

# T I M E L E S S

THE PARABLES OF JESUS





THE PARABLES OF JESUS  
TIMELESS

SERMON SERIES AND SMALL GROUP STUDY  
FALL 2019

*Timeless: The Parables of Jesus*

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All these things Jesus said to the crowds in parables; indeed, he said nothing to them without a parable. This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet: “I will open my mouth in parables: I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world.”

—Matthew 13:34-35, referencing Psalm 78:2

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# INTRODUCTION

The change was abrupt. As Jesus began his third and final year of ministry in Galilee, one day a large crowd gathered on the shore and, as he began to teach, *“he told them many things in parables.”* The illustration of the sower would follow, and from that point forward, thirty-nine parables of Jesus would be recorded in Scripture.

Why this sudden shift in teaching style? Up to this point, Jesus had preached to the crowds with classic sermons, exhorting them in the way of righteousness and discipleship. No parables were utilized in the synagogue discourses, or within any of the theological public lectures found in the Gospel of John. So, why on this day did Jesus begin to teach only with the use of parables?

The short answer, the best answer, the answer Jesus himself provided to the disciples on this question, was *“because seeing they do not see and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand ... but blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear.”*

In other words, for those with ears to hear, parables provided a blessing of greater understanding to the truths Jesus taught. They were a means of further enlightenment for those who sought to know and follow Jesus. However, for those who would refuse to hear, who had rejected truth, hardened their hearts, and were not given to understanding, the parables obscured meaning.

This sounds harsh, but it is actually a prophecy-fulfilling realization of grace and judgment. Also, it is not so harsh when we realize the context of Jesus’ teaching.

For almost two years, Jesus had taught plainly and patiently. He preached to crowds, to Jews and Gentiles, to the religious

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elite and the non-religious. The opportunity to clarify doctrine, test the Scriptures, seek and understand his words, had been available to all. But now “this day by the sea,” it seems that Jesus is saying, “*Enough! Some of you who reject my teaching will never see nor hear. My teaching of kingdom truth is now made plain for those interested in the kingdom.*” Grace and Judgment.

Additionally, we are told that Jesus had encountered a recent wave of accusations from the Pharisees and Scribes. Perhaps it was a result of these confrontations that Jesus shifted to parables, concealing truth from everyone except those with willing ears to hear.<sup>1</sup> In fact, the religious establishment found Jesus’ teaching more repulsive and undesirable over time, while those who desperately sought to understand found his teaching especially edifying, with the parables adding great clarity.

And adding greater clarity to biblical truth and kingdom understanding, that is our prayer for *Timeless: The Parables of Jesus*. That through these parable teachings, we will discover greater intimacy with the Gospel in relationship with Jesus and in the application of our faith.

The *Timeless* study is a selection of parables, following a generally-accepted chronological order of Scripture. Not only is it our desire to grow through the specifics of each parable passage, but also to gain an appreciation for the way Jesus utilized parables. In this, it is important to keep the following in the mind:

- **Keep it Simple.** Parables are never thickly layered, and rarely multidimensional. In most cases, they make one simple point. Don’t attempt to find symbolism that Jesus does not explain or that does not exist. Minor elements in the story are not rich in spiritual meaning, as they might be in an allegorical work, such as John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* or the fictional works of C.S. Lewis.

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<sup>1</sup> John MacArthur, *Parables: The Mysteries of God’s Kingdom Revealed Through the Stories Jesus Told*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2016), 15.



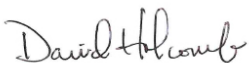
- 
- **Keep it Focused.** The word *parable* is derived from two Greek words; *para* (alongside) + *ballo* (to throw or cast). This was the intentional meaning in the original language for the use of parables in teaching. They are illustrations “*thrown alongside*” the primary truth. The parable itself is not the main point. We have failed to understand the parable when we miss the central lesson that it supports.
  - **Keep it Limited.** In almost all the parables, there is one “Big Idea,” or teaching point. While there might be additional truths that we can glean from the illustration, Jesus has one kingdom truth that he is teaching.

The study guide is intended to reinforce our methodology of inductive Bible study: **observation, interpretation, reflection, and application**. Each week consists of understanding what the passage says, what it means, and how it applies to our lives. Following these inductive questions, the unit will conclude with an opportunity to reinforce our knowledge of the parable by updating the illustration without losing the meaning (this should be an engaging group exercise as well).

Finally, as a community that values prayer-fueled discipleship, a prayer journal has been included in each unit. We encourage you to use it weekly in your personal time, with your group members, and as a journal of your spiritual journey through the parables.

May the parables of Jesus come alive for us in new and refreshing ways as we seek to know his truth and follow him more closely. May we have ears to hear. Amen.

Because he lives,



David Holcomb

Minister of Discipleship, River Oaks Community Church

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## MARK 4:1-20

*Again he began to teach beside the sea. And a very large crowd gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat in it on the sea, and the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land. And he was teaching them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: "Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it. Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil. And when the sun rose, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away. Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. And other seeds fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold." And he said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."*

*And when he was alone, those around him with the twelve asked him about the parables. And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables, so that*

*"they may indeed see but not perceive,  
and may indeed hear but not understand,  
lest they should turn and be forgiven."*

*And he said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? The sower sows the word. And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: the ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy. And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away. And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold."*

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## UNIT 1: THE PARABLE OF...

# THE SOWER

MARK 4:1-20

*Notes, thoughts, questions from Sunday morning message and personal study.*

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**OBSERVE:** What is the setting, or context, of this passage (not of the parable, but of the *passage*)? What key observations do you identify?

**INTERPRET:** What does the parable illustrate?

- the sower?
- the seed?
- the path?
- the rocky ground?
- the thorns?
- the good soil?

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What is the “**Big Idea**”? (Briefly give the central, *timeless* truth that Jesus is conveying with the use of this parable?)

**REFLECT:** In Mark 4:13, Jesus implies that understanding the parable of the sower is critical to understanding all the parables. Why is this?

**APPLY:** Given the “Big Idea,” how should followers of Jesus apply this passage to their lives? How will you apply the timeless truth of the parable to your life this week?

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# TIMELESS TRUTH, MODERN UNDERSTANDING

## THE SOWER

MARK 4:3-8

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*While the central truths of Scripture are unchanging yesterday, today, and tomorrow, language and cultural understanding are constantly changing. In narratives, such as parable stories, that which is familiar in one century is often unfamiliar in subsequent centuries. In the parable below, key items (objects, people, activities) have been removed. As you consider how you might best restate the parable today, staying true to the central lesson, fill in the blank with contemporary replacements. Share these as a group and reinforce the “Big Idea” as you do.*

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“Listen! Behold, a \_\_\_\_\_ went out to \_\_\_\_\_ . And as he \_\_\_\_\_ , some seed fell along the \_\_\_\_\_ , and the birds came and devoured it. Other seed fell on \_\_\_\_\_ , where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil. And when the sun rose, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away. Other seed fell among \_\_\_\_\_ , and the \_\_\_\_\_ grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. And other seeds fell into good soil and produced \_\_\_\_\_ , growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.”

# WEEKLY PRAYER JOURNAL

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## MATTHEW 13:24-43

*He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?' He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' So the servants said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' But he said, 'No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, "Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn."'"*

*He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."*

*He told them another parable. "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened."*

*All these things Jesus said to the crowds in parables; indeed, he said nothing to them without a parable. This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet:*

*"I will open my mouth in parables;*

*I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world."*

*Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples came to him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field." He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear."*



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UNIT 2: THE PARABLES OF...

# THE WEEDS, MUSTARD SEED, AND LEAVEN

MATTHEW 13:24-43

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*Notes, thoughts, questions from Sunday morning message and personal study.*

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**OBSERVE:** What is the setting, or context, of this passage (not of the parable, but of the *passage*)? What key observations do you identify?

**INTERPRET:** What do the parables illustrate?

- the weeds?
- the harvest?
- the barn?
- the mustard seed?
- the leaven?
- the flour?

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What are the “**Big Ideas**”? (Briefly give the central, *timeless* truth that Jesus is conveying with the use of this parable?)

**REFLECT:** These parables are among a large number of parables that refer to the kingdom of heaven. How does each help you explain what the kingdom of God is like?

**APPLY:** Given the “Big Ideas,” how should followers of Jesus apply this passage to their lives? How will you apply the timeless truth of the parable to your life this week?

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## TIMELESS TRUTH, MODERN UNDERSTANDING

### THE WEEDS, MUSTARD SEED, AND LEAVEN

#### MATTHEW 13:31-33

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*While the central truths of Scripture are unchanging yesterday, today, and tomorrow, language and cultural understanding are constantly changing. In narratives, such as parable stories, that which is familiar in one century is often unfamiliar in subsequent centuries. In the parable below, key items (objects, people, activities) have been removed. As you consider how you might best restate the parable today, staying true to the central lesson, fill in the blank with contemporary replacements. Share these as a group and reinforce the “Big Idea” as you do.*

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“The kingdom of heaven is like a \_\_\_\_\_ that a man took and \_\_\_\_\_ in his \_\_\_\_\_. It is the smallest of seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.”

“The kingdom of heaven is like \_\_\_\_\_ that a woman took and hid in \_\_\_\_\_, till it was \_\_\_\_\_.”

# WEEKLY PRAYER JOURNAL

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## MATTHEW 13:44-52

*“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.*

*“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.*

*“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

*“Have you understood all these things?” They said to him, “Yes.” And he said to them, “Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.”*

UNIT 3: THE PARABLES OF...

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**THE TREASURE,  
PEARL, AND NET**  
**MATTHEW 13:44-52**

*Notes, thoughts, questions from Sunday morning message and personal study.*

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**OBSERVE:** What is the setting, or context, of this passage (not of the parable, but of the *passage*)? What key observations do you identify?

**INTERPRET:** What do the parables illustrate?

- the hidden treasure?
- the finder of the treasure?
- the pearl of great value?
- the merchant?
- the net?
- the sorting of good and bad fish?



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What are the “**Big Ideas**”? (Briefly give the central, *timeless* truth that Jesus is conveying with the use of this parable?)

**REFLECT:** What priceless “find”—such as the hidden treasure or pearls—would you do anything to obtain?

**APPLY:** Given the “Big Ideas,” how should followers of Jesus apply this passage to their lives? How will you apply the timeless truth of the parable to your life this week?

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## TIMELESS TRUTH, MODERN UNDERSTANDING

### THE TREASURE AND PEARL

#### MATTHEW 13:44-46

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*While the central truths of Scripture are unchanging yesterday, today, and tomorrow, language and cultural understanding are constantly changing. In narratives, such as parable stories, that which is familiar in one century is often unfamiliar in subsequent centuries. In the parable below, key items (objects, people, activities) have been removed. As you consider how you might best restate the parable today, staying true to the central lesson, fill in the blank with contemporary replacements. Share these as a group and reinforce the “Big Idea” as you do.*

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“The kingdom of heaven is like \_\_\_\_\_, which a man found and \_\_\_\_\_. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that \_\_\_\_\_.”

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a \_\_\_\_\_ in search of \_\_\_\_\_ who, on finding \_\_\_\_\_, went and sold all that he had and bought it.”

# WEEKLY PRAYER JOURNAL

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## MATTHEW 18:21-35

*Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.*

*“Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay what you owe.’ So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. Then his master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’ And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”*

## UNIT 4: THE PARABLE OF...

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# THE UNFORGIVING SERVANT

MATTHEW 18:21-35

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*Notes, thoughts, questions from Sunday morning message and personal study.*

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**OBSERVE:** What is the setting, or context, of this passage (not of the parable, but of the *passage*)? What key observations do you identify?

**INTERPRET:** What does the parable illustrate?

- the servant owing 10,000 talents?
- the servant owing 100 denarii?
- the King / Master?

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What is the “**Big Idea**”? (Briefly give the central, *timeless* truth that Jesus is conveying with the use of this parable?)

**REFLECT:** Jesus often used hyperbole (literary exaggeration) to emphasize the unimaginable or unthinkable reality of God and the kingdom of heaven. In this passage, the debt of the first man would equate to over \$2 billion in modern currency. Why would Jesus use hyperbole in this way?

**APPLY:** Given the “Big Idea,” how should followers of Jesus apply this passage to their lives? How will you apply the timeless truth of the parable to your life this week?

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## TIMELESS TRUTH, MODERN UNDERSTANDING

### THE UNFORGIVING SERVANT

MATTHEW 18:23-33

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*While the central truths of Scripture are unchanging yesterday, today, and tomorrow, language and cultural understanding are constantly changing. In narratives, such as parable stories, that which is familiar in one century is often unfamiliar in subsequent centuries. In the parable below, key items (objects, people, activities) have been removed. As you consider how you might best restate the parable today, staying true to the central lesson, fill in the blank with contemporary replacements. Share these as a group and reinforce the “Big Idea” as you do.*

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“Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a \_\_\_\_\_ who wished to settle accounts with his \_\_\_\_\_. When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him \_\_\_\_\_. And since he could not pay, his \_\_\_\_\_ ordered him to \_\_\_\_\_, and payment to be made. ... And out of pity for him, he forgave him the debt. But when that same \_\_\_\_\_ went out, he found one of his fellow \_\_\_\_\_ who owed him \_\_\_\_\_, seizing him, he began to \_\_\_\_\_ him, saying, ‘Pay what you owe.’ ... Then his \_\_\_\_\_ summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked \_\_\_\_\_. I forgave you all that debt be-cause you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’”



# WEEKLY PRAYER JOURNAL

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## MATTHEW 21:33-46

*“Hear another parable. There was a master of a house who planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a winepress in it and built a tower and leased it to tenants, and went into another country. When the season for fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to get his fruit. And the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Again he sent other servants, more than the first. And they did the same to them. Finally he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.’ And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?” They said to him, “He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons.”*

*Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures:*

*“The stone that the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone;  
this was the Lord’s doing,  
and it is marvelous in our eyes?”*

*Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.”*

*When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them. And although they were seeking to arrest him, they feared the crowds, because they held him to be a prophet.*

## UNIT 5: THE PARABLE OF...

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# THE TENANTS

MATTHEW 21:33-46

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*Notes, thoughts, questions from Sunday morning message and personal study.*

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**OBSERVE:** What is the setting, or context, of this passage (not of the parable, but of the *passage*)? What key observations do you identify?

**INTERPRET:** What does the parable illustrate?

- the Master / Owner?
- the servants?
- the Son?
- the tenants?

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What is the “**Big Idea**”? (Briefly give the central, *timeless* truth that Jesus is conveying with the use of this parable?)

**REFLECT:** Many mistakenly characterize God as unloving Judge in the Old Testament and unjudging Savior in the New Testament. How does the parable of the tenants demonstrate equal parts love and judgment in Jesus’ teaching? (See Matthew 22:37-39, 2 Corinthians 5:10.)

**APPLY:** Given the “Big Idea,” how should followers of Jesus apply this passage to their lives? How will you apply the timeless truth of the parable to your life this week?

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## TIMELESS TRUTH, MODERN UNDERSTANDING

### THE TENANTS

#### MATTHEW 21:33-40

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*While the central truths of Scripture are unchanging yesterday, today, and tomorrow, language and cultural understanding are constantly changing. In narratives, such as parable stories, that which is familiar in one century is often unfamiliar in subsequent centuries. In the parable below, key items (objects, people, activities) have been removed. As you consider how you might best restate the parable today, staying true to the central lesson, fill in the blank with contemporary replacements. Share these as a group and reinforce the “Big Idea” as you do.*

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“There was a \_\_\_\_\_ who \_\_\_\_\_ and put a fence around it and \_\_\_\_\_ in it and leased it to tenants, and went into another country. When the season for \_\_\_\_\_ drew near, he sent his \_\_\_\_\_ to the tenants to get his \_\_\_\_\_. And the tenants took his \_\_\_\_\_ and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Again he sent other \_\_\_\_\_, more than the first. And they did the same to them. Finally he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.’ And they took him and threw him out of the \_\_\_\_\_ and killed him. When therefore the owner of the \_\_\_\_\_ comes, what will he do to those tenants?”

# WEEKLY PRAYER JOURNAL

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## MATTHEW 24:36-51

*“But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.*”

*“Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. But if that wicked servant says to himself, ‘My master is delayed,’ and begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*



UNIT 6: THE PARABLE OF...

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# THE FAITHFUL AND WISE SERVANT

MATTHEW 24:36-51

*Notes, thoughts, questions from Sunday morning message and personal study.*

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**OBSERVE:** What is the setting, or context, of this passage (not of the parable, but of the *passage*)? What key observations do you identify?

**INTERPRET:** What does the parable illustrate?

- the faithful servant?
- the Master?
- giving food?
- the wicked servant?
- beating others, drunkenness?

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What is the “**Big Idea**”? (Briefly give the central, *timeless* truth that Jesus is conveying with the use of this parable?)

**REFLECT:** Leading into this specific parable, Jesus refers to “the days of Noah” (vv. 37-39). Describe why that would have been, and should continue to be, an impactful analogy for the parable teaching.

**APPLY:** Given the “Big Idea,” how should followers of Jesus apply this passage to their lives? How will you apply the timeless truth of the parable to your life this week?

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## TIMELESS TRUTH, MODERN UNDERSTANDING

### THE FAITHFUL AND WISE SERVANT

#### MATTHEW 24:45-51

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*While the central truths of Scripture are unchanging yesterday, today, and tomorrow, language and cultural understanding are constantly changing. In narratives, such as parable stories, that which is familiar in one century is often unfamiliar in subsequent centuries. In the parable below, key items (objects, people, activities) have been removed. As you consider how you might best restate the parable today, staying true to the central lesson, fill in the blank with contemporary replacements. Share these as a group and reinforce the “Big Idea” as you do.*

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“Who then is the faithful and wise \_\_\_\_\_, whom his \_\_\_\_\_ has set over his \_\_\_\_\_, to give them their \_\_\_\_\_ at the proper time? Blessed is that \_\_\_\_\_ whom his \_\_\_\_\_ will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his \_\_\_\_\_. But if that wicked \_\_\_\_\_ says to himself, ‘My \_\_\_\_\_ is delayed,’ and begins to beat his fellow \_\_\_\_\_ and eats and drinks with drunkards, the \_\_\_\_\_ of that \_\_\_\_\_ will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know and will \_\_\_\_\_ and put him with the \_\_\_\_\_.”

# WEEKLY PRAYER JOURNAL

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## MATTHEW 25:1-13

*“Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a cry, ‘Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ But the wise answered, saying, ‘Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.’ And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ But he answered, ‘Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.’ Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.”*

## UNIT 7: THE PARABLE OF...

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# THE TEN VIRGINS

MATTHEW 25:1-13

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*Notes, thoughts, questions from Sunday morning message and personal study.*

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**OBSERVE:** What is the setting, or context, of this passage (not of the parable, but of the *passage*)? What key observations do you identify?

**INTERPRET:** What does the parable illustrate?

- the ten virgins?
- the Bridegroom?
- the five wise virgins?
- the five foolish virgins?
- the midnight cry?
- the marriage feast?



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What is the “**Big Idea**”? (Briefly give the central, *timeless* truth that Jesus is conveying with the use of this parable?)

**REFLECT:** The marriage feast, and thereby the covenant of marriage, is often portrayed throughout Scripture as a reflection of Jesus, the Bridegroom, and his church, the bride. What does this wider application of the illustration mean?

**APPLY:** Given the “Big Idea,” how should followers of Jesus apply this passage to their lives? How will you apply the timeless truth of the parable to your life this week?

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## TIMELESS TRUTH, MODERN UNDERSTANDING

### THE TEN VIRGINS

MATTHEW 25:1-10

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*While the central truths of Scripture are unchanging, yesterday, today, and tomorrow, language and cultural understanding are constantly changing. In narratives, such as parable stories, that which is familiar in one century is often unfamiliar in subsequent centuries. In the parable below, key items (objects, people, activities) have been removed. As you consider how you might best restate the parable today, staying true to the central lesson, fill in the blank with contemporary replacements. Share these as a group and reinforce the “Big Idea” as you do.*

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“The kingdom of heaven will be like ten \_\_\_\_\_ who took their \_\_\_\_\_ and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. For when the foolish took their \_\_\_\_\_ they took no \_\_\_\_\_ with them, but the wise took \_\_\_\_\_ with their \_\_\_\_\_. As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. But at midnight there was a cry, ‘Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ .... And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your \_\_\_\_\_, for our \_\_\_\_\_ are going out.’ But the wise answered, ‘Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go to the \_\_\_\_\_ and buy for yourselves.’ And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut.”

# WEEKLY PRAYER JOURNAL

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## LUKE 14:7-24

Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he noticed how they chose the places of honor, saying to them, “When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him, and he who invited you both will come and say to you, ‘Give your place to this person,’ and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

He said also to the man who had invited him, “When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.”

When one of those who reclined at table with him heard these things, he said to him, “Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!” But he said to him, “A man once gave a great banquet and invited many. And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’ But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, ‘I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.’ And another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.’ And another said, ‘I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.’ So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, ‘Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.’ And the servant said, ‘Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.’ And the master said to the servant, ‘Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.’”

UNIT 8: THE PARABLES OF...

# THE WEDDING FEAST AND GREAT BANQUET

LUKE 14:7-24

*Notes, thoughts, questions from Sunday morning message and personal study.*

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**OBSERVE:** What is the setting, or context, of this passage (not of the parable, but of the *passage*)? What key observations do you identify?

**INTERPRET:** What do the parables illustrate?

- assuming a place of honor?
- assuming the lowest place?
- the great banquet?
- the excuses?
- the poor, crippled, and blind?
- the highways and hedges?

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What are the “**Big Ideas**”? (Briefly give the central, *timeless* truth that Jesus is conveying with the use of this parable?)

**REFLECT:** Read Proverbs 25:6-7 and Ezekiel 21:26. How do they reinforce this parable teaching?

**APPLY:** Given the “Big Ideas,” how should followers of Jesus apply this passage to their lives? How will you apply the timeless truth of the parable to your life this week?

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## TIMELESS TRUTH, MODERN UNDERSTANDING

# THE WEDDING FEAST AND GREAT BANQUET

LUKE 14:16-23

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*While the central truths of Scripture are unchanging yesterday, today, and tomorrow, language and cultural understanding are constantly changing. In narratives, such as parable stories, that which is familiar in one century is often unfamiliar in subsequent centuries. In the parable below, key items (objects, people, activities) have been removed. As you consider how you might best restate the parable today, staying true to the central lesson, fill in the blank with contemporary replacements. Share these as a group and reinforce the “Big Idea” as you do.*

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“A man once gave a great \_\_\_\_\_ and invited many. And at the time for the \_\_\_\_\_ he sent \_\_\_\_\_ to say to those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’ But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, ‘\_\_\_\_\_ Please have me excused.’ And another said, ‘\_\_\_\_\_. Please have me excused.’ And another said, ‘\_\_\_\_\_ I cannot come.’ .... Then he became angry and said to his \_\_\_\_\_, ‘Go out quickly to the \_\_\_\_\_ of the city, and bring in the \_\_\_\_\_.’ And the \_\_\_\_\_ said, ‘Sir, still there is room.’ And he said, ‘Go out to the \_\_\_\_\_ and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled.’”



# WEEKLY PRAYER JOURNAL

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## LUKE 16:19-31

*“There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man’s table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried, and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. And he called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.’ But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.’ And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father’s house—for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.’ But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’ And he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ He said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.’”*

UNIT 9: THE PARABLE OF...

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# THE RICH MAN

# AND LAZARUS

LUKE 16:19-31

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*Notes, thoughts, questions from Sunday morning message and personal study.*

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**OBSERVE:** What is the setting, or context, of this passage (not of the parable, but of the *passage*)? What key observations do you identify?

**INTERPRET:** What does the parable illustrate?

- the rich man?
- Lazarus (not of John 11)?
- a great chasm?
- Moses and the prophets?

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What is the “**Big Idea**”? (Briefly give the central, *timeless* truth that Jesus is conveying with the use of this parable?)

**REFLECT:** Recalling in the “Introduction” of this guide why Jesus taught in parables throughout his final year of ministry, what point is Jesus making in vv. 29-31?

**APPLY:** Given the “Big Idea,” how should followers of Jesus apply this passage to their lives? How will you apply the timeless truth of the parable to your life this week?

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## TIMELESS TRUTH, MODERN UNDERSTANDING

### THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

LUKE 16:19-31

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*While the central truths of Scripture are unchanging yesterday, today, and tomorrow, language and cultural understanding are constantly changing. In narratives, such as parable stories, that which is familiar in one century is often unfamiliar in subsequent centuries. In the parable below, key items (objects, people, activities) have been removed. As you consider how you might best restate the parable today, staying true to the central lesson, fill in the blank with contemporary replacements. Share these as a group and reinforce the “Big Idea” as you do.*

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“There was a rich man who was \_\_\_\_\_ and who \_\_\_\_\_ every day. And at his \_\_\_\_\_ laid a poor man named \_\_\_\_\_, covered with \_\_\_\_\_, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man’s table. .... The poor man died and was carried by the angels to \_\_\_\_\_. The rich man also died and was buried, and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and \_\_\_\_\_ at his side. And he called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.’ But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish.’”

# WEEKLY PRAYER JOURNAL

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## LUKE 18:9-14

*He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”*



UNIT 10: THE PARABLE OF...

# THE PHARISEE AND TAX COLLECTOR

LUKE 18:9-14

*Notes, thoughts, questions from Sunday morning message and personal study.*

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**OBSERVE:** What is the setting, or context, of this passage (not of the parable, but of the *passage*)? What key observations do you identify?

**INTERPRET:** What does the parable illustrate?

- the Pharisee?
- the tax collector?
- humility/exaltation?

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What is the “**Big Idea**”? (Briefly give the central, *timeless* truth that Jesus is conveying with the use of this parable?)

**REFLECT:** The parable is rich in the doctrine of justification by grace through repentant faith and not works (Ephesians 2:8-9). How are we tempted to respond as the Pharisee? How can we be more consistently humble?

**APPLY:** Given the “Big Idea,” how should followers of Jesus apply this passage to their lives? How will you apply the timeless truth of the parable to your life this week?

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## TIMELESS TRUTH, MODERN UNDERSTANDING

### THE PHARISEE AND THE TAX COLLECTOR

LUKE 18:10-13

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*While the central truths of Scripture are unchanging yesterday, today, and tomorrow, language and cultural understanding are constantly changing. In narratives, such as parable stories, that which is familiar in one century is often unfamiliar in subsequent centuries. In the parable below, key items (objects, people, activities) have been removed. As you consider how you might best restate the parable today, staying true to the central lesson, fill in the blank with contemporary replacements. Share these as a group and reinforce the “Big Idea” as you do.*

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“Two men went up into \_\_\_\_\_ to pray, one a \_\_\_\_\_ and the other a \_\_\_\_\_. The \_\_\_\_\_, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, or even like this \_\_\_\_\_. I \_\_\_\_\_ twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ But the \_\_\_\_\_, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’”

# WEEKLY PRAYER JOURNAL

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## LUKE 19:11-27

*As they heard these things, he proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately. He said therefore, "A nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return. Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten minas, and said to them, 'Engage in business until I come.' But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We do not want this man to reign over us.' When he returned, having received the kingdom, he ordered these servants to whom he had given the money to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by doing business. The first came before him, saying, 'Lord, your mina has made ten minas more.' And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.' And the second came, saying, 'Lord, your mina has made five minas.' And he said to him, 'And you are to be over five cities.' Then another came, saying, 'Lord, here is your mina, which I kept laid away in a handkerchief; for I was afraid of you, because you are a severe man. You take what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.' He said to him, 'I will condemn you with your own words, you wicked servant! You knew that I was a severe man, taking what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow? Why then did you not put my money in the bank, and at my coming I might have collected it with interest?' And he said to those who stood by, 'Take the mina from him, and give it to the one who has the ten minas.' And they said to him, 'Lord, he has ten minas!' 'I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me.'"*

## UNIT 11: THE PARABLE OF...

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# THE TEN MINAS (POUNDS)

LUKE 19:11-27

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*Notes, thoughts, questions from Sunday morning message and personal study.*

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**OBSERVE:** What is the setting, or context, of this passage (not of the parable, but of the *passage*)? What key observations do you identify?

**INTERPRET:** What does the parable illustrate?

- the nobleman?
- the kingdom?
- engaging in business?
- the ten minas?



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What is the “**Big Idea**”? (Briefly give the central, *timeless* truth that Jesus is conveying with the use of this parable?)

**REFLECT:** Following this parable, we read that Jesus went up to Jerusalem. What significance does the parable have relative to this timing? How might this apply today?

**APPLY:** Given the “Big Idea,” how should followers of Jesus apply this passage to their lives? How will you apply the timeless truth of the parable to your life this week?

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## TIMELESS TRUTH, MODERN UNDERSTANDING

### THE TEN MINAS (POUNDS)

LUKE 19:12-22

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*While the central truths of Scripture are unchanging yesterday, today, and tomorrow, language and cultural understanding are constantly changing. In narratives, such as parable stories, that which is familiar in one century is often unfamiliar in subsequent centuries. In the parable below, key items (objects, people, activities) have been removed. As you consider how you might best restate the parable today, staying true to the central lesson, fill in the blank with contemporary replacements. Share these as a group and reinforce the “Big Idea” as you do.*

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“A \_\_\_\_\_ went into a far country to receive for himself a \_\_\_\_\_ and then return. Calling ten of his \_\_\_\_\_, he gave them \_\_\_\_\_, and said to them, ‘Engage in \_\_\_\_\_ until I come.’ But \_\_\_\_\_ hated him, saying, ‘We do not want this man to \_\_\_\_\_ us.’ When he returned, having received the \_\_\_\_\_, he ordered these \_\_\_\_\_ to whom he had given the money to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by \_\_\_\_\_. The first came before him, saying, ‘Lord, your \_\_\_\_\_ has made \_\_\_\_\_ more.’ And he said to him, ‘Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have \_\_\_\_\_.’ And the second came, saying, ‘Lord, your \_\_\_\_\_ has made

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\_\_\_\_\_? And he said to him, 'And you are to have  
\_\_\_\_\_? Then another came, saying, 'Lord, here is  
your \_\_\_\_\_, which I kept\_\_\_\_\_; for  
I was afraid of you, because you are a severe man. You take  
what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow?  
He said to him, 'I will condemn you with your own words, you  
wicked servant!'"

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