. The enemy of all humanity patiently waits for an opportunity to “steal, kill, and destroy” our never-dying soul. Thankfully, God made provision for our salvation and the means whereby we can be kept free from sin. Our part is to be honest, humble, and faithful to do whatever God brings to our attention. Sometimes the adjustments are minor and seemingly unimportant, but faithfulness in the small things helps make the larger adjustments less frequent.

*“Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for the wisdom you have for us all. Thank you for taking the time to deal with me! Help me to have the wisdom to take care of the little things you bring to my attention. Amen.”*

## **REFLECTIONS**

Jesus was our perfect example, a perfect vessel, you might say. John the Baptist, who was filled with the Spirit of God from his mother’s womb, said of Jesus, “...God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him” (John 3:34). John recognized that Jesus had a fullness of the Spirit that even he did not possess. When the time came that the Holy Spirit was given, all who were ready to receive Him were filled, whether male or female, young or old, Jew or Gentile. We still have access today to that same outpouring of the Spirit of God, but how much can we possess?

The scriptures are clear that the Father wants to give us His Spirit, and He has no limitation of giving the Holy Spirit to a vessel prepared to receive Him. We may say without argument that because Jesus was a perfect vessel, and that He had full “capacity” to be filled with the Holy Spirit. What about our “capacity”? How much of the Holy Spirit can we receive?

Within our nature we have character traits, old wounds, and misguided thought processes that limit our “capacity” to receive God’s regenerating Spirit. But as His Spirit flows in and cleanses, heals, and renews us, we become ever more receptive to His working, and our “capacity” is increased.

Once, I was wondered how the foolish virgins ran out of oil. Here’s an object lesson that the Lord brought to my mind: water will displace oil because it is denser. What if the foolish virgins’ oil was mixed with water? Their vessels had the capacity to hold enough oil to keep their lamps burning, but if the oil was displaced by something like water, their lamps would go out. What a serious thought that we could potentially be found without a full supply of oil, thereby disqualifying us from joining the wedding supper because our lamps have gone out.

—Sis. Sarah L. Herron

**APRIL 27, 2025**  
**PARABLES ON FORGIVENESS AND UNFORGIVENESS**

**Luke 7:36** And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat.

37 And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that *Jesus* sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment,

38 And stood at his feet behind *him* weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe *them* with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed *them* with the ointment.

39 Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw *it*, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman *this is* that toucheth him: for she is a sinner.

40 And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on.

41 There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty.

42 And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?

43 Simon answered and said, I suppose that *he*, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.

44 And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped *them* with the hairs of her head.

45 Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet.

46 My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.

47 Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, *the same* loveth little.

**Matthew 18:21** Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?

22 Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

23 Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.

24 And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents.

25 But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

26 The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

27 Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

28 But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took *him* by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.

29 And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

30 And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

31 So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.

32 Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me:

33 Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?

34 And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

**MEMORY VERSE:** So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses. —**Matthew 18:35**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Simon the Pharisee was offended when the sinner woman washed Jesus' feet and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Jesus pointed out to Simon that he who is forgiven little loves little, but he who is forgiven much loves much.

In another parable, a certain servant, when begging for mercy, was forgiven of a debt so large it was impossible to repay. This same servant then caused his fellow servant to be cast into debtors' prison

over a debt that was almost nothing compared to the debt forgiven him. The ungrateful servant was then delivered to the tormentors by his master.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

Luke 7:36, 40 **“One of the Pharisees”**: Jesus was eating in the house of Simon, a Pharisee. Simon had most likely been healed of leprosy by Jesus. (See also Matthew 26:6, Mark 14:3, and John 12:3.)

Matthew 18:25 **“Ten thousand talents”**: It is not certain on the exact amount but estimated to be in the billions to trillions of dollars. Regardless of the sum, it was too much to ever repay.

Matthew 18:28 **“One hundred pence”**: one hundred days’ wages in Roman times (*Bible Hub*).

### LESSON BACKGROUND

Simon the Pharisee invited Jesus and His disciples for a meal, but did not give Jesus the common courtesy of providing water to wash His feet. He did not give Him a kiss, nor did he anoint His head with oil. These three forms of greeting were not mandatory, but they were common. Jesus did not point out to Simon his lack until Simon complained about the “sinner woman” giving Jesus a much superior greeting.

It is interesting that Jesus’ parable of the unforgiving servant came immediately after the instructions He had just given to His disciples on what to do in the event of being sinned against. The offended party was to bring the offence to the offender in private. If the offense was not settled with that step, the offended was to take one or two more with him and speak to the offender again. If that failed, the matter was to be brought to the church for resolution.

The verse immediately following Jesus’ prescription on how to handle offences starts the parable of the unforgiving servant and reads: “Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?”

## DISCUSSION:

1. Simon the Pharisee “spoke within himself” against the woman that washed Jesus’ feet with her tears. Why did Jesus address Simon’s private thoughts?
2. How well does the Lord understand our musings? How accurate are His assessments?
3. Why is it easy to justify our own faults while placing the shortcomings of others under a microscope?
4. What was the state of Simon the Pharisee’s sins after he pointed out the sins of the woman?
5. Why did Jesus forgive the woman her many sins?
6. How are Jesus’ instructions in Matthew 18:15-20 tempered by the parable of the unforgiving servant in Matthew 18:21-35?

## COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Any sin, no matter how “great or small” it may seem will bar a soul from Heaven. It is a solemn realization when we think about “just a little unforgiveness” being one of those sins.

God set up the plan of salvation to include the necessity of forgiving others because “a little unforgiveness” allows “a little poison” to remain in our heart. Hebrews 12:15 explains it perfectly: “Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble *you*, and thereby many be defiled.” By not allowing God’s grace to work in our hearts, unforgiveness soon turns into bitterness, which grows to the point of not only bringing much trouble to us, **but also** to many others we would not otherwise wish to harm (Proverbs 11:17)!

A particular set of circumstances tempted me with feelings of resentment, which would have soon turned into unforgiveness and bitterness had God not soon given me grace to turn it all over to Him. Soon after, someone I love dearly told me the individual I had been tempted to feel bitterness towards said something that blessed them. They had no idea I had battled resentment, because God had helped me release my feelings before I voiced my struggle. Had I allowed my resentment to grow, and had I spoken of it to the individual who later received a blessing by something the other individual said, that blessing might not have ever happened!

The times I have failed to turn over my feelings as soon as I should have brought undesirable consequences; however, God was merciful to deal with me about them and ultimately helped me overcome—but delaying only hindered God and tied His hands.

There is an old game called “hot potato” where a bean bag or ball is passed around a circle of people while music is played. The object of the game is to touch the “hot potato” as little as possible before passing it on to the next person. The music is stopped at irregular intervals during the game. Whoever is holding the “hot potato” when the music stops has to drop out of the game. When dealing with our difficulties in life, it is best we treat them as a “hot potato” and give them to God as quickly as possible—lest we be found holding on to our hurt.

*“Dear Lord, thank you for the forgiveness you so freely give. Please help me to forgive, even as I am forgiven. Amen!”*

## REFLECTIONS

Forgiveness is a serious responsibility that each of us have because it involves our eternal destiny. It is often very difficult, but essential.

Jesus stressed the importance of forgiveness in various ways, using parables and live examples to demonstrate the lesson He wanted to impart. When we read the parables in our lesson today, we are left without excuse to carry unforgiveness in our hearts. We cannot justify unforgiveness no matter what circumstances caused these feelings.

Jesus showed forgiveness to the woman who was penitent for her many sins. By this example, we see how that no matter how deep one goes in sin, Jesus forgives. Also, the deeper a person goes into sin, the greater they appreciate forgiveness.

The parable Jesus told is indeed an example of how many people today show unforgiveness to others. When we think of all the things for which God has forgiven us, we should be willing to forgive others. Our debt to God is like the talents, and others' debt to us is like the pence. We see a vivid picture of how insignificant the things are for which we have to forgive others compared to what God has forgiven us.

Unforgiveness is very serious because it ultimately affects the way God forgives us. Jesus didn't give room for unforgiveness. When Peter asked how often should he forgive, he questioned if it should be until seven times? Jesus responded, "...until seventy times seven."

What can we learn from these examples and from the parable about forgiveness and unforgiveness? Unforgiveness is forbidden and forgiveness is required—but, how can we accomplish this? First, we must be willing in our hearts to forgive and see the need to do it right away. Secondly, we must pray and ask God to help us forgive. Finally, we should accept the grace of God and the freedom that comes when we forgive others.

—Sis. Doris Clay

**MAY 4, 2025**  
**THE FOOLISHNESS OF RICHES**

**Luke 12:13** And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.

14 And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?

15 And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

16 And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:

17 And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

18 And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, *and* be merry.

20 But God said unto him, *Thou* fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

21 So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

**Luke 16:19** There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:



20 And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,

21 And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;

23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

24 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

25 But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

26 And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that *would come* from thence.

27 Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house:

28 For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

29 Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

**MEMORY VERSE:** For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. —**I Timothy 6:10**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Allowing ourselves to grow overly fond of money, whether it involves the pursuit of riches, dreaming about them, or envying someone else's wealth, is a great danger to our soul. As our memory verse points out, "The love of money is the root of all evil."

## WORD DEFINITIONS

Luke 12:15 “**Covetousness**”: fraud, extortion, greediness.

Luke 12: 20 “**Fool**”: mindless, ignorant, egotistical, rash, morally unbelieving, unwise (*Strong’s*).

## LESSON BACKGROUND

While Jesus was teaching the people [as recorded in Luke 12], a certain man in the crowd asked Jesus to mediate between he and his brother regarding their inheritance. Jewish culture typically gave half of the inheritance to the oldest son and the remaining portion was divided equally among the rest of the siblings. Unfortunately, it was not uncommon for the oldest son to keep the entire inheritance. It is possible there were only two siblings and the oldest did not wish to divide the inheritance equally with his brother—or possibly the oldest brother wanted it all. Whatever the case, the younger brother did not feel satisfied with the arrangement and wished for an intermediary to settle the estate to his liking.

In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, the rich man remained nameless. It is unknown if Lazarus, the beggar, was a real person in history or if Jesus simply chose to give him a name in the parable. By mentioning Lazarus by name, however, we understand that Jesus takes note of everyone facing poverty, sickness, or sorrow. On the other hand, those who seem to “have it made” but do not regard the needs of others do not get much recognition from He who “owns the cattle on a thousand hills.”

## DISCUSSION:

1. Why did Jesus decline to intervene in the case of the two brothers' inheritance?
2. How easy is it for earthly possessions to occupy too much of our attention and affection?
3. What part of the rich man’s decision regarding his bountiful harvest condemned him?
4. Why did Jesus refer to the rich man as foolish?
5. When we pass from this life, what do we take with us?
6. What harm did the rich man bring to Lazarus, other than ignore

his pitiful condition?

7. What aspect of riches is dangerous to wealthy people?
8. How can wealth be regarded so that it proves a blessing rather than a curse?

### **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

Jesus did not focus on earthly possessions while He lived among us. At the time of His death, the soldiers divided His clothes among themselves by casting lots. His outer coat was “without seam” and deemed the most valuable part of His clothing. Isn’t it amazing that Jesus’ sole possessions during His ministry were the clothes he wore on His back?

A dear departed brother in our local congregation made the remark several years ago: “We never see a funeral hearse pulling a U-Haul trailer.” Our earthly goods become someone else’s responsibility when we pass on. The decision of what is done with them is then left to the new owners. Will the newly acquired items or money be used for selfish ends only, or will a portion of them be used to bless others?

King David did not obtain much of his eventual wealth by inheriting it from his father; most of it came by way of the throne God placed him on. David dedicated a vast amount of gold, silver, and other resources toward the construction of the temple. Even after donating so much toward the temple project, David was an extremely wealthy man.

When David died, the throne and all the wealth associated with it passed on to Solomon. God granted Solomon the wisdom he prayed for, along with additional wealth—which was promised to exceed all kingdoms before and after his reign. It is difficult to process how much wealth God entrusted Solomon with. After Solomon’s death, his son, Rehoboam, inherited his father’s wealth by virtue of the throne. Unfortunately, Rehoboam reigned differently than did David, his grandfather, and differently than the first years of Solomon, his father. The kingdom was soon divided, with ten tribes revolting and only the tribe of Judah and Benjamin remaining.

Later, King Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Solomon’s temple, which had lasted about 400 years, and took its immense wealth back to Babylon. The Jewish people were brought under Babylonian

bondage and the wealth of the kingdom of Judah became the property of Nebuchadnezzar.

Wealth is passed from generation to generation in normal circumstances, but can also change hands by less friendly means, such as war, lawsuits, and theft. Inherited wealth, while appreciated, can eventually be taken for granted and lost—or it can be an instrument of ruin to those who inherit it. Wealth gained quickly through unrighteous ways never yields the happiness hoped for. “Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for *riches* certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven” (Proverbs 23:5).

*“Dear God, thank you for providing for my temporal needs. Help me to be content with your provision. Help me to not set my heart on riches unintended for my stewardship. Amen!”*

## REFLECTIONS

Earthly wealth has always been spoken of in the Bible as fleeting. The Lord warns in Haggai 1:5-7 that we should consider our ways because we sow much and gather little, we eat and drink but aren’t satisfied, earning wages that just go into a bag with holes.

When the woman brought the alabaster box of expensive ointment to anoint Jesus prior to his death, several of the disciples made complaint that it was a waste of money—that the ointment could have been sold and used to provide for the poor. Judas Iscariot was motivated by having money in the bag more than actually spending it, as suggested. Jesus responded that the poor would be with us always, and that the woman would be remembered for her selfless deed.

I read once of a man blessed of God to make money easily. He set his intentions to grow his investments and then once funds were suitable, he would begin providing support for various ministry efforts. The sad end of that man’s efforts was a fund full of money, but the man never felt it was quite enough to begin providing the intended support. I wonder how the Lord will view this man’s actions on the day of judgment?

May we not lose sight of our goal. The allure of the world and its riches have made shipwreck of many.

—Bro. Eric Doolittle

**MAY 11, 2025**  
**SERVANTS MUST REMAIN WATCHFUL**

**Mark 13:32** But of that day and *that* hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.

33 Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.

34 *For the Son of man is* as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.

35 Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning:

36 Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.

37 And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.

**Luke 12:35** Let your loins be girded about, and *your* lights burning;

36 And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.

37 Blessed *are* those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.

38 And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find *them* so, blessed are those servants.

39 And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through.

40 Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.

**MEMORY VERSE:** He that dasheth in pieces is come up before thy face: keep the munition, watch the way, make *thy* loins strong, fortify *thy* power mightily. —**Nahum 2:1**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Jesus warned that no man knows when the end of time will be; nor do Jesus or the angels know—only God the Father. Therefore, lest the end come at an inopportune time,

we are to continually watch for Christ's second coming, expecting it to happen at any moment!

### WORD DEFINITIONS

Mark 13:33 **“Watch”**: to be sleepless, keep awake; to be circumspect, attentive, ready.

### LESSON BACKGROUND

“And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work. And it came to pass from that time forth, *that* the half of my servants wrought in the work, and the other half of them held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the habergeons; and the rulers *were* behind all the house of Judah. They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, *every one* with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other *hand* held a weapon” (Nehemiah 4:15-17). What a wonderful example the people that rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem gave us! They labored with their hands but constantly watched for the enemy that promised to stop their labors. God blessed them for their diligence, and the wall was completed in fifty-two days!

### DISCUSSION:

1. Throughout history people have predicted the date of the end of time. All have been wrong. What do they do with Mark 13:32?
2. Because no one truly knows when the end will be, what is a common temptation regarding its coming?
3. How do we maintain vigilance and still get our necessary rest?
4. How will Jesus' coming be like a “thief in the night”?
5. Jesus said He would come at an hour when we think not. What will people be doing when the end comes?
6. Why does God withhold full knowledge of our date of death?
7. How does not knowing the date of our death correlate with the end of time?

## COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Emergency personnel, such as firemen, paramedics, and policemen, are trained to be ready at a moment's notice for anything—because disaster strikes all hours of the day, every day of the week. Full-time firemen often work 24 hours on and 48 hours off. During their 24 hours on duty, the firemen take time to rest, but they know the alarm can go off in the middle of a good dream.

Volunteer firemen often carry gear with them in the trunk of their car or in a gear box in the back of their truck. A volunteer fireman is never really “off duty.” When their pager or radio alerts them, they jump in their vehicle as quickly as possible and rush to the emergency.

Off duty policemen have the authority to enforce the law and often step up to help when situations call for assistance. Doctors and nurses are encouraged to render medical aid when they are in proximity to accidents and emergencies. On a few occasions, an off-duty commercial pilot, flying as a passenger, has relieved an on-duty pilot who had a medical emergency.

People with specialized skills and training find their services are sometimes needed in places and situations beyond the scope of a normal workday; they are trained to anticipate the unexpected and are always ready to help.

Jesus taught us to live ready at all times because we do not know when the end of time will or when our personal end may come.

*“Dear Lord, thank you for warning us to always be ready! Amen.”*

## REFLECTIONS

If we are truly ready at all times in this life, we will be ready when He comes. This readiness requires continual maintenance in our daily life—so read, pray, learn, and grow in His grace.

We don't know when the Lord will return for judgment; more personally, we don't know when He will come for us. Absolutely, the only thing we can do is be ready, watching, praying, and expecting Him. Sadly, I have seen too many instances in college, work, and in everyday life when people knew what was coming and knew when it was coming, yet, when the situation arose, they were not ready for it.

Many years ago, Sis. Annie Bell Allen hosted a meeting in Dallas. After the Sunday service dinner many began to leave, returning home.

Sis. Katherine Williams hit her head on something and someone led her into the dining area, asking for prayer. The only two people present in the room were two young people, Bro. E. Gracey and myself. When asked to pray we both looked at each other, hesitating, as if to say, “She wants us to pray?” Sis. Katherine then abruptly challenged us about being saved; that moved us to pray and the Lord did help her.

Emergency personnel respond to many circumstances that aren’t fully known. When working on a line crew, we had to ensure we had sufficient supplies on our trucks to take care of emergencies, as well as daily needs. We did this by checking and replenishing our supplies daily. It serves no purpose for emergency crews to arrive at a scene having nothing to work with; they must have skills, commitment, and proper supplies on hand—prepared and ready. So, it must be with the Christian. Salvation, prayer, grace, fruit of the Spirit and more must be daily maintained so that we are prepared to meet any circumstance and keep us ready to meet Christ. Watch, pray, learn, and grow!

—Bro. Paul Phillips

**MAY 18, 2025**  
**FAITHFULNESS IN BEARING FRUIT**

**Luke 13:6** He spake also this parable; A certain *man* had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.

7 Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?

8 And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung *it*:

9 And if it bear fruit, *well*: and if not, *then* after that thou shalt cut it down.

10 And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.

**Matthew 13:3** And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow;

4 And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up:



5 Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth:

6 And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.

7 And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them:

8 But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.

**Matthew 13:18** Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower.

19 When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth *it* not, then cometh the wicked *one*, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.

20 But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it;

21 Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.

22 He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.

23 But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth *it*; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

**Matthew 13:36** Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field.

37 He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man;

38 The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked *one*;

39 The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.

40 As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world.

41 The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;

42 And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

43 Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

**“Reaping and Sowing” also see: Matthew 13:24-30 and Matthew 25:14-30**

**MEMORY VERSE:** But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep *it*, and bring forth fruit with patience. —**Luke 8:15**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** After asking for the blood of Jesus to wash away our sins, the good seed of God’s word grows and multiplies in our lives. The evidence of godly seed growing in our heart is the good fruit it produces. God eagerly anticipates it and **expects** it. Our eternal destiny depends on it.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

Luke 13:7 **“Vine dresser”**: the worker that prunes the vines (*Strong’s*).

Luke 13:7 **“Cumbereth”**: to be entirely idle, useless, of none effect; to vanish away, make void (*Strong’s*).

Matthew 13:4 **“By the wayside”**: beside a well-traveled road; close to a way of thinking, feeling, or deciding (*Thayer*).

Matthew 13:4 **“Tares”**: originally good wheat, but turned degenerate, or bad (*Clarke*).

Matthew 25:27 **“Usuary”**: interest on money loaned (*Strong’s*).

### LESSON BACKGROUND

In today’s society, it is easy to forget where our food comes from. Since many people buy most of their food from stores and restaurants, rather than growing it themselves, the true origins of food can be taken for granted.

In Jesus’ time, most people grew at least some of their daily food. Produce, grain, and meat purchased from others was easily traced to a nearby field or lake. There was a general understanding of the importance of bearing good fruit in abundance.

## DISCUSSION:

1. Why did the owner of the fig tree lose patience with it after three years of no fruit?
2. What did the vinedresser propose to do instead of immediately cutting the fig tree down?
3. How did Jesus compare Himself to the vinedresser?
4. What does Jesus do to those who are not bearing fruit?
5. What happens to those who refuse to bear fruit, despite all of Jesus' efforts to encourage them?
6. What control do we have over the effect the seed of the Word of God has in our lives?
7. How does the Lord regard the tares among His wheat?
8. How important to God is the wheat that is near the tares?
9. What justification did the landowner have of being angry with the servant that buried his talent (Matthew 25:14-30)?

## COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Several years ago, a certain farmer near our area became known for the extremely high yields his crops produced. The ground was prime farmland and could produce good yields with normal effort—but he was not satisfied with an average crop. He did all he could to maximize yields by irrigating and fertilizing rigorously. During the early part of plant growth, he would “shock” the young shoots with a concoction of barnyard waste mixed with water. The shock from this type of fertilizer would almost kill the plants because of its potency. When they recovered, however, they were far more vigorous than normal. The results were yields that roughly doubled neighboring crops.

Why didn't nearby farmers do the same thing? Most farmers were satisfied with average crops through average effort, and that is what they got. In a dry year, the farmers that did not irrigate had very low yields. The ground was essentially the same for all the farmers in the area, but the results were not. The difference was the farmer, not the ground or seed.

*“Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your patient dealings with my soul. Help me to be fruitful for the benefit of my own soul, and for the good of your kingdom! Amen.”*

## REFLECTIONS

Naturally speaking, many of us may have known or heard stories about someone with a natural gift, skill or intellect that was not used to the best of their ability. Obstacles in their lives or they themselves hindered utilization of the talents God had given them. Using our gifts/talents for the kingdom of God is crucial.

Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is the best teacher that has or ever will walk this earth. He used numerous parables to convey the messages He endeavored to get across to all mankind. As illustrated in the parables in our lesson, how we respond and whether His word finds fertile ground in our heart for harvesting will determine where we spend eternity. Are we bearing fruit for His kingdom? Are we using our God-given talents or hiding them? We are called to be vessels for God to use as He pleases. The songwriter penned the words to a vital question: "Since Jesus gave his life for me, Should I not give him mine?"

On that great judgement day, I presume several questions might be asked of us. What did you do with the life I gave you? Did you bear any fruit in my vineyard? Whatever our response, if we did not bear fruit as He expected, we will be without excuse. The sweet words that we are all longing to hear are, "Well done."

May we have a determination more than ever before to allow God's word to penetrate our minds and hearts to bear the fruit He intends for us to bear.

—Bro. Tavis Browne

### MAY 25, 2025 A GRAIN OF MUSTARD SEED

**Mark 4:26** And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground;

27 And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how.

28 For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.

29 But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.

**Matthew 13:31** Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field:

32 Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.

33 Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Then said he, Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it. —**Luke 13:18-19**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** The good seed of the kingdom of God can be small, but it is powerful! When the seed of God’s love and salvation sprouts in an honest heart and is allowed to grow to maturity, the end result is a great tree of righteousness that blesses many.

## WORD DEFINITIONS

Matthew 13:31-32 **“Grain of mustard seed...becometh a tree”:** Bible scholars believe this particular plant to be a “mustard tree” that grew much larger than the mustard herb. The mustard tree can grow large enough for a man to climb on its branches. Some have been known to reach thirty feet tall. The seed is remarkably small (one to two millimeters or 1-1/6 inch).

## LESSON BACKGROUND

The mustard seed, while not the smallest seed in the world, was the smallest seed men typically planted in Bible times. The climate in Palestine favored the growth of the mustard plant to reach considerable size. Jesus used the mustard plant as an example of how a small seed can grow to great size, given enough time and the proper growing conditions.

The gospel seed planted in the hearts of Jesus’ disciples did not reach full maturity until after the day of Pentecost when the Holy

Spirit came into their hearts. This was a period of a little over three and a half years. Those seeds have grown and multiplied tremendously since that time—and the multiplication and growth continues!

### **DISCUSSION:**

1. How is salvation likened to a small seed sown in the ground?
2. What has to happen to a seed before it can germinate and grow?
3. How fast does a seed typically sprout and grow so it can be recognized?
4. How long does it take, on average, before the plant, or its fruit, can be eaten?
5. Why doesn't God make a newly saved person instantly and fully spiritually mature?
6. What is God's overall design regarding plant reproduction?
7. How does the seed of the Word of God multiply in the hearts of individuals?
8. What is God's plan for the growth of the kingdom of God for all mankind?

### **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

Frank Jenner was an Australian sailor in WWII that lived up to the reputation of “rowdy sailor.” Addicted to gambling and alcohol, Frank one day found himself at his wits end. He talked with a fellow sailor who led him to Christ. In his immense gratitude to the Lord for turning his life around, Frank promised he would try to witness to at least ten people every day from then on.

True to his commitment, Frank began talking to people on George Street in Sydney, Australia. His typical approach was to hand strangers a gospel tract and say, “Excuse me Sir/Madam, are you saved? If you were to die tonight, would you go to heaven?”

Several years later, a pastor from England was preaching in Sydney. He had heard of the story of Frank Jenner. While he was telling his story, a man jumped up in the crowd and said, “Mr. Jenner witnessed to me also! I am saved today because of his witness for Christ.”

The pastor soon heard of two others who gave their lives to Christ because of Frank's commitment to ask people, "Are you saved?" In later travels to other parts of the globe, more and more people acknowledged Frank had also talked to them. Many of these people later turned to Christ; some became missionaries, pastors, and chaplains.

The pastor finally decided he wanted to meet Frank. Upon arriving back in Sydney, he located Frank and asked to visit him. By this time Frank was an old man and unable to get out much anymore. Parkinson's disease had taken its toll on his ability to witness like he used to. Upon hearing the pastor's accounts of the many people Frank had won to Christ, tears welled up in his eyes. "In forty years of doing this, I didn't know of anyone who came to Christ and stayed with it."

If Mr. Jenner was able to speak to ten people every day for forty years, that is at least 146,000 people. Many rejected Frank's tract and simple question, but several accepted Jesus' invitation and got saved. Those who accepted salvation went on to win others to Christ. It is hard to imagine how many people we will eventually see heaven because of the commitment of one thankful man!

<https://archive.org/details/FrankJenner-IGotOffAtGeorgeStreet-commonlySpeltMr.Genor-Just> and [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frank\\_Jenner](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frank_Jenner)

*"Dear Lord, thank you for the powerful seed of your gospel! Please help it to germinate and grow in my heart as you designed it to. Help me to plant the seed of the gospel in other hearts. Amen."*

## REFLECTIONS

The tapestry of the Gospel woven through the centuries is filled with small seeds that have grown into something much greater than originally planted. Do you suppose Paul knew how foundational the letters he wrote to the various churches in Asia would become to the Christian faith? Do you think Tabitha, also known as Dorcas, understood when she made the first little garment for one of the widows in Joppa (or perhaps for one of their children), that her work was so instrumental to God's kingdom that it would necessitate her life being restored?

The Kingdom of God is one, not of addition, but of multiplication. Have you a little faith or a little love? It is enough. Have you few

resources but are doing God's work? It will multiply. The question then, my brothers and sisters, is not how much you have, but whether God is in it. As Gamaliel cautioned the Sanhedrin in the Acts, if only man is in a work, "...it will come to naught." But if God is in something, it cannot be stopped! I am reminded of a few words from the hymn:

"Little Is Much When God Is in It" by Kittie Louise Suffield

Does the place you're called to labor  
Seem too small and little known?  
It is great if God is in it,  
And He'll not forget His own.

Little is much when God is in it!  
Labor not for wealth or fame.  
There's a crown—and you can win it—  
If you go in Jesus' name.

—Bro. Fari Matthews

**JUNE 1, 2025**

### **HIDDEN TREASURE OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD**

**Matthew 13:44** Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.

45 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls:

46 Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

47 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind:

48 Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.

49 So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just,



50 And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

51 Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea, Lord.

52 Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe *which is* instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man *that is* an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure *things* new and old.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

—Isaiah 55:1

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** The treasure of the kingdom of heaven infinitely surpasses all other treasures. Throughout the ages of time, people have sought for treasure in many other places, but none has ever been found to equal salvation. Sometimes salvation is sought after by those who hunger after more than they have. Others are sought out, much like a fishing net seeks after fish. Honest souls respond to the gospel call and are saved. Dishonest souls do not make it into heaven but are cast into the furnace of fire in the end. The difference between the two choices is unimaginable!

### WORD DEFINITIONS

Matthew 13:44 **“Treasure hid in a field”**: possibly a treasure chest containing immense wealth.

Matthew 13:50 **“Gnashing of teeth”**: used to denote extreme anguish and utter despair of men consigned to eternal punishment in hell; snarling, growling: in the sense of biting (*Thayer*).

Matthew 13:52 **“Every scribe”**: every man that is acquainted with the truth of the gospel (*Barnes*).

### LESSON BACKGROUND

A couple from Northern California, while walking their dog on their property in 2013, found a rusty can filled with gold coins. It contained 1,427 gold coins dating from 1847 to 1894. Some of the

coins were uncirculated and in mint condition, making them some of the best specimens of their kind. It is speculated these coins could be tied to a theft from the U.S. Mint years ago.

<https://www.thearchaeologist.org/blog/here-are-10-of-the-most-valuable-treasures-ever-discovered>

In 2011 a Filipino fisherman found a 26-inch-long pearl weighing seventy-five pounds inside a giant clam. He hid it under his bed for several years for “good luck.” When his house burned down a few years ago, the pearl was unharmed. The pearl is valued at \$100,000,000, making it the most valuable pearl of all time (*Forbes*).

The fishing net referred to in Jesus’ parable was a drag net, or sweep net. It was drug along the bottom of the river or lake and caught everything in its path. Once brought ashore, or into a boat, the desirable fish were kept but the undesirable fish were either killed or thrown back into the water. The nets were indiscriminate in what they brought up, leaving the choosing of good and bad to the fishermen.

A householder who does not use all the valuable assets at his disposal for the advantageous good of the household is neither wise nor faithful. Some of the assets will have been in his possession a long time, but others will have been newly acquired. It makes no difference how new or novel these assets are, nor how ordinary or familiar they seem to him; they must all be used judiciously and not kept back from use by hoarding or by neglect.

## **DISCUSSION:**

1. In Jesus’ parables of the treasure hid in the field and the pearl of great price, why did the men eagerly sell everything to obtain the prize they had found?
2. How much better off did the men count themselves to be when they sold everything to obtain their prize?
3. Why is it usually necessary to sacrifice *something* of less value for that which is highly valued?
4. What would have hindered the men seeking their treasures if they had insisted on keeping what little they already had?
5. What usually happens to great wealth obtained by those who sacrificed nothing to get it?
6. How valuable would salvation be to mankind if they never had to

- give up their old hurtful and sinful ways to obtain it?
7. Why does the fisherman, and not the fish, determine what part of the catch is valuable and what is thrown back or destroyed?
  8. Why should old and familiar truths be valued the same as newly revealed truths when it regards our souls and the souls of those around us?

### COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

A man traveling to the United States from England years ago sold all he had and bought a valuable diamond. On board the ship, he began juggling the diamond, amazing and worrying all who watched. One day, while juggling the diamond, he threw it up very high—as he had sometimes done before—but this time the ship lurched to the side after being hit with a large wave. Just as the ship moved to the side, the diamond came down...into the water!

I am unable to verify the authenticity of this story, although it has circulated for some time. There is a truth, however, that is evident. Many people lose things of immense value. Sometimes it is because of an accident or a disaster; other times it is because of their own carelessness. This type of loss is extremely painful.

There is a treasure we are each given at birth—our soul. The Bible tells us our soul is worth more than the combined wealth of the world, which stands at around \$454 trillion. This truth is hard to comprehend because we are not accustomed to dealing with wealth like that on an everyday basis. Yet, we do, because we are each responsible for the welfare of our own soul. “I must die, but when? I must meet God, but how? I must live in eternity, but where?”

*“Dear God, thank you for the gift of my never-dying soul. Help me to remember its true worth and help me to act accordingly! Amen.”*

### REFLECTIONS

Jesus came to this earth to bring us the kingdom of God. He came to bring salvation to mankind. These parables represent the kingdom of God as hid treasures. We may question why. Why is it hidden? Why is it an extremely valuable treasure?

First of all, salvation is the hidden treasure of the kingdom of God. It is hidden from the world, and unless a person partakes of it, it

will remain hidden. One may wonder why people who are not saved don't realize its value and partake of it. It is a hidden treasure. A person must search for it. They must have a longing for it. Jesus said, "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). But the encouraging thing is that when a person longs and searches for this treasure, he will find it!

Salvation is the "pearl of great price"—its value is limitless. Nothing equals its value! All the treasures of this earth combined cannot be compared to it! The treasures of this world will fade away with the world, but salvation is eternal. Jesus warned of laying up treasures on earth, "...where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal" (Matthew 6:19), but nothing can touch this treasure. It is the only treasure a person can take with them when they die. Even if earthly treasures are buried with a person, they will remain here; the person had to leave them. Salvation is the only priceless treasure that can be enjoyed in this life and then taken to eternity.

I wish to share a conversation with an elderly person who found this great treasure: This dear one expressed that her one desire in life was to live faithful to the end. She doesn't care what people do with the things she has after she dies; she said she just wants to take her salvation with her. She has found this great treasure and sold all she has for it!

—Sis. Doris Clay

## JUNE 8, 2025 SHEEP AND GOATS

**Luke 15:4** What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?

5 And when he hath found *it*, he layeth *it* on his shoulders, rejoicing.

6 And when he cometh home, he calleth together *his* friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.

7 I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons,

which need no repentance.

**John 10:1** Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.

2 But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.

3 To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.

4 And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.

5 And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.

7 Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.

8 All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.

9 I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

10 The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more abundantly.

11 I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

12 But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.

13 The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep.

14 I am the good shepherd, and know my *sheep*, and am known of mine.

15 As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.

16 And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, *and* one shepherd.

**Matthew 25:31** When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:

32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep

from the goats:

33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed *thee*? or thirsty, and gave *thee* drink?

38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took *thee* in? or naked, and clothed *thee*?

39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done *it* unto me.

41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

42 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink:

43 I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

44 Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did *it* not to one of the least of these, ye did *it* not to me.

46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

**MEMORY VERSE:** And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats: —**Matthew 25:32**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** God regards people as either a sheep or a goat. Sheep hear and obey the voice of their Master. Goats take the other path, and are lost—unless they repent and take on the nature of sheep.

## **WORD DEFINITIONS**

John 10:9 **“I am the door”**: In Bible times shepherds slept in the entrance to the sheepfold to protect their flock.

## **LESSON BACKGROUND**

King David, “a man after God’s own heart,” was a shepherd in his youth. David understood how helpless sheep were and was willing to risk his life to protect and defend them—even if it meant facing a lion and a bear.

Shepherds have demonstrated countless times that their sheep will listen only to their voice. Sheep soon learn to recognize their master and respond only to them—because they know their master cares for them.

In Bible times, sheep and goats often grazed together in the same fields. At the end of the day, the shepherd put them in a divided enclosure—the sheep on one side and goats on the other side. The shepherds understood that within the confines of the fold, goats would harm the sheep.

## **DISCUSSION:**

1. Regarding the parable of the one lost sheep, what did Jesus do for Peter after he denied Him?
2. Why did the Lord deal with Saul of Tarsus to be saved despite his persecution of the believers?
3. What potential did God see in each one of us before salvation?
4. Why does a thief try to climb up some other way into the sheepfold?
5. What effort does God put into protecting His own sheep?
6. Why do God’s sheep recognize and follow only His voice?
7. What hope would we have of salvation if Jesus had not been willing to give His life for the sheep?

8. Why does God compare some people to sheep and some to goats?
9. What characteristics is God looking for in His sheep?

### COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Sergei Kourdakov, a young leader of a special task force responsible for terrorizing believers in the Soviet Union in the late 1960's and early 1970's, led a life much like Saul of Tarsus. One particular believer, Natasha, a beautiful young woman, caught Sergei's attention. No matter how much she was beaten and threatened, she would be at the next secret worship service. Natasha's commitment to her Savior began to wear on Sergei as he realized, "She must have something I don't!"

Sergei finally had a "Damascus-road experience" and gave his heart to God. On one of their raids, they found a portion of the Bible, Luke 11, handwritten from memory. Out of curiosity, Sergei read some of it in private. It spoke to his heart and convinced him that the teachings of Jesus were not against the state but simply taught people how to live life.

After becoming a believer and asking Jesus to save him from his sinful past, Sergei eventually escaped off of a ship near the coast of Canada and swam to shore. Sergei knew his former comrades would eventually find him and eliminate him, but before his death, he spoke to many others of the evil in his past life, and of the hope and peace of the gospel of Jesus Christ. (*The Persecutor, by Sergei Kourdakov. Guideposts Associates, Inc. Carmel, NY*)

*"Dear Lord, help me to have the nature of a sheep, trusting you to be my shield and defense. Help me to love you more and more. Help me to lead others to your sheep fold! Amen."*

### REFLECTIONS

Goats and sheep, while sharing some genetic similarities, certainly differ in behavior. I recently visited a brother in Germany who raises both. I noted the separation he maintained between them in his barn, and he explained that the goats quickly begin harassing and dominating the sheep. This wasn't a learned behavior, but the very nature of the goats to which Jesus alluded; a nature



more aggressive, independent, and stubborn than that of sheep.

This brother also shared a story of a shepherd in his country that found his sheep had been stolen. He knew his sheep quite well and knew and the exact number that were missing. He suspected the thief had loaded them onto the livestock cars of a train traveling through and hurried ahead to the destination. Upon reaching the station, he alerted the authorities of the theft and began scouring the masses of animals that had been unloaded from the train cars and staged in large pens. He soon recognized his sheep, but how would he ever prove they belonged to him? As he stood near the pen explaining to the officer what had happened and attempting to convince him of the proper ownership of the animals, the officer noted something peculiar. One sheep after another in the pen began lifting their heads and moving toward the familiar voice. As they talked, the officer counted the number of sheep that had drawn near the shepherd and found that it was the exact number he was missing! The officer was convinced that these sheep had undoubtedly learned the voice of their shepherd.

May we too have the nature of sheep and follow the voice of our gentle Shepherd. The day is coming when the true nature of each person will be laid bare, and the sheep's clothing that Jesus said is worn by some goats will fall away. There will be no greater joy than to hear Him claim us for His own at His right hand!

—Bro. Clint Doolittle

**JUNE 15, 2025**

**WORKERS FOR THE KINGDOM AND PRIDE AMONG THE  
WORKERS**

**Matthew 20:1** For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man *that* is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard.

2 And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

3 And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace,

4 And said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way.

5 Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise.

6 And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle?

7 They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, *that* shall ye receive.

8 So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them *their* hire, beginning from the last unto the first.

9 And when they came that *were hired* about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny.

10 But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny.

11 And when they had received *it*, they murmured against the goodman of the house,

12 Saying, These last have wrought *but* one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.

13 But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny?

14 Take *that* thine *is*, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee.

15 Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?

16 So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

**Matthew 21:28** But what think ye? A *certain* man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard.

29 He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went.

30 And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I *go*, sir: and went not.

31 Whether of them twain did the will of *his* father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.

32 For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye

believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen *it*, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.

**Luke 18:10** Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.

11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men *are*, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as *his* eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

**Luke 14:7** And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them,

8 When thou art bidden of any *man* to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him;

9 And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room.

10 But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee.

11 For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

12 Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor *thy* rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee.

13 But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind:

14 And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

**(Workers of the Kingdom: See also Luke 14:28-33, Luke 20:9-18, Luke 17:7-10)**

**MEMORY VERSE:** So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen. —**Matthew 20:16**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** We are all called to be saved and labor in the Lord’s vineyard. Some gladly agree while others decline. God forces no one. Final payment for working in God’s vineyard is the same for every redeemed soul—eternal life. Jesus cautioned that His workers should never compare themselves among themselves, as doing so fosters pride and conflict. God is the judge of the heart of His workers.

### **WORD DEFINITIONS**

Matthew 20:6 **“Eleventh Hour”**: about five o’clock in the afternoon, or when there was but one working hour of the day left. (*Barnes*) “The "eleventh hour" refers to the late afternoon, around 5 p.m., in the Jewish workday, which typically ended at sunset. This timing emphasizes the urgency and unexpected nature of the landowner's actions. In biblical symbolism, the eleventh hour can represent the last opportunity for repentance and salvation, highlighting God's grace extended even at the last moment. This concept is echoed in the parable's broader message of God's kingdom, where the last can be first, and vice versa.” (*Study Bible from Bible Hub online*)

### **LESSON BACKGROUND**

Vineyards were common in Judea when the parable of the householder and his vineyard was given. The owner of a vineyard would employ workers at daybreak, or 6 a.m., known as the first hour. Those who desired work for that day would often congregate in the market place where they stood the greatest chance of gaining employment. The common wage for a day’s work in Jesus’ time was one penny, otherwise known as the Roman denarius.

The tower referred to in Luke 14 was a tall building built either on a hill or in a vineyard. Its purpose was for observation and defense. Jesus intended for people to consider the cost of discipleship in much the same way they considered building a tower. It is not good to start something worthwhile and not see it through to completion.

In Luke 17, Jesus pointed out that a servant was expected to do whatever his master wished of him, even if it was inconvenient for the servant. This might include serving his master's meal before eating his own meal; even if he had just come from work in the field. Serving Christ and working in His vineyard often means forsaking our own comfort for the good of others.

The servant sent by the master of the vineyard to receive the fruit of the vineyard in the parable told in Luke 20 points out that the servant carried the authority of the master. When the servant was mistreated, the master sent his own son, expecting the other servants to respect him. When the servants killed the son with the belief they could take ownership of the vineyard, their destruction was ensured. Jesus was the Son sent by the Master of the vineyard. Jesus foretold of the destruction of those who would eventually kill Him in their effort take possession of that which was not rightfully theirs.

The parables in Luke 18 and 14 point out that conflict can occur between servants. Conflict arises because of pride. Disruption through conflict is not profitable to God's cause, but, rather, is destructive.

## **DISCUSSION:**

1. How thankful are we that God calls everyone to work in His vineyard, even if it is the eleventh hour?
2. Why doesn't every worker in God's vineyard "start at the same time"?
3. What does God's willingness to "pay every man a penny" tell us about Him?
4. Why is it so important to do God's will rather than merely saying the right words?
5. What can happen if someone starts living for God without fully considering their commitment?
6. Why should we always say, "We have done that which was our duty to do"?
7. How can a person presume to escape God's wrath while at the same time mistreating God's messengers?
8. What profit is there in lifting ourselves above a fellow servant?

## COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

I saw a cute poster one time of two small boys with a little wagon. One boy was in front pulling and steering the wagon while the boy in back was in a pushing position. The caption above the poster told what the boy in front asked of the boy behind the wagon: “Are you pushing or pulling back there?” Evidently, the load in the wagon made the job hard enough for the boy in front to wonder if his friend was helping or hindering their progress.

The poster still brings a smile to my face, but I have to ask myself as I face new circumstances, “Am I helping or hindering in this situation?” If I happen to be in front of the wagon, my job is to pull. If I am behind the wagon, I can’t pull—I have to push.

In reality, all of us are given a “wagon” to help move down the path of life. The choice is always ours about how much we help or hinder.

*“Dear Heavenly Father, help me be a blessing to others rather than a burden. Amen.”*

## REFLECTIONS

Pride among the workers, our brothers and sisters in the Lord, can so insidiously slip in. Before we’re hardly aware of it, it begins growing when we begin noting and comparing our efforts with the efforts of fellow laborers.

In service attendance, have you ever found yourself feeling you were “more faithful” than others because you’re consistently present? I like to sit toward the front of the chapel because there are typically less distractions, and I can focus easier. I’ve found myself questioning others’ commitment when it seemed the greater part of people sat toward the back.

We can be over-zealous in getting people to “measure-up” instead of allowing the Lord lead them. Consistent church attendance, service participation, and modest apparel can clothe a critical spirit, hair-trigger anger, harsh words, selfishness and pride. It’s just so much easier to adjust a garment than deal with deeply rooted heart issues.

In working for the Lord, it’s easy to forget I’m doing it for Him when I’m weary or there doesn’t seem to be enough help. I’ve found

myself noticing who is not helping and feeling a martyr. I cringe at a past memory of verbalizing, “If I can do ‘it’ anyone should be able to.” I’ve learned people’s background, understanding and abilities aren’t the same and it makes a difference.

These are just a few examples where pride can creep in, and it seems to happen when I get my eyes off the Lord and on others. May the Lord help me to extend grace and love to my fellow servants and to keep my focus on Him.

—Sis. Diane Doolittle

**JUNE 22, 2025**  
**THE GREAT BANQUET, THE GOOD SAMARITAN, AND**  
**THE PERSISTENT WIDOW**

**Luke 14:16** Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many:

17 And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready.

18 And they all with one *consent* began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused.

19 And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused.

20 And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.

21 So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.

22 And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.

23 And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel *them* to come in, that my house may be filled.

24 For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.

**(Great Banquet also see: Matthew 22:2-14)**

**Luke 10:30** And Jesus answering said, A certain *man* went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded *him*, and departed, leaving *him* half dead.

31 And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

32 And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked *on him*, and passed by on the other side.

33 But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion *on him*,

34 And went to *him*, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

35 And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave *them* to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

36 Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?

37 And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

**Luke 18:2** Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man:

3 And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.

4 And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man;

5 Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.

6 And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.

7 And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?

8 I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

**(Persistent Importuning also see: Luke 11:5-8)**

**MEMORY VERSE:** For many are called, but few *are* chosen.

—Matthew 22:14



**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Jesus is making preparations in heaven for His bride, the church. God invites everyone to this great heavenly wedding, but all guests must have on the robes of salvation to gain admittance.

Jesus told of a man no one would have thought capable of helping someone in need. Despite being a Samaritan and despised by Jews, the Good Samaritan took care of the immediate needs of a Jewish traveler who had been severely beaten and robbed. The priest and Levite, both of whom refused to be troubled by the hurting man's plight, missed the opportunity to prove what a true neighbor does for those in need. The Good Samaritan, however, went above and beyond in caring for the wounded man's immediate needs. He also hired someone to take care of Jewish traveler until he recovered.

God admires importunity and tenacity in those who seek His help for others and for themselves. In the two parables Jesus shared on this topic, the seekers received the help they sought even though it looked at first like they would not have their petitions met. How much more does our Heavenly Father want to help His children—even if it takes a while sometimes!

### **WORD DEFINITIONS**

Matthew 22:11 **“Wedding garment”**: In ancient times kings and princes provided garments for wedding guests—simple flowing white robes (*Barnes*).

### **LESSON BACKGROUND**

In Bible times, weddings involved feasts that normally lasted seven days. Robes were provided for the guests to wear during the wedding and feast. The robes covered the guests' normal clothing, thus making it easy for guests of every rank to mingle freely with one another without regard to status. Failure to wear the wedding garment provided by the host was extremely disrespectful. The host would ask the guest to leave if they refused to accept the wedding garment.

Failure to attend a wedding when invited was considered extremely ill-mannered. Reasons not to attend had to be acceptable

to the host. Because weddings involved seven days of feasting and everyone was expected to stay the entire seven days, it was a significant commitment of time for the guests.

In the parable of the Good Samaritan, the priest and Levite that “passed by on the other side” followed the letter of the law when they avoided the injured man. If they touched a dead person, they would be unclean for seven days. This potentially meant a significant inconvenience for the priest and Levite who felt they did not have time to remain in isolation that long. Rather than risking exposure to death, they decided to “let someone else show compassion rather than taint their hands.”

As we see in the “Persistent Widow,” the role of a judge in Bible times was primarily to settle disputes in their jurisdiction. Their authority went as far as the respect they had among the people. A corrupt judge would soon lose credibility and effectiveness.

## **DISCUSSION:**

1. Who does God invite to the wedding of His Son?
2. What are the consequences of refusing to attend this great wedding?
3. Describe the wedding garment everyone is given.
4. How does God regard those who do not put on their wedding garment?
5. What inconveniences are involved in helping someone in great need?
6. Why is the inconvenience of helping others sometimes used as an excuse not to help?
7. What would happen if everyone mimicked the priest and Levite who “passed by on the other side”?
8. When will you or I be in the same situation as the man who was robbed and beaten?
9. How much power and credibility does our Heavenly Father have compared to the unjust judge of whom Jesus spoke?

## **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

**Great Banquet:** During an interview for a possible job promotion several years ago, my boss recommended I agree to change from

salary compensation to hourly. Since I was not expecting this, I requested a little time to think about his proposition. Immediately, I could tell my hesitation upset my boss. He was looking out for my best interest, and my hesitation was perceived as a lack of trust.

Two of the main reasons people hesitate to accept, or outright refuse, God's wonderful offer of eternal life is that they are either uninformed or uninterested. The devil tries to keep everyone in the dark regarding God's great plan of salvation. Those who do learn the glad news are immediately attacked by the enemy with doubts that God really cares for them or has their best interest at heart when He offers them eternal life. The devil's sole purpose is to cheat souls out of heaven.

**Good Samaritan:** My favorite teacher of all time was a man that never shirked the responsibility of helping someone in need. He told of a time when someone was being beaten up in a parking lot. Onlookers merely stood around in a big circle and watched the man taking advantage of the individual unable to defend himself. My instructor became infuriated even thinking about it as he told us of the incident. If I recall the story correctly, my teacher was the only man that intervened in the situation.

Another time, while our teacher was instructing our class, a substitute teacher gathered a group of students in the courtyard between several of the classrooms and began a demonstration of "burning rubber" in his highly modified hot rod. The substitute teacher locked his front brakes and stepped on the accelerator. By the time our teacher reached the window of the car, billows of smoke were pouring out from the rear wheels. The show soon stopped. Our teacher came back inside almost shaking with anger. He told us that he informed the visiting teacher that "a small chunk of rubber coming from the back end of your car could seriously injure or kill one of the students." Our teacher never hesitated to step in if help or intervention was needed—even if others held back.

**The Persistent Widow:** While visiting with a small business owner/operator several years ago, I learned that the business owner had gone to their state capitol to talk with their legislators about matters affecting their business. As he voiced his concerns to the legislator, he was told, "Not many people come to us with their concerns, although it is our job to listen to the people." Unfortunately, most of the people that appear before congress are

hired spokesmen for large businesses and special interest groups. They are known as professional lobbyists. The original intent of our government was for private individuals to lobby for themselves. How many understand they have the privilege, or make the time and put forth the effort, to lobby for themselves?

*“Dear Lord, I accept your gracious invitation to the great wedding of Your Son, Jesus Christ. I accept your wedding garment of salvation of the shed blood of your Son. Help me to lend a helping hand to others, rather than ignore their plight. Help me intercede for their needs before your throne. Amen.”*

## REFLECTIONS

The current attitude and spirit of our society is to live to the fleshly indulgences of oneself without restraint and to lash out against anyone who would voice God’s constraint against sin. This attitude leads to actions that create greater wretchedness of spirit, hopelessness, self-hate, and violence against others. Christ’s mission to earth was to awaken all to their condition of guiltiness before God and to provide the means whereby reconciliation could be made between of all mankind and our loving, holy Father. He told us to go into all the world and preach the gospel, thereby compelling all that are in the hedges of sin to receive this glorious, white garment of salvation and be clean from all sin’s defilements.

It is only when we feel both the weight of sin on the lives of those that we love and our debt of love toward God that we are willing to step outside our comfort zone to confront others of their sin and point them to Jesus, the One who can deliver them from its bondage. People around us are tormented in their minds and hearts by loneliness, bitterness, depression and so many other dark spirits of satan because they are taken captive of him at his will.

What are we willing to sacrifice in order to share our Saviour’s passion and vision, and to bring all men into perfect communion with their creator? The Word of God and the incessant prayer of faith for others and for our own spirits also are the two key weapons in bringing souls out of darkness and into His glorious light. “It fills our hearts with glory to tell the hungry thirsting soul of the redemption story.”

—Bro. Jeremy Booher

**JUNE 29, 2025**  
**THE LOST COIN AND THE PRODIGAL SON**

**Luke 15:8** Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find *it*?

9 And when she hath found *it*, she calleth *her* friends and *her* neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost.

10 Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

11 And he said, A certain man had two sons:

12 And the younger of them said to *his* father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to *me*. And he divided unto them *his* living.

13 And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

19 And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

20 And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

22 But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put *it* on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on *his* feet:

23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill *it*; and let us eat, and be merry:

24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

25 Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing.

26 And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.

27 And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.

28 And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him.

29 And he answering said to *his* father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends:

30 But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

31 And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.

32 It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

—Luke 15:10

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** When we lose something of value, we look for it diligently. When we find it, we rejoice and often share our good news with others. God values souls more than anything. When a lost soul returns to His fold, He rejoices with the angels in heaven.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

Luke 15:12 “**Divided unto them *his* living**”: the youngest son’s inheritance.

Luke 15:22 “**Put a ring on his hand**”: A ring signified wealth and dignity; it signified favor, affection, or conferring of an office (*Barnes*).

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Eastern cultures gave provision for children to request their inheritance before their father's death. The father was required by law and custom to honor the request, even if he felt the son would use the inheritance unwisely. If, after giving a son his inheritance, the father wished to pursue the matter legally, he could bring his case to the magistrate who could fine the son for misconduct.

### DISCUSSION:

1. In Jesus' parables of the ten coins, why did the woman search so diligently for the one she lost?
2. How does God regard every soul that has strayed from Him?
3. Why did the prodigal's father let him take his share of the inheritance?
4. Why does God honor the decision of those who go their own way?
5. How much does God grieve for lost souls?
6. What regrets do people have after choosing their own way?
7. Describe the process of a prodigal's return to his Heavenly Father.
8. Why was the loyal son unhappy with the way his father treated his returned brother?
9. How does the father's reply to his oldest son, "All that I have is thine," show there are no bounds to our eternal inheritance?

### COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The parable of the prodigal son not only tells of a lost son returning home, but it shows the great love parents have for their children—and, by extension, the wonderful love our Heavenly Father has for His children.

Years ago, a certain man offered a random woman a great amount of money to cross a tightrope strung between two tall buildings. After each refusal the amount offered was increased—but the answer was still "No!" Finally the man said, "What if I told you that the other building is on fire, and your child is on the top floor?" The woman promptly cried out, "Show me the rope"!

Our situation here on earth was like a burning building. God knew He had to do something very bold and daring to save us, so He put in motion His plan of salvation, the ***ONLY*** means whereby we might be saved. It cost our Heavenly Father His only-begotten Son, Jesus, but He did it anyway—because He loves us!

*“Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your great love for us! You sacrificed so much for our redemption. Help us to always keep that in our consciousness. Amen.”*

## REFLECTIONS

A story can certainly stir us and help us get the principle being shared. Imagine your child being lost. The yearning a parent feels is a wonderful expression of God’s heart toward us. I have felt the panic of a lost child; although brief, the horror of possibly not finding them again was sickening. The relief and joy of having them return safely was amazing. God used this experience to give me a glimpse into what He experiences when individuals are lost from him. The intensity of emotion is a result of the extreme loss. I can’t imagine losing anything more valuable than a child—a child who is ill-equipped to face the world. God values us this much. We are also ill-equipped to navigate this world without God. He has a deep yearning to deliver us from the evils around us and the ultimate end of such evils. It is essential and heartening to know God values us this much. It also gives us a glimpse of the severity of being separated from Him. We are truly lost without God.

—Bro. Marvin Moles



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