

*Let those that have ears to
hear, let them hear...*

*The Parables of Jesus in Chronological
Order - A Lesson Plan for Discipleship*

PREFACE

The Gospel accounts give us the greatest example of how to truly disciple people effectively. The twelve disciples had the distinct and wonderful privilege and blessing to have the greatest "disciple" in the history of the world train them in their mission of life. One of the tools that Jesus used as the "Great Discipler" was the use of parables. We are all familiar with these wonderful stories, analogies and word pictures that Jesus gave. Some of these parables He spoke to the multitudes with His disciples present. Some He spoke in "private" times of teaching and training with just the twelve present. If we follow the Gospel accounts and Jesus' use of these parables, we begin to see a process of discipleship from the first parable given to the very last one spoken to them just prior to Jesus' passion. They form a "lesson plan of discipleship." We can say that these parables, put in chronological order as given within the Gospel accounts, bring the disciples through a process of growing from "infants" in this new way of life, to becoming the men that would ultimately be used by God to radically "change the world."

The term, "disciple" comes from the Greek word, "*mathētēs*," which means "*to be a student, a pupil for the purpose of changing one's lifestyle to the one that you are choosing to follow.*" We know that Jesus selected twelve men to be with Him. They were called His twelve disciples. However, we do know that one of those twelve ended up not being one who understood Jesus, His message and teaching and therefore, he did not change his lifestyle. Yes, he is called as one of the twelve. Yes, he followed and listened to Jesus. However, the end result was that He did not truly "hear with ears that would hear" what Jesus was actually teaching. The result was clear.

Everyone knows what happened. Even though Judas followed and listened, he did not truly "hear" nor did he choose to change His lifestyle. The other eleven followed, listened and truly heard what Jesus was truly saying. Their lives were in process of changing. When "push came to shove" they may have run but they ultimately did hear and receive what Jesus spoke. His words fell on good hearts. As we said previously, they went on to bring the Good News of salvation, redemption and restored relationship back with God, the Father, through His Son, Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit to this hungry and thirsty world.

Over the years, the Lord has renewed the vision that He had given me in which, simply stated, he said "Consider your ways... build my house." The "house" meaning each and every believer where God now rests and dwells because of Jesus' work on the cross and His resurrection from the grave. The Lord has prompted me to study the parables much in the same way Jesus used with His disciples in approximately their same order. I say approximately simply to be honest and say that no one can be totally sure of their exact order because of their use in one, some but not all the Gospel accounts.

Jesus used these parables to amplify His message to His disciples. Some parables were given in teaching settings. Some were given in response to a question or presented to Jesus. Some were in response to a statement or action from someone in the crowd. Some of the parables were directed towards the religious leaders. Some were directly given to just His twelve disciples in personal quiet times together. Some were spoken to the multitudes.

Whatever the case may be, we as disciples of Christ, should be reading, hearing and **listening** to these parables within the same context that Jesus spoke. The context and background of each parable is just as vital to understanding what Jesus was teaching as the parable itself. As we study these parables in this way, we are allowing ourselves to be under His training and tutelage just as the twelve disciples were. We need to "sit" under Jesus who is "THE teacher," THE Great "Discipler," and allow Him to use these same parables and analogies to "disciple" each and every one of us.

We in turn should use these same "tools" (the parables of Jesus) in "discipleship classes and training." Remember, we must be making "disciples of Jesus" and not disciples of any pastor, leader, denomination or anyone else. The only "DNA" a true disciple of Jesus should have is the "DNA" of Jesus because in Jesus we are "one with Him and the Father." There should be no such thing as the "DNA" or discipleship role model of a certain ministry, leader, church or denomination. It should be all about Jesus!!!

We invite you come along on this journey with Jesus. Lose yourself in time and imagine as if we are traveling with Jesus through the regions of Galilee; sitting with Him by the Sea of Galilee, sitting with him along the roadside as He teaches the crowds; visiting the cities of Capernaum, Nain, Jericho and of course Jerusalem. We will be listening to the "Great Discipler" as He disciplines His disciples. We will be listening but I pray that we will be "hearing?"

"Let those that have ears to hear, let them hear..."

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The First Parables

- *Guests of the Bridegroom* - Matthew 9: 15; Mark 2:19,20; Luke 5:34,35
- *New Cloth on an Old Garment* - Matthew 9:16; Mark 2:21; Luke 5:36
- *New Wine in Old Wineskins* - Matthew 9:17; Mark 2:22; Luke5:37-38

Guests of the Bridegroom - Matthew 9: 15; Mark 2:19, 20; Luke 5:34, 35

New Cloth on an Old Garment - Matthew 9:16; Mark 2:21; Luke 5:36

New Wine in Old Wineskins - Matthew 9:17; Mark 2:22; Luke 5:37-38

- Background and context
 1. Other than some analogies and other teachings that we know of as seen through the first chapters of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, the parables used at this setting seem to be the first usage by Jesus of the "disciplining tool" known as parables.
 2. The traditional view of these parables - the "Guests of the Bridegroom," "New Cloth on an Old Garment" and "New Wine in Old Wineskins" - is that Jesus was speaking about the Holy Spirit coming into the lives of new believers. The "traditional teaching" is that you cannot put new ideas and Christian thinking into the "old" ways of the Old Testament. The "traditional" explanation of these parables goes on to say that the Holy Spirit can only come and dwell within a person who has been made new through a born again experience. These are very true principles. However, in the context of when and why these parables were given, as we shall discuss, Jesus may have had something different that He was trying to bring forth with these parables. Let's see...
 3. These three parables were given at the same event - the banquet/dinner that Matthew (Levi) had at his home after his encounter with, and his call by, Jesus to come and follow Him. (Matthew 9:9,10)
 4. Matthew had invited all of his fellow publicans (tax collectors) and "others" who were referred to collectively as, in the words of the Pharisees, "sinners."
 5. All twelve of the disciples were not "called" as of yet. So far up, until this time, we have Peter, Andrew, John, James and now Matthew.
 6. Others may have been present but were not "called out" to be His twelve "disciples" as of yet.
- The question asked to Jesus concerned, "Why were Jesus' disciples not fasting?"
 1. The Pharisees and their disciples, as well as John the Baptist's disciples were those who would have had a lifestyle that included fasting. Most probably, John, who did come from a priestly line (Zacharias), had disciples who were most probably Levites, as well as some who may have possibly been from the Essene sect, which was a very "religiously, devout" sect of Judaism. It was at the ruins of the Essene community in Qumran, the "Dead Sea Scrolls" were found.
 2. Both the Pharisee's disciples and John's disciples, being followers of what they considered devout Judaism, seemed to be in agreement concerning this aspect of fasting. (Even though the Pharisees and their disciples were not sold out concerning John the Baptist and His ideas.)
 3. They were also in agreement that if Jesus was preaching a return to the true spiritual things of God, then why were His disciples not doing what they thought were the "spiritual things of God," one of which would be "fasting."
 4. The question was really asked by the disciples of John. The Pharisees may have "stirred them up" as a ploy by the Pharisees to try to get a "division" to rise up between John's disciples and Jesus to cause John's disciples to back away from Jesus and His teachings. John was most likely already in prison at this time and He most likely pointed them to Jesus. After all, even at the baptism of Jesus, John said that Jesus must increase and he must decrease.

- We see Jesus respond in a gentle manor because of the fact that they were John's disciples and Jesus probably realized that they were stirred up and put up to asking the question being prompted by the Pharisees and their followers.
- We must keep in mind the context and time of this encounter.
 1. Let's take a quick look at Jesus' disciples at that time
 - As we had said previously, He had just recently called Peter, Andrew, James and John to come and follow Him. What were they doing? They were fishermen who had very little background in living a "spiritual" lifestyle that a priest, Levite or devout Jew would have understood and lived.
 - Matthew was just called from his tax collector booth. He was a "sinful publican." The spiritual lifestyle of a priest was the farthest thing from his mind. His life and his mind were all about money.
 - These men were new to all this "spiritual" stuff. Their hearts were stirred by Jesus, which prompted them to follow Him. However, when they did choose to follow, they were about to enter into a totally new and different world than what they were used to and understood.
 2. The Pharisees had just finished questioning Jesus' few disciples about why Jesus eats with sinners. We know that they did not answer. Most likely because they did not know what to answer. We will see why in a moment. Jesus overheard the Pharisees asking His disciples the question. Jesus responded, *"They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."* (Matthew 9:11-13).
 3. Now, John's disciples go to Jesus to bring accusations against those same disciples. They ask, *"Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?"* - Matthew 9:14 (KJV)
- Jesus' answer to the question presented to Him was to give these three parables - *"Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast. No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved."* - Matthew 9:16-17
 1. We must understand that Jesus was not doing away with fasting. Jesus does say that there will be a time when His disciples will indeed enter into a fasting lifestyle. Jesus was not expressing, at least not at this time that He was bringing in a new teaching that needed a new mindset. Although that would be true as He continued on in His ministry, it was not the point that I believe He was trying to make in His answer to the question given. Remember, the question was, "Why are they were not fasting?"
 2. Jesus was saying that this whole thing of being a "disciple" was totally new to His followers. There would be things that they needed to grow into. He did not want to put extra burdens on them at this time. In other words, He was "easing" them into this whole new way of life. He was saying that now is not the time for them to deal with fasting. After all, they were fishermen and a tax collector. They were used to having big appetites and eating a lot. They were big guys and most likely never fasted.

3. Here they were just starting out, most likely a few days (it was Matthew's first day) or possibly a few weeks for the others, on this new venture and journey. Jesus' main task was to form relationship with them, as well as to form and gain their trust in Him. Fasting, therefore, was a little further down on His priority list. If Jesus had placed the "fasting" initiative immediately upon them, it may have been too much for them to handle in this "infancy stage" of their "discipleship."
 4. Therefore He goes on to say that it would be like putting "new cloth on old ones." It would put undue stress upon these men before the proper time and it would "tear" them from Him and He would lose them. It would be like putting "new wine in old wineskins." These new "disciples" were set in their worldly ways and to now quickly drop them into a new "spiritually" led lifestyle, especially in the area of fasting, would cause them to "burst."
- We see that Jesus did not do away with the "spiritual" aspects of the Word that included fasting.
 1. Even though now was not the time for His disciples to be pressed into doing these things, there will come a time "*when the bridegroom will not be with them.*" He was pointing to a time, 3 ½ years later, when they would have had time to be with Jesus and grow. They would have experienced His resurrection. They would be able to grasp the whole concept of who Jesus actually was. They would then also receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit. All of that would help give them the ability to live the Christ-like lifestyle.
 2. In other words, Jesus was saying that there will come a time - when they will be spiritually prepared, have the correct spiritual understanding and the correct motives - for fasting.
 - I believe the point that Jesus was teaching to those present, was not so much that He was bringing in a "new" movement of God's Kingdom. This was true. However, I believe He was trying to tell the Pharisees and John's disciples to "cut my disciples some slack." They are new to all of this. They will be spending time with me and there is a time and place for all these things you bring up. However, concerning this aspect of "fasting," now is not the time. Jesus was "**protecting**" His newly formed group of disciples.
 - I believe leaders and Christians in general would do well to heed the message and learn from this teaching from a very wise "discipler" when it comes to "discipling" new believers.
 1. We need to be careful that we do not over burden new believers. Sometimes, we immediately put requirements on new believers. We require such things as, being in church seven days a week. We make them pray three hours a day when they really don't even know what prayer really is. We tell them that they must be doing this or that and yes, even fasting, because "now you are a Christian." What we should do is allow the new believer to grow in the Lord and allow them time for growth. People grow at different levels.
 2. We must be careful that we do not take new believers and make them into disciples of John, or Ray, or Joe, or Mary, or pastor so and so, or prophet so and so, or ... you fill in the blank.
 3. The most important thing we can do for new believers is to point them to a deeper relationship with Jesus - not by giving them things to do - but by allowing Jesus to work in their lives according to His timetable for each individual. We just need to be there to support them as they grow. Yes, we may need to add a little "water." Yes, we may need to add some "fertilizer." Yes, we may be used to do some "pruning." But ultimately we must allow Jesus, through the Holy Spirit within each believer, to lead him or her on their "spiritual" journey of being a disciple of Jesus. Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, takes His disciples on their own journey to where they become full-grown "disciples of Jesus" - ones who choose to change their lifestyle to that of the One they are choosing to follow.

The Early Parables of Jesus by the Sea of Galilee

- *The Parable of the Wise and the Foolish Builders*
- Matthew 7:24-27; Luke 6:47-49
- *The Parable of the "Children in the Market Place"*
- Matthew 11:16, 17; Luke 7:31, 32
- *The Creditor and the Two Debtors* - Luke 7:40-43
- *Parable of the Sower and The Four Types of Soils*
- Matthew 13:3-8, 18-23; Mark 4:3-8, 14-20; Luke 8:5-8, 11-15
- *The Parable of the "Good Seed Sown"* - Mark 4:26-29

The Parable of the Wise and the Foolish Builders (Matthew 7:24-27; Luke 6:47-49)

- Matthew 7:24-27
 - Background and Context of this parable as found in Matthew 7
 1. This "parable" by Jesus could be considered as either a parable or an analogy. It was used during the conclusion of Jesus' very first major teaching that really launched His ministry. It was the teaching that is commonly referred to as the "Sermon on the Mount" (Matthew 5, 6, and 7). This parable/analogy was given in the midst of this first in-depth teaching to His very first followers and the first of those that He would choose to be the "12 disciples" of His inner circle.
 2. As of this time, we can only be assured that Peter, Andrew, James and John were "called" to be with Jesus (Matthew 4:18-22). Some of the others who would become known as the "twelve disciples," along with these four, may have been in the crowd.
 3. This was the first time Jesus used this parable. He uses it again in Luke 6:47-49.
 - Matthew 7:24-27 - *"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: 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. 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: 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."*
 1. As mentioned, this parable was used at the conclusion of Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount" in which Jesus expressed the character and lifestyle of what a true disciple of His would exhibit and manifest.
 2. This parable follows the analogy of the "strait gate and narrow way" (See page 204), as well as the analogy of the "Good and Bad Fruit Trees" (See page 207).
 3. Why does Jesus end His "Sermon on the Mount" with this parable?
 - It is clear that Jesus is referring to the entire teaching that He just presented in Matthew 5, 6, 7, as He states, "... whosoever heareth these sayings of mine..." Jesus is stating that the most important aspect concerning being a true disciple of His was that the "hearer" would actually **"do what He is saying."** These teachings were to be a guideline to the lifestyle of a true disciple of Jesus. His teaching expressed the very lifestyle and character that Jesus exhibited and lived. Therefore it would be a role model for His disciples, not just for the "twelve" that would follow Him while He was on the earth, but it was a role model for every believer that would come afterwards including us, today.
 - Some terms defined
 1. "Build" - This comes from the Greek word "*oikodomeō*" which means to erect something from the foundation. It also can infer that restoration or rebuilding needs to be done.
 2. "House" - This comes from the Greek word, "*oikia*" which means a dwelling place, a place to inhabit. It also can stand for the inhabitants of the house as well as the family or the family line.
 3. "Wise man" - This comes from the Greek word, "*phronimos*" which is an adjective and means prudent, intelligent and mindful to take great care in one's interests.
 4. "Foolish man" - This comes from the Greek word "*mōros*" (where we get our English word "moron" from). This again is an adjective that means godless and impious.

- This is a fitting parable for Jesus to conclude His first important teaching. This parable sets the "tone" for not just Jesus' ministry, but it clearly "draws the line" for anyone who chooses to follow Him and take on the lifestyle that He is about to role-model.
 1. If an individual chooses to believe in Jesus and chooses to change his or her lifestyle to that of the lifestyle that Jesus role-modeled, He goes on to tell us that that individual had made a very "wise" decision and Jesus considers that individual as a "wise" person.
 2. An individual's "house," their physical "dwelling place," referring to their physical body as well as one's "spiritual being," would then become a "spiritual house" that would be built or rebuilt (born again) upon the "Rock."
 - The term "Rock" is used in the Jewish scriptures to refer to God, the Father, (Psalm 62:7; 92:15; 2Samuel 22:3; Psalm 18:2).
 - By this the scriptures are inferring that all the precepts, principles and ways of God and His Kingdom are the "Rock" in which an individual should live out and obey throughout their life. If the individual follows these principles and precepts they would be able to stand firm, walk in and experience God's abundance and blessings.
 - It is actually God's Word that is the "Rock of our Salvation." Jesus was the perfect role model of the Word of God because He was the incarnate Word of God.
 3. Therefore, if the disciple of Jesus (the born again child of God) lives their life by following and obeying the precepts and principles of God's Word during their most difficult times, as well as whatever life and the devil may throw their way, they **will not** fall or be destroyed. That disciple will have "life eternal" and experience abundant life in and through Christ.
 4. Those that have heard but reject Jesus and choose not "to do" His precepts.... Well, great will be their fall - right into the depths of eternal damnation and separation from God.
 5. Jesus was teaching His disciples that it is wise and prudent to "hear" His words and believe in who He is. It is a wise person who follows after and chooses to change their lifestyle to that of Jesus. This is the only sensible (wise) thing to do. Unless the individual has "a death wish" or they are just out and out hard-hearted, stubborn or rebellious.
- The second use of the parable of the "Wise and the Foolish Builders" as found in Luke 6:47-49
 - Background and Context of this parable as found in Luke 6
 1. Jesus uses this parable a second time. However, it is in a totally different setting.
 2. If we read Luke 6:13-18 we see that at this time, Jesus had just selected and named all of His 12 disciples. In the account in Matthew 5 of the Sermon on the Mount we discussed that He had only selected 4 at that time.
 3. Also, as we read in Luke 6:17, Jesus and His disciples "*came down to the plain*" where He was met by the multitudes. In Matthew it said that He "*went up the mountain then sat*" and taught. From this we can see that this is a different setting from the account in Matthew. Therefore, it is a second use of this parable by Jesus.
 4. If we see it in context, Jesus repeated much of His teaching from the "Sermon on the Mount" but in a little different way (Luke 6:20-38). There are some differences. However, at the conclusion of this time of teaching, Jesus again refers to this parable of the "Wise and Foolish Builders." In this version He adds some other aspects to this parable.

- Luke 6:47-49 - *"Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like: He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great."*
 1. The main emphasis of this teaching was that if you claim to be a disciple of Jesus and He is your Lord, then your life and lifestyle should be manifesting the lifestyle of Christ. *"And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"* (Luke 6:46)
 2. Jesus was expressing that everything He had just taught concerned the character and lifestyle of a disciple of His. However, in this account of the parable, Jesus adds another aspect. He added the words, *"... and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock..."*
 3. Why did Jesus add this phrase to this parable here?
 - As we mentioned previously, the Jewish scriptures referred to the "Rock" as being God and His Word - His precepts, principles and ways of His love, grace, mercy and peace.
 - In the New Testament, the term "foundation" or "foundation stone," is used to refer to the Good News of Jesus (Isaiah 28:6; 1Corinthians 3:11). Through accepting Jesus into their heart, the believer can now build their "spiritual house," their lives, upon the "foundation stone" of salvation that is found in and through Jesus. Jesus' ministry was "laid" and "founded upon" the ways and precepts of God the Father (the Rock).
 - The "digging deep" part refers to a true heart of repentance by the individual that digs deep within themselves and recognizes their need to be rescued from imminent peril. It recognizes its need for God. That type of "heart" recognizes its sinful ways, cries out for God to "save" them and makes a decision to turn from that sinful lifestyle and turn towards God, the "Rock," whose ways are righteous and brings life.
 - Their "heart" allows Jesus to come and be their "foundation" that is laid upon the "Rock" of the principles of God. The believer's "house," their life and lifestyle, will now be able to manifest the Kingdom of God and it will "not be shaken." It will stand strong and firm no matter what may come against them.
 - Through this parable, Jesus speaks of a lifestyle of continual obedience to the principles, precepts and commandments of God. As we live our lives - living a lifestyle that is led by the Holy Spirit, founded upon God's Word and on the "Foundation Stone" of Jesus who is our role-model - we will have life eternal. If a person "hears" but chooses not to do these sayings of Jesus - great will be their fall - right into the depths of eternal damnation and separation from God.
 - As we had discussed previously, Jesus was teaching His disciples that it is wise and prudent to believe in Him as Messiah, follow after and choose to change their lifestyle to that of the one He role-modeled. He puts it in such a way that it would be the only sensible (wise) thing for any individual to do unless they have "a death wish" or they are just out and out hard-hearted, stubborn or rebellious.
 - *Let those that have ears to hear, let them hear...*