

10. Jesus Showed How to Teach Through Parables

Jesus taught His disciples in many different ways. He also showed them how to teach others in a variety of different ways. One of the ways Christ taught them to teach was through parables. We see that Christ used parables to teach some very specific lessons to His disciples. Today, we will learn that one of the things we want to teach developing leaders is how to teach and explain the parables.

We see that after hearing Christ give a parable to the crowd, the disciples privately asked Christ why He spoke to the crowd in parables. Christ gave a very interesting answer. Luke 8:9-11 says, “Then His disciples asked Him, saying, ‘What does this parable mean?’ And He said, ‘To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is given in parables, that “Seeing they may not see, And hearing they may not understand.” Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God...” Here, Christ told the disciples that He spoke in parables to hide the truth from those who did not believe and to reveal the truth to those who followed Him.

This raises a very important question, “Why would Christ want to hide truth from those who did not believe?” This is especially important to understand since Christ said, in Mark 4:33-34, “And with many such parables He spoke the word to them as they were able to hear it. But without a parable He did not speak to them. And when they were alone, He explained all things to His disciples.” In the passage in Luke, Christ said that He was talking about the mysteries of the kingdom of God. A mystery was something that was previously hidden but was now being revealed.

We see here that Christ is talking about the future, and He is only revealing the future to those who believe. Many of the parables do reveal things about the future, but those are not things that an unbeliever would understand. As a result, Christ chose to reveal them to His followers in parables. In this way, we see that one reason to teach in parables is to hide truth from those who reject while revealing truth to those who believe. This was especially true when Christ was teaching about the future.

However, Christ also spoke parables that many in the crowd could understand. An example of this is the parables that are given in Luke 15. Luke 15:1-2 tell us, “Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, ‘This Man receives sinners and eats with them.’” In this case, there were two unbelieving groups listening to Christ while the disciples observed. One group included the tax collectors and sinners, while the other group included the Pharisees and scribes.

The tax collectors and sinners were able to understand all three parables in Luke 15. The people in this group knew that they were sinful. The Pharisees and the scribes were continually rejecting them. As the tax collectors and sinners heard the parable about the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost sons, it was very clear to them that the Lord loved them and was actively looking for them to bring them into His fold and into His family. In contrast, the Pharisees and scribes probably never understood that they were like the older son who thought he was righteous because of his

own efforts. They probably never understood that the older son represented them. They never understood that they were refusing to come into God's family so they could enjoy fellowship with Christ. In this case, part of those who were not followers of Christ realized that they were being given an invitation to follow Christ.

Sometimes, Christ spoke a parable to rebuke a specific sin in the lives of those to whom He was speaking. Luke 14:7-11 says, "So He told a parable to those who were invited, when He noted how they chose the best places, saying to them: 'When you are invited by anyone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in the best place, lest one more honorable than you be invited by him; and he who invited you and him come and say to you, "Give place to this man," and then you begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place, so that when he who invited you comes he may say to you, "Friend, go up higher." Then you will have glory in the presence of those who sit at the table with you. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.'" Here, Christ made it clear to all that He was rebuking the sin of pride, so people could examine themselves.

When Christ used a parable to rebuke sin, He avoided using any names, so people were called to examine their own heart attitudes. In Luke 18:9, we read, "Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:" Here, we see that Christ was using a parable to rebuke those who were depending on their own righteousness. By using a parable, Christ was forcing them to examine their own lives. That is why it is so important to teach developing leaders the various ways that Christ used parables. Here, He shows a developing leader how to help people in a group examine their own hearts without condemning any particular person.

Christ even used this approach to help specific people examine their own lives without condemning them. Luke 10:25 says, "And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, 'Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?'" The lawyer even knew how to answer Christ with the right answer but Christ knew he had the wrong attitude. Luke 10:26-29 says, "He said to him, 'What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?' So he answered and said, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind," and "your neighbor as yourself.'" And He said to him, 'You have answered rightly; do this and you will live.' But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?'"

Christ knew the inner attitude of the lawyer. Instead of condemning the lawyer, Christ told the parable of the Good Samaritan. Then, Christ said, in Luke 10:36-37, "'So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?' And he said, 'He who showed mercy on him.' Then Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise.'" Christ never criticized the lawyer. Instead, Christ just told a parable, asked a question, let the lawyer give the answer, and then, told the lawyer to put his answer into practice. Here, Christ used a parable to answer a specific question and provided an opportunity for the lawyer to make his own decision about what was right. Then, Christ encouraged the lawyer to follow his own answer.

Christ also used a parable to help people make a choice at the end of His Sermon on the Mount.

Growing Christian Leaders Series – Developing Leaders Who Are Becoming Like Their Teacher 10. "Jesus Showed How to Teach Through Parables"

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Matthew 7:24-29 says, “Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.’ And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.” Christ left the decision to each person in the audience to decide whether to be like the wise man or the foolish man.

As the disciples traveled with Christ, they saw that Christ spoke with parables in many different situations. He used parables when He wanted to hide information about the future from those who were rejecting Him. He used parables to hide truth from one group while revealing truth to another group. He used parables to force people to examine their own inner attitudes. He used parables to help people realize the choices that they faced in their lives. He then encouraged them to make wise choices.

Christ usually used things that the people clearly understood as the basis for His parables. Mark 4:1-2 says, “And again He began to teach by the sea. And a great multitude was gathered to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat in it on the sea; and the whole multitude was on the land facing the sea. Then He taught them many things by parables, and said to them in His teaching...” Since the people were gathered on the hillside next to the lake, all of the parables talked about things you could see from the hillside as Jesus was talking.

Christ used very simple things that people clearly understood to explain very profound spiritual truths. This is one of the keys to being an effective teacher. We want to use things that people clearly understand to explain deep spiritual truths that they do not understand. It would be foolish to talk about driving on the freeway to a person who has never been out of the jungle, just as it would be foolish to talk about surviving in a jungle to a person who had never been out of a large city. Christ chose parables that fit the people to whom He was talking. He used the daily occurrences of their lives to explain things they did not understand. We need to help developing spiritual leaders learn to do the same, so they can communicate effectively. May the Lord richly bless you as you show developing leaders how to teach using the parables.