

Tutorial Guide: The Parables of Jesus – Stories that Reveal and Conceal

Session Length: 1 hour

Audience: Mixed familiarity with the Bible

Facilitator Role: Guide discussion on how Jesus used parables and why. Help participants engage with the meaning and purpose of the parables. No advanced knowledge required.



Session Overview

Time	Section	Topic
0–5 min	Welcome & Introduction	Why did Jesus speak in parables?
5–20 min	What is a Parable?	Definition and function of parables
20–35 min	Parables as Challenge and Invitation	Stories that both reveal and confront
35–50 min	Exploring a Parable Together	Example: The Good Samaritan or The Sower
50–60 min	Wrap-Up and Reflection	What makes a parable stick with you?



1. Welcome & Introduction (0–5 min)

Say:

“Today we’re exploring why Jesus used parables — those short, surprising stories that reveal deep truths. We’ll look at how they work, what they ask of us, and why they still speak today.”

Ask: - What comes to mind when you hear the word “parable”? - Do you have a favourite parable of Jesus? Why that one?



2. What is a Parable? (5–20 min)

Summary:

A **parable** is a short story with a deeper meaning. Jesus used parables to teach about the **Kingdom of God**, often through everyday images: farmers, seeds, bread, coins, vineyards. But parables are more than illustrations — they provoke, puzzle, and challenge.

Key ideas: - Parables often have a “twist” or unexpected ending - Not all parables have one clear meaning - They require the listener to reflect and respond

Why parables? (see Matthew 13:10–17) - To reveal truth to those who are open - To challenge assumptions - To fulfill prophecy (Isaiah 6:9–10)

Discussion Prompts: - Why might Jesus choose stories instead of lectures? - Can a story speak to different people in different ways? - What happens when we try to find just “one meaning” in a parable?

3. Parables as Challenge and Invitation (20–35 min)

Summary:

Parables are not moral tales with easy answers. They are stories that **unsettle, invite reflection, and call for transformation**. Some listeners lean in; others turn away. Jesus uses parables to divide hearers as well as to reveal truth.

Examples: - The Lost Son (Luke 15): Who is lost — the younger son or the older? - The Workers in the Vineyard (Matthew 20): Is it fair that latecomers are paid the same? - The Rich Fool (Luke 12): What’s wrong with planning for the future?

Discussion Prompts: - Which characters do you relate to in these stories? - How do parables reveal what we value or resist? - Can you think of a story that challenged your way of thinking?

4. Exploring a Parable Together (35–50 min)

Option A: The Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:1–23) - 4 types of soil = 4 types of response - The seed is the word of the kingdom - Emphasises listening and fruitfulness

Option B: The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37) - Begins as a legal question: “Who is my neighbour?” - Ends with a reversal: the outsider is the true neighbour

Ask: - What surprises or disturbs you in this story? - Where do you see yourself in the parable? - What might this parable be saying to our world today?

5. Wrap-Up and Reflection (50–60 min)

Say: Parables are more than nice stories. They are Jesus’ way of turning the world upside down and inviting us into God’s kingdom.

Ask: - What stuck with you today? - Did you hear a parable in a new way? - How might we read parables differently going forward?

Optional closing thought:

“He who has ears, let him hear.” (Matthew 13:9)

What kind of listener do you want to be?