



I. WHAT IS A PARABLE?

A parable is a simple earthly image or story that illustrates a profound spiritual truth.

II. WHY DID JESUS TEACH WITH PARABLES? (See Mark 4:10-12)

Jesus used parables as a kind of “spiritual sifting” tool. Because, while they reveal truth, at the same time they conceal some as well. What the hearer gets out of the parable depends on the condition of their heart.

The chains of habit are too weak to be felt until they are too strong to be broken.

Samuel Johnson

HABIT

You may know me.
I'm your constant companion.
I'm your greatest helper;
I'm your heaviest burden.
I will push you onward
or drag you down to failure.
I am at your command.
Half the tasks you do
might as well be turned over to me.
I'm able to do them quickly,
and I'm able to do them the same every time
if that's what you want.
I'm easily managed;
all you have to do is be firm with me.

Show me exactly how you want it done;
after a few lessons I'll do it automatically.
I've made all the great individuals who have
ever been great.
And, of course, I've made all the failures, too.
But, I work with all the precision
of a marvelous computer
with the intelligence of a human being.
Take me.
Be easy with me and I will destroy you.
Be firm with me and I'll put the world at your
feet.
Who am I?
I am Habit!

Adapted from Unknown Author

III. HOW SHOULD I UNDERSTAND THIS PARABLE—MARK 4:1-20

1. Explanation: The condition of my heart determines my openness to God's Word

- The seed is the Word of God
- The farmer is anyone who shares the Word

Dear brothers and sisters, be patient as you wait for the Lord's return. Consider the farmers who patiently wait for the rains in the fall and in the spring. They eagerly look for the valuable harvest to ripen. You, too, must be patient. Take courage, for the coming of the Lord is near.

James 5:7-8 (NLT)

- **The soils are a metaphor for the human heart**

⇒ Seed on the path = The hard heart

The devil [is] a liar and the father of lies.

John 8:44 (GOD'S WORD)

Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News.

2 Corinthians 4:4 (NLT)

Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Ephesians 6:10-12 (NIV)

⇒ Seed on the rocky places = The shallow heart

⇒ Seed on the weedy soil = The crowded heart

⇒ Seed on the good soil = The fruitful heart

But the Spirit produces the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. There is no law that says these things are wrong.

Galatians 5:22-23 (NCV)

2. Application: Ways I can cultivate a receptive and fruitful heart

- **Desire God's truth**

I long for your instructions more than I can tell.

Psalm 119:20 (TLB)

- **Get alone with God**

As often as possible Jesus withdrew to out-of-the-way places for prayer.

Luke 5:16 (The Message)

- **Remove the distractions**

Let all that I am wait quietly before God, for my hope is in him.

Psalm 62:5 (NLT)

- **Seek direction from God's Word**

I treasure your word in my heart, so that I may not sin against you.

Psalm 119:11 (NRSV)

- **Write down my thoughts**

Then the Lord told me: "I will give you my message in the form of a vision. Write it clearly enough to be read at a glance..."

Habakkuk 2:2 (CEV)

- **Do something about what I hear immediately**

So you see, faith by itself isn't enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless.

James 2:17 (NLT)

- **Pray for a fruitful heart**

And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart. And I will put my Spirit in you so that you will follow my decrees and be careful to obey my regulations.

Ezekiel 36:26-27 (NLT)