

BENEATH THE OLIVE TREE

PARABLE DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. THE SOWER

Matthew 13:1-23; Mark 4:1-20; Luke 8:4-15

WATCH

Watch The Sower before beginning the discussion. Watch the full episode on YouTube

BIG IDEA

Jesus describes the same seed falling on four kinds of soil. The difference is not the seed, but how it is received. The parable invites us to examine the condition of our hearts and the fruit God's word is producing in our lives.

READ

Read Matthew 13:1-23. Read the surrounding verses as time allows. Notice the setting, the people Jesus addresses, the movement of the story, and how Jesus applies it.

REFLECT

Which soil most closely describes the way I am receiving God's word right now?

DISCUSS

1. What stands out to you most in Jesus' story, and why?
2. What obstacles are represented by the path, rocky ground, and thorns?
3. What might those same obstacles look like in our lives today?
4. What does bearing fruit look like in everyday life?
5. What might God be asking you to remove, deepen, or cultivate so His word can bear more fruit in you?

GO DEEPER

- The seed is God's word, generously scattered.
- The soils picture different responses: resistance, shallow reception, divided attention, and fruitful reception.
- The good soil does more than hear; it receives, perseveres, and bears fruit.

PRAY

Lord Jesus, give us hearts open to Your word. Break up what is hard, deepen what is shallow, remove what crowds You out, and make our lives fruitful. Amen.

SHARE

Send this episode to one person who may need encouragement to receive God's word with a fresh heart.

LEADER NOTE

Encourage honest self-examination rather than labeling other people as particular soils. Keep returning to Jesus' own explanation.

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BENEATH THE OLIVE TREE
PARABLE DISCUSSION GUIDE
2. THE GROWING SEED
Mark 4:26-29

WATCH

Watch The Growing Seed before beginning the discussion. Watch the full episode on YouTube

BIG IDEA

God's Kingdom often grows quietly and mysteriously. Our calling is faithful participation and trust; the life and growth ultimately come from God.

READ

Read Mark 4:26-29. Read the surrounding verses as time allows. Notice the setting, the people Jesus addresses, the movement of the story, and how Jesus applies it.

REFLECT

Where am I impatient because I cannot yet see the growth I hoped for?

DISCUSS

1. What does the farmer do, and what is beyond his control?
2. Why might Jesus emphasize that the seed grows while the farmer sleeps and rises?
3. Where have you seen spiritual growth happen gradually rather than dramatically?
4. How can impatience tempt us to interfere with work that belongs to God?
5. What faithful action can you take while trusting God with the outcome?

GO DEEPER

- The farmer sows and later harvests, but cannot manufacture life.
- The sequence - blade, head, full grain - suggests growth can be gradual.
- The harvest reminds us that hidden growth is moving toward God's appointed completion.

PRAY

God of the harvest, teach us to sow faithfully, wait patiently, and trust You for growth we cannot produce ourselves. Amen.

SHARE

Encourage someone whose faithful work seems unnoticed or slow, and share this episode with them.

LEADER NOTE

Let the mystery remain. The point is not passivity, but humility about what human effort can and cannot accomplish.

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3. THE MUSTARD SEED

Matthew 13:31-32; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-19

WATCH

Watch The Mustard Seed before beginning the discussion. Watch the full episode on YouTube

BIG IDEA

The Kingdom of God can begin in ways that appear insignificant and grow far beyond what anyone expects.

READ

Read Matthew 13:31-32. Read the surrounding verses as time allows. Notice the setting, the people Jesus addresses, the movement of the story, and how Jesus applies it.

REFLECT

What small act of obedience might God be asking me not to dismiss?

DISCUSS

1. Why do you think Jesus chose such a tiny seed for this picture?
2. What small beginnings in Scripture or your own life have produced surprising results?
3. Why are we tempted to measure God's work by size, speed, or visibility?
4. How does this parable encourage a small church, ministry, family, or individual?
5. What 'mustard seed' opportunity is in front of you now?

GO DEEPER

- Jesus contrasts an unimpressive beginning with expansive growth.
- The image of birds finding shelter emphasizes reach beyond the seed's original scale.
- Kingdom significance is not always visible at the beginning.

PRAY

Lord, keep us from despising small beginnings. Give us faith to plant what You place in our hands and trust You with what it may become. Amen.

SHARE

Share the episode with someone beginning a small but faithful work.

LEADER NOTE

Resist turning the parable into a promise that every project will become large. Focus on God's Kingdom and His ability to work beyond appearances.

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4. THE WEEDS AMONG THE WHEAT

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

WATCH

Watch The Weeds Among the Wheat before beginning the discussion. Watch the full episode on YouTube

BIG IDEA

Jesus acknowledges the troubling coexistence of good and evil while teaching patience, discernment, and confidence that final judgment belongs to God.

READ

Read Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43. Read the surrounding verses as time allows. Notice the setting, the people Jesus addresses, the movement of the story, and how Jesus applies it.

REFLECT

Where am I tempted to take into my own hands a judgment that belongs to God?

DISCUSS

1. Why does the master refuse the servants' immediate plan to pull the weeds?
2. What dangers can come from trying to separate wheat and weeds prematurely?
3. How does Jesus' explanation balance patience with the reality of judgment?
4. What does this parable say to us when evil seems to prosper?
5. How can we pursue holiness without assuming God's role as final judge?

GO DEEPER

- The enemy's work is real, but it does not overthrow the owner's field.
- Premature uprooting can damage what is good.
- Jesus explicitly places final separation at the close of the age.

PRAY

Righteous Judge, make us faithful in Your field. Give us patience without indifference, discernment without pride, and confidence that You will finally set things right. Amen.

SHARE

Share this with someone discouraged by the apparent strength of evil or injustice.

LEADER NOTE

Keep the discussion from becoming speculation about who is 'wheat' or 'weeds.' Jesus' explanation should produce faithfulness and humility.

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5. THE LEAVEN
Matthew 13:33; Luke 13:20-21

WATCH

Watch The Leaven before beginning the discussion. Watch the full episode on YouTube

BIG IDEA

God's Kingdom can work quietly from within until its transforming influence reaches the whole.

READ

Read Matthew 13:33. Read the surrounding verses as time allows. Notice the setting, the people Jesus addresses, the movement of the story, and how Jesus applies it.

REFLECT

What quiet work of God might I be overlooking because it is not dramatic?

DISCUSS

1. Why is hidden leaven a fitting image for the Kingdom?
2. Where have you seen quiet spiritual influence transform a person, family, or community?
3. Why do visible results often receive more attention than hidden faithfulness?
4. What habits allow God's truth to work more deeply within us?
5. Where could your own quiet faithfulness have a transforming influence?

GO DEEPER

- A small amount of leaven affects a much larger quantity of dough.
- The action is largely unseen, yet its effect becomes unmistakable.
- The parable invites confidence in God's transforming work before results are obvious.

PRAY

Lord, work Your Kingdom deeply into our hearts and through our lives. Make us faithful even when Your work is hidden from view. Amen.

SHARE

Send the episode to someone whose quiet faithfulness has influenced you, and thank them.

LEADER NOTE

Emphasize transformation rather than speed. The image is small, ordinary, and powerful precisely because the work happens from within.

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6. THE WISE AND FOOLISH BUILDERS

Matthew 7:24-27; Luke 6:46-49

WATCH

Watch The Wise and Foolish Builders before beginning the discussion. Watch the full episode on YouTube

BIG IDEA

A secure life is built not merely by hearing Jesus' words, but by putting them into practice before the storms arrive.

READ

Read Matthew 7:24-27. Read the surrounding verses as time allows. Notice the setting, the people Jesus addresses, the movement of the story, and how Jesus applies it.

REFLECT

What teaching of Jesus do I know but still need to practice?

DISCUSS

1. What do the two builders have in common, and what makes them different?
2. Why is the foundation most important before the storm?
3. What kinds of storms reveal the foundations of our lives?
4. How can religious knowledge create a false sense of security if it is not obeyed?
5. What one teaching of Jesus can you act on this week?

GO DEEPER

- Both builders hear; obedience is the decisive distinction.
- The storm tests what was already built.
- Jesus places His own words at the foundation of enduring discipleship.

PRAY

Jesus, make us doers of Your word. Give us courage to build on obedience now, so that our lives rest on You when storms come. Amen.

SHARE

Share the episode with someone facing a storm and offer to pray with them.

LEADER NOTE

Avoid implying that obedience prevents storms. Jesus' image assumes storms come to both houses; the issue is the foundation.

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7. THE NEW CLOTH

Matthew 9:16; Mark 2:21; Luke 5:36

WATCH

Watch The New Cloth before beginning the discussion. Watch the full episode on YouTube

BIG IDEA

Jesus cannot simply be added as a patch to an unchanged life. His presence calls for a deeper renewal than cosmetic repair.

READ

Read Matthew 9:16. Read the surrounding verses as time allows. Notice the setting, the people Jesus addresses, the movement of the story, and how Jesus applies it.

REFLECT

Where am I asking Jesus merely to patch something rather than transform me?

DISCUSS

1. What happens when new cloth is used as a patch on an old garment?
2. Why are we often attracted to small repairs rather than deep change?
3. What might it look like to add Jesus to our plans without surrendering those plans to Him?
4. Where does the gospel challenge familiar religious habits or assumptions?
5. What area of your life needs renewal rather than a patch?

GO DEEPER

- The patch image exposes the inadequacy of superficial repair.
- Jesus' ministry is not merely an adjustment to existing patterns.
- Renewal may require releasing forms or assumptions that cannot contain what Christ is doing.

PRAY

Lord Jesus, do more than patch the surface of our lives. Renew us deeply and make us willing to receive the new life You bring. Amen.

SHARE

Share this with someone who is beginning again after a season of change.

LEADER NOTE

Keep the focus on Jesus' newness rather than treating everything old as bad. The context concerns the fitting response to His presence.

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8. NEW WINE IN OLD WINESKINS

Matthew 9:17; Mark 2:22; Luke 5:37-39

WATCH

Watch New Wine in Old Wineskins before beginning the discussion. Watch the full episode on YouTube

BIG IDEA

The new life Jesus brings requires hearts and patterns capable of receiving it; rigid containers can resist living, expanding work.

READ

Read Matthew 9:17. Read the surrounding verses as time allows. Notice the setting, the people Jesus addresses, the movement of the story, and how Jesus applies it.

REFLECT

What has become so rigid in me that I may be resisting what Jesus wants to do?

DISCUSS

1. Why would new wine burst an old wineskin?
2. What does flexibility look like without abandoning biblical truth?
3. How can traditions serve faith, and how can they sometimes become obstacles?
4. Where might fear of change keep us from responding to Jesus?
5. What would becoming a 'new wineskin' look like in your life or community?

GO DEEPER

- New wine continues to ferment and expand.
- The problem is not the wine but an inflexible container.
- Jesus' presence calls for renewed people and practices able to receive His work.

PRAY

Jesus, soften what has become rigid in us. Give us discernment to treasure truth while remaining responsive to Your living work. Amen.

SHARE

Share the episode with someone navigating a season of spiritual change or renewal.

LEADER NOTE

Distinguish faithfulness from rigidity. The parable is not permission to chase novelty; it is a call to respond fittingly to Jesus.

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9. HIDDEN TREASURE

Matthew 13:44

WATCH

Watch Hidden Treasure before beginning the discussion. Watch the full episode on YouTube

BIG IDEA

Discovering the Kingdom of Heaven reveals a treasure so valuable that joyful surrender becomes a reasonable response.

READ

Read Matthew 13:44. Read the surrounding verses as time allows. Notice the setting, the people Jesus addresses, the movement of the story, and how Jesus applies it.

REFLECT

What does my use of time, attention, and resources reveal that I treasure most?

DISCUSS

1. What emotions do you notice in the man's response to discovering the treasure?
2. Why is joy important to understanding his sacrifice?
3. What competing treasures most often claim our loyalty?
4. How does the Kingdom reorder rather than merely add to our priorities?
5. What would wholehearted response to God's Kingdom look like this week?

GO DEEPER

- The treasure is discovered and recognized for what it is worth.
- The man sells 'in his joy,' not merely from grim duty.
- The parable emphasizes incomparable value rather than a transaction by which salvation is purchased.

PRAY

King Jesus, open our eyes to the surpassing worth of Your Kingdom. Free us from lesser treasures and teach us joyful surrender. Amen.

SHARE

Share the episode with someone who is reconsidering what matters most in life.

LEADER NOTE

Be careful not to imply that God's Kingdom can be bought. The selling demonstrates the treasure's value and the man's wholehearted response.

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BENEATH THE OLIVE TREE
PARABLE DISCUSSION GUIDE
10. PEARL OF GREAT PRICE
Matthew 13:45-46

WATCH

Watch Pearl of Great Price before beginning the discussion. Watch the full episode on YouTube

BIG IDEA

The seeker recognizes one pearl of surpassing value and responds decisively, illustrating the incomparable worth of God's Kingdom.

READ

Read Matthew 13:45-46. Read the surrounding verses as time allows. Notice the setting, the people Jesus addresses, the movement of the story, and how Jesus applies it.

REFLECT

What am I still treating as equal in value to what Jesus offers?

DISCUSS

1. How is the merchant different from the man who unexpectedly finds hidden treasure?
2. What does the merchant's searching suggest about spiritual longing?
3. Why does recognition of true value demand decision?
4. What 'good pearls' can still distract us from the greatest treasure?
5. What would a decisive response to Jesus look like for you?

GO DEEPER

- Unlike the treasure finder, this merchant is actively searching.
- Recognition changes everything: many valuable pearls are eclipsed by one incomparable pearl.
- The response is wholehearted because the value has become clear.

PRAY

Lord, give us eyes to recognize what is truly precious. Let no lesser good keep us from wholehearted devotion to You and Your Kingdom. Amen.

SHARE

Send the episode to someone who is spiritually searching and invite conversation rather than argument.

LEADER NOTE

Allow room for seekers. The parable honors searching while showing that discovery eventually calls for response.

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11. THE DRAGNET

Matthew 13:47-50

WATCH

Watch The Dragnet before beginning the discussion. Watch the full episode on YouTube

BIG IDEA

The Kingdom's net gathers broadly, but Jesus also speaks soberly of a final separation and accountability before God.

READ

Read Matthew 13:47-50. Read the surrounding verses as time allows. Notice the setting, the people Jesus addresses, the movement of the story, and how Jesus applies it.

REFLECT

How does the reality of final accountability shape the way I live today?

DISCUSS

1. What does the image of a net gathering 'every kind' tell us about the reach of the Kingdom message?
2. Why might Jesus pair broad gathering with final separation?
3. How should judgment produce humility rather than superiority?
4. What is the danger of assuming outward association is the same as inward response?
5. How can this parable deepen both urgency and compassion?

GO DEEPER

- The net is indiscriminate in what it gathers.
- Sorting occurs at the end, not during the gathering.
- Jesus uses the image to speak plainly about final judgment.

PRAY

Merciful and holy God, keep us from presumption. Give us humble hearts, genuine faith, and compassion for those who have not yet responded to You. Amen.

SHARE

Share the episode with someone who is open to a thoughtful conversation about eternity.

LEADER NOTE

Handle judgment soberly, without using the parable to frighten or label particular people. Let Jesus' warning produce self-examination and compassion.

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PARABLE DISCUSSION GUIDE
12. THE HOUSEHOLDER
Matthew 13:51-52

WATCH

Watch The Householder before beginning the discussion. Watch the full episode on YouTube

BIG IDEA

A disciple trained for the Kingdom learns to draw faithfully from the treasures of God's revelation, bringing forth what is old and what is new.

READ

Read Matthew 13:51-52. Read the surrounding verses as time allows. Notice the setting, the people Jesus addresses, the movement of the story, and how Jesus applies it.

REFLECT

What truth I already know needs to be seen afresh in the light of Jesus?

DISCUSS

1. Why does Jesus ask whether the disciples have understood these things?
2. What might 'treasures new and old' mean in the context of His teaching?
3. How does Jesus both fulfill Scripture and surprise His hearers?
4. What danger comes from valuing only what is familiar - or only what is novel?
5. How can you become a wiser steward of the truth you have received?

GO DEEPER

- The householder possesses a treasury and knows how to bring from it appropriately.
- Kingdom understanding does not discard God's prior revelation.
- Jesus teaches His disciples to become responsible interpreters and teachers.

PRAY

Teacher and Lord, deepen our understanding. Help us treasure all You have revealed and bring Your truth forth wisely, faithfully, and freshly. Amen.

SHARE

Share one 'old treasure' from Scripture that has become newly meaningful to you with another person.

LEADER NOTE

Invite participants to connect Jesus' parables with the wider biblical story. Avoid making 'new' automatically better than 'old.'

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PARABLE DISCUSSION GUIDE
13. THE LOST SHEEP
Matthew 18:12-14; Luke 15:3-7

WATCH

Watch The Lost Sheep before beginning the discussion. Watch the full episode on YouTube

BIG IDEA

God's concern for the lost is personal and active. The shepherd seeks the one, and heaven rejoices when the lost is found.

READ

Read Matthew 18:12-14. Read the surrounding verses as time allows. Notice the setting, the people Jesus addresses, the movement of the story, and how Jesus applies it.

REFLECT

Who is easy for me to overlook because they are only 'one' person?

DISCUSS

1. What does leaving the ninety-nine reveal about the shepherd's concern for the one?
2. How does the shepherd's joy challenge our attitudes toward people who return?
3. Who are the 'lost' we may be tempted to write off?
4. How can a church pursue people without treating them as projects?
5. What would it look like for you to participate in God's seeking love?

GO DEEPER

- The shepherd notices one missing sheep.
- The search is active, not merely a hope that the sheep wanders home.
- The climax is joy, echoing heaven's joy over repentance.

PRAY

Good Shepherd, give us Your heart for those who are lost. Help us notice, seek, welcome, and rejoice without pride. Amen.

SHARE

Reach out gently to one person who may feel forgotten or spiritually distant.

LEADER NOTE

Do not pressure participants to disclose painful family situations. Keep the emphasis on God's pursuing love and joyful restoration.

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14. THE UNFORGIVING SERVANT

Matthew 18:21-35

WATCH

Watch The Unforgiving Servant before beginning the discussion. Watch the full episode on YouTube

BIG IDEA

Those who have received immeasurable mercy from God are called to become people who extend mercy and forgiveness.

READ

Read Matthew 18:21-35. Read the surrounding verses as time allows. Notice the setting, the people Jesus addresses, the movement of the story, and how Jesus applies it.

REFLECT

Whose debt am I still rehearsing after asking God to forgive mine?

DISCUSS

1. How does the first servant's debt compare with the debt owed to him?
2. Why does remembering the mercy we received matter for forgiving others?
3. What is forgiveness - and what is it not?
4. How can bitterness imprison the person who refuses to release a debt?
5. What step toward forgiveness might God be asking of you?

GO DEEPER

- Jesus deliberately contrasts an enormous forgiven debt with a much smaller one.
- The servant's failure is not that the second debt is imaginary, but that received mercy does not reshape him.
- Forgiveness can coexist with boundaries, truth, consequences, and the pursuit of justice.

PRAY

Merciful God, keep the mercy we have received before us. Give us grace to release resentment, seek reconciliation where possible, and become people marked by forgiveness. Amen.

SHARE

Pray for someone with whom reconciliation is difficult; if appropriate and safe, take one peaceful step toward repair.

LEADER NOTE

Be especially careful with abuse or unsafe relationships. Forgiveness does not require immediate trust, access, or removal of appropriate boundaries.

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BENEATH THE OLIVE TREE
PARABLE DISCUSSION GUIDE
15. THE GOOD SAMARITAN
Luke 10:25-37

WATCH

Watch The Good Samaritan before beginning the discussion. Watch the full episode on YouTube

BIG IDEA

Jesus shifts the question from defining the limits of neighbor-love to becoming a neighbor through costly compassion.

READ

Read Luke 10:25-37. Read the surrounding verses as time allows. Notice the setting, the people Jesus addresses, the movement of the story, and how Jesus applies it.

REFLECT

Whom do I find easiest to pass by, excuse myself from, or keep at a distance?

DISCUSS

1. Why do you think Jesus makes the compassionate figure a Samaritan?
2. What reasons might the priest and Levite have had for passing by?
3. What makes the Samaritan's compassion costly and concrete?
4. Who falls outside the boundaries of our natural concern today?
5. What would 'go and do likewise' look like in one specific situation this week?

GO DEEPER

- The lawyer asks, 'Who is my neighbor?' Jesus reframes the issue around becoming a neighbor.
- The Samaritan crosses social hostility and accepts inconvenience, expense, and risk.
- Mercy becomes visible in action.

PRAY

Lord Jesus, open our eyes to people we are tempted to pass by. Give us compassion that crosses boundaries and becomes practical love. Amen.

SHARE

Do one concrete act of mercy this week without expecting recognition, and share the episode if it may encourage someone else.

LEADER NOTE

Avoid reducing the discussion to abstract social categories. Keep asking how compassion becomes specific, costly action.

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16. THE FRIEND AT MIDNIGHT

Luke 11:5-13

WATCH

Watch The Friend at Midnight before beginning the discussion. Watch the full episode on YouTube

BIG IDEA

Jesus encourages bold, persistent prayer and anchors that persistence in the goodness of the Father who gives good gifts.

READ

Read Luke 11:5-13. Read the surrounding verses as time allows. Notice the setting, the people Jesus addresses, the movement of the story, and how Jesus applies it.

REFLECT

What have I stopped bringing to God because I became discouraged?

DISCUSS

1. What creates the urgency in the friend's midnight request?
2. What does persistence reveal about the requester's confidence?
3. How do 'ask, seek, knock' invite active prayer?
4. How does Jesus move from a reluctant human friend to a generous heavenly Father?
5. What request do you need to bring to God again with trust?

GO DEEPER

- Hospitality created a real social need for the host.
- The story moves into Jesus' direct invitation to ask, seek, and knock.
- The final emphasis is not on wearing God down but on the Father's goodness, especially His gift of the Holy Spirit.

PRAY

Father, teach us to ask, seek, and knock with confidence in Your goodness. Strengthen us when answers seem delayed and align our desires with Yours. Amen.

SHARE

Offer to pray persistently with someone carrying a long-term burden.

LEADER NOTE

Do not imply that persistence guarantees the exact outcome requested. Jesus grounds prayer in the Father's wise goodness.

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17. THE RICH FOOL
Luke 12:13-21

WATCH

Watch The Rich Fool before beginning the discussion. Watch the full episode on YouTube

BIG IDEA

Life cannot be secured by possessions. Jesus exposes the folly of accumulating for oneself while neglecting what it means to be rich toward God.

READ

Read Luke 12:13-21. Read the surrounding verses as time allows. Notice the setting, the people Jesus addresses, the movement of the story, and how Jesus applies it.

REFLECT

If my life ended sooner than expected, what would my current priorities say I believed mattered most?

DISCUSS

1. What is wrong with the rich man's response to a successful harvest?
2. How many times does his reasoning center on himself?
3. What false promise does accumulated wealth make in the story?
4. What might it mean to be 'rich toward God'?
5. How could generosity reshape one financial or lifestyle decision you are making?

GO DEEPER

- The man's abundance is not itself condemned; his self-centered security is.
- He plans for larger barns but not for mortality, God, or neighbor.
- Jesus places the parable in a warning against greed.

PRAY

God, free us from the illusion that possessions can secure our lives. Make us grateful, generous, and rich toward You. Amen.

SHARE

Choose one act of generosity this week and, if useful, share the episode with someone reflecting on money and meaning.

LEADER NOTE

Keep the discussion from shaming people for having resources. Jesus addresses greed, false security, and the orientation of the heart.

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18. THE WATCHFUL SERVANTS

Luke 12:35-40

WATCH

Watch The Watchful Servants before beginning the discussion. Watch the full episode on YouTube

BIG IDEA

Jesus calls His followers to live awake, ready, and faithful because the Master's return is certain even though its timing is not known.

READ

Read Luke 12:35-40. Read the surrounding verses as time allows. Notice the setting, the people Jesus addresses, the movement of the story, and how Jesus applies it.

REFLECT

If Jesus' return shaped today's priorities, what would I do differently?

DISCUSS

1. What images communicate readiness in this passage?
2. Why can delay tempt servants to become spiritually sleepy?
3. What is surprising about the master's response to servants he finds watching?
4. How is readiness different from date-setting or anxiety?
5. What habit would help you live more watchfully and faithfully?

GO DEEPER

- Ready clothing and burning lamps picture active preparedness.
- The timing is intentionally uncertain.
- Watchfulness is expressed through faithful living, not speculation.

PRAY

Lord Jesus, keep our lamps burning and our hearts awake. Help us live faithfully today, ready to welcome You whenever You come. Amen.

SHARE

Encourage someone who is weary in long-term faithfulness, and share this episode with them.

LEADER NOTE

Keep the focus on readiness, not predictions. Jesus uses uncertainty about timing to motivate faithfulness.

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19. THE WISE STEWARD AND THE DISHONEST MANAGER

Luke 16:1-13

WATCH

Watch The Wise Steward and the Dishonest Manager before beginning the discussion.
Watch the full episode on YouTube

BIG IDEA

Jesus uses a morally complicated manager to press His hearers toward shrewd stewardship, eternal perspective, faithfulness, and undivided loyalty to God.

READ

Read Luke 16:1-13. Read the surrounding verses as time allows. Notice the setting, the people Jesus addresses, the movement of the story, and how Jesus applies it.

REFLECT

What resource entrusted to me could be used more intentionally for eternal good?

DISCUSS

1. What exactly does the manager recognize about his changing situation?
2. Which quality does the master commend, and which actions should not be imitated?
3. What does it mean to use temporary wealth with eternal perspective?
4. How do small acts of stewardship reveal larger loyalties?
5. Where are you tempted to serve both God and money?

GO DEEPER

- The manager acts decisively because he understands that his present stewardship is temporary.
- Jesus does not commend dishonesty; He highlights foresight and purposeful action.
- The passage culminates in faithfulness and the impossibility of serving both God and money.

PRAY

Lord, everything we hold is entrusted to us. Give us wisdom, integrity, generosity, and an eternal perspective in how we use it. Amen.

SHARE

Use one resource - money, time, influence, skill, or hospitality - intentionally to bless someone this week.

LEADER NOTE

This parable can confuse groups. Distinguish clearly between the manager's dishonesty and the foresight Jesus uses as an illustration.

COME. SIT. LISTEN. SHARE.

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BENEATH THE OLIVE TREE
PARABLE DISCUSSION GUIDE
20. THE BARREN FIG TREE
Luke 13:6-9

WATCH

Watch The Barren Fig Tree before beginning the discussion. Watch the full episode on YouTube

BIG IDEA

God's patience is merciful and purposeful: it gives space for repentance and fruit, but the opportunity should not be treated casually.

READ

Read Luke 13:6-9. Read the surrounding verses as time allows. Notice the setting, the people Jesus addresses, the movement of the story, and how Jesus applies it.

REFLECT

Where has God's patience with me become an invitation I need to answer?

DISCUSS

1. Why is the owner disappointed with the fig tree?
2. What does the gardener's request reveal about patience and care?
3. Why is patience not the same as indifference?
4. What kind of fruit would repentance produce in your present circumstances?
5. Is there a delayed act of obedience you need to stop postponing?

GO DEEPER

- The tree has received time and place but has not borne expected fruit.
- The gardener asks for additional care and time.
- The open ending preserves both mercy and urgency.

PRAY

Patient God, thank You for giving us time to turn toward You. Cultivate our hearts and produce the fruit You desire in our lives. Amen.

SHARE

Share the episode with someone who needs to hear both the mercy and urgency of a fresh start.

LEADER NOTE

Hold mercy and accountability together. Avoid using the parable to assign tragedies or hardships as punishment for particular sins.

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BENEATH THE OLIVE TREE
PARABLE DISCUSSION GUIDE
21. THE GREAT BANQUET
Luke 14:15-24

WATCH

Watch The Great Banquet before beginning the discussion. Watch the full episode on YouTube

BIG IDEA

God's invitation is abundant and generous, but ordinary preoccupations and excuses can keep people from receiving what He freely offers.

READ

Read Luke 14:15-24. Read the surrounding verses as time allows. Notice the setting, the people Jesus addresses, the movement of the story, and how Jesus applies it.

REFLECT

What good thing has become an excuse that keeps me from saying yes to God?

DISCUSS

1. What do the invited guests' excuses have in common?
2. Why can ordinary responsibilities become spiritually dangerous when they displace God's invitation?
3. What does the widening invitation reveal about the host?
4. Who might feel unlikely or unworthy of a place at God's table?
5. What invitation from God are you being asked to accept rather than postpone?

GO DEEPER

- The banquet is prepared before the final summons: the host has made generous provision.
- The excuses concern possessions, work, and family - good things that become ultimate things.
- The host extends the invitation beyond the expected guest list.

PRAY

Generous God, keep us from excusing ourselves from Your invitation. Give us joyful hearts that say yes, and make us eager to welcome others to Your table. Amen.

SHARE

Invite someone who may feel spiritually outside or overlooked to watch the episode with you.

LEADER NOTE

Do not caricature the original invitees. Let the excuses expose the universal human tendency to let legitimate concerns crowd out God's call.

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BENEATH THE OLIVE TREE
PARABLE DISCUSSION GUIDE
22. THE TOWER BUILDER
Luke 14:25-33

WATCH

Watch The Tower Builder before beginning the discussion. Watch the full episode on YouTube

BIG IDEA

Jesus refuses to hide the cost of discipleship. Following Him calls for thoughtful, wholehearted allegiance rather than impulsive enthusiasm.

READ

Read Luke 14:25-33. Read the surrounding verses as time allows. Notice the setting, the people Jesus addresses, the movement of the story, and how Jesus applies it.

REFLECT

What cost of following Jesus am I tempted to avoid or minimize?

DISCUSS

1. Why does Jesus tell would-be disciples to count the cost?
2. What happens when enthusiasm begins something that commitment cannot finish?
3. How do Jesus' strong words challenge casual discipleship?
4. What has following Christ cost you - or what might it cost?
5. Why is Jesus still worth following when the cost is real?

GO DEEPER

- The builder's unfinished tower becomes a public picture of uncompleted commitment.
- Jesus speaks these words to large crowds, not merely to opponents.
- Counting the cost is meant to produce durable discipleship, not discourage genuine faith.

PRAY

Jesus, You are worthy of more than casual allegiance. Give us clear eyes, steadfast hearts, and grace to follow You whatever the cost. Amen.

SHARE

Share the episode with someone considering what deeper commitment to Christ might mean.

LEADER NOTE

Jesus' language about family and possessions is intentionally demanding. Discuss allegiance carefully without encouraging neglect of genuine responsibilities.

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BENEATH THE OLIVE TREE
PARABLE DISCUSSION GUIDE
23. THE WARRING KING
Luke 14:31-32

WATCH

Watch The Warring King before beginning the discussion. Watch the full episode on YouTube

BIG IDEA

A king facing a stronger force must reckon honestly with reality. Jesus uses the image to underscore the seriousness of responding to His call.

READ

Read Luke 14:31-32. Read the surrounding verses as time allows. Notice the setting, the people Jesus addresses, the movement of the story, and how Jesus applies it.

REFLECT

Where do I need to stop pretending I am stronger, safer, or more self-sufficient than I really am?

DISCUSS

1. What must the king do before marching into battle?
2. Why is honest assessment a spiritual virtue?
3. How does this image complement the Tower Builder in the same passage?
4. Where does pride keep us from seeking peace on God's terms?
5. What might surrender to Jesus require from you now?

GO DEEPER

- The king does not control the strength of the opposing army; wisdom begins with reality.
- The image is part of Jesus' call to count the cost of discipleship.
- The conclusion of the passage points toward renouncing competing claims to ultimate ownership.

PRAY

Lord Jesus, deliver us from self-deception. Give us humility to see reality clearly and courage to surrender ourselves fully to You. Amen.

SHARE

Share the episode with someone wrestling honestly with the claims of Jesus.

LEADER NOTE

Keep the discussion anchored in Luke 14:25-33. Avoid turning the image into a general strategy lesson about warfare.

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BENEATH THE OLIVE TREE
PARABLE DISCUSSION GUIDE
24. THE LOST COIN
Luke 15:8-10

WATCH

Watch The Lost Coin before beginning the discussion. Watch the full episode on YouTube

BIG IDEA

God's seeking love values what is lost, searches carefully, and erupts in joy when the lost is found.

READ

Read Luke 15:8-10. Read the surrounding verses as time allows. Notice the setting, the people Jesus addresses, the movement of the story, and how Jesus applies it.

REFLECT

Do I share heaven's joy when someone turns toward God?

DISCUSS

1. What does the woman's careful search tell us about the value of the missing coin?
2. Why does Jesus emphasize celebration after the coin is found?
3. How can religious people become more suspicious than joyful when someone repents?
4. Who might feel unseen or lost in your community?
5. How can we reflect God's seeking love without becoming intrusive?

GO DEEPER

- The woman lights a lamp, sweeps, and searches carefully.
- The value of one coin is enough to motivate sustained effort.
- Jesus explicitly connects the celebration to joy before God's angels over one sinner who repents.

PRAY

Seeking God, thank You for valuing the lost. Give us patient love, attentive eyes, and heaven's joy whenever someone turns toward You. Amen.

SHARE

Notice one person who may feel invisible and offer a sincere word of welcome or encouragement.

LEADER NOTE

Pair this parable with the Lost Sheep and Loving Father to see the repeated rhythm of lost, found, and rejoicing.

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BENEATH THE OLIVE TREE
PARABLE DISCUSSION GUIDE

25. THE LOVING FATHER (THE PRODIGAL SON)

Luke 15:11-32

WATCH

Watch The Loving Father (The Prodigal Son) before beginning the discussion. Watch the full episode on YouTube

BIG IDEA

Jesus reveals a father whose costly welcome meets repentance with grace, while also exposing the resentment of the outwardly obedient older son.

READ

Read Luke 15:11-32. Read the surrounding verses as time allows. Notice the setting, the people Jesus addresses, the movement of the story, and how Jesus applies it.

REFLECT

Do I find it easier to identify with the younger son's rebellion or the older son's resentment?

DISCUSS

1. What does the younger son believe will happen when he returns?
2. What does the father's running, embracing, and celebrating reveal about him?
3. Why is the older brother angry?
4. How can we be physically near the Father's house yet far from His heart?
5. What would it mean for you to receive - or extend - the Father's welcome?

GO DEEPER

- Both sons are alienated from the father in different ways.
- The father moves toward both sons: running to the younger and going out to plead with the older.
- The story ends without telling us the older brother's response, leaving the hearer with a decision.

PRAY

Father, bring us home from rebellion and from self-righteousness. Teach us to receive Your grace and rejoice when others receive it too. Amen.

SHARE

Share the episode with someone who needs to know that returning to God is possible.

LEADER NOTE

Give attention to both sons. The parable is not only about obvious rebellion; it also confronts resentment, entitlement, and graceless obedience.

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BENEATH THE OLIVE TREE
PARABLE DISCUSSION GUIDE
26. THE LOWEST SEAT
Luke 14:7-14

WATCH

Watch The Lowest Seat before beginning the discussion. Watch the full episode on YouTube

BIG IDEA

Jesus confronts status-seeking and calls His followers toward humility and generous hospitality that does not calculate repayment.

READ

Read Luke 14:7-14. Read the surrounding verses as time allows. Notice the setting, the people Jesus addresses, the movement of the story, and how Jesus applies it.

REFLECT

Where am I quietly seeking the best seat, recognition, or repayment?

DISCUSS

1. What behavior does Jesus observe among the guests?
2. Why is choosing the lower place more than a lesson in etiquette?
3. How does Jesus connect humility with God's future honor?
4. Why does He tell the host to invite people who cannot repay?
5. What would non-transactional generosity look like in your life?

GO DEEPER

- Jesus addresses both guests and hosts.
- Humility releases the need to secure one's own status.
- Kingdom hospitality reaches beyond reciprocal social circles.

PRAY

Lord, free us from the hunger to be noticed and repaid. Teach us humility, generous hospitality, and joy in honoring others. Amen.

SHARE

Include or serve someone this week who cannot advance your status or repay the favor.

LEADER NOTE

Watch for false humility that is really another strategy for recognition. Jesus is reshaping the heart, not teaching social manipulation.

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BENEATH THE OLIVE TREE
PARABLE DISCUSSION GUIDE

27. THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

Luke 16:19-31

WATCH

Watch The Rich Man and Lazarus before beginning the discussion. Watch the full episode on YouTube

BIG IDEA

Jesus warns that wealth and comfort can blind us to suffering at our gate, and that God's revealed word deserves response before it is too late.

READ

Read Luke 16:19-31. Read the surrounding verses as time allows. Notice the setting, the people Jesus addresses, the movement of the story, and how Jesus applies it.

REFLECT

Who is at my 'gate' whose need I have learned not to see?

DISCUSS

1. What contrasts does Jesus draw between the rich man and Lazarus?
2. What is striking about the rich man's apparent indifference during his lifetime?
3. How does the reversal after death challenge common assumptions about success?
4. Why does Abraham point back to Moses and the Prophets?
5. What suffering close to you requires a response now rather than later?

GO DEEPER

- Lazarus is named; the rich man is not, reversing ordinary social visibility.
- The rich man's failure is vividly connected to a suffering person at his gate.
- The ending emphasizes the sufficiency and seriousness of God's revealed word.

PRAY

God of justice and mercy, open our eyes to people we have stopped seeing. Make us responsive to Your word and generous toward those in need. Amen.

SHARE

Respond to one nearby need with practical generosity, and share the episode where it may prompt compassionate action.

LEADER NOTE

Avoid speculative discussion about the mechanics of the afterlife. Keep attention on Jesus' moral and spiritual warning.

COME. SIT. LISTEN. SHARE.

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BENEATH THE OLIVE TREE
PARABLE DISCUSSION GUIDE

28. THE PERSISTENT WIDOW

Luke 18:1-8

WATCH

Watch The Persistent Widow before beginning the discussion. Watch the full episode on YouTube

BIG IDEA

Jesus tells His disciples to pray continually and not lose heart, trusting that the just God hears His people even when answers seem delayed.

READ

Read Luke 18:1-8. Read the surrounding verses as time allows. Notice the setting, the people Jesus addresses, the movement of the story, and how Jesus applies it.

REFLECT

Where am I most tempted to lose heart in prayer?

DISCUSS

1. Why is the judge an intentionally negative character?
2. What keeps the widow returning?
3. How is God unlike the unjust judge?
4. Why can delayed justice test faith?
5. What practice could help you persevere in prayer without becoming consumed by the outcome?

GO DEEPER

- Luke states the purpose before the parable: always pray and do not lose heart.
- The widow has little social power but refuses to stop appealing for justice.
- Jesus argues from lesser to greater: if even an unjust judge responds, how much more can God's people trust Him.

PRAY

Just and faithful God, strengthen us when waiting is long. Teach us to pray without losing heart and to trust Your character when timing is hard to understand. Amen.

SHARE

Ask someone about a long-standing prayer burden and commit to pray with them regularly.

LEADER NOTE

Do not portray God as reluctant or annoyed. The unjust judge is a contrast, not a portrait of God's character.

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BENEATH THE OLIVE TREE
PARABLE DISCUSSION GUIDE

29. THE PHARISEE AND THE TAX COLLECTOR

Luke 18:9-14

WATCH

Watch The Pharisee and the Tax Collector before beginning the discussion. Watch the full episode on YouTube

BIG IDEA

Jesus contrasts self-confident religion with humble dependence on mercy: the one who exalts himself is humbled, while the humble are lifted up.

READ

Read Luke 18:9-14. Read the surrounding verses as time allows. Notice the setting, the people Jesus addresses, the movement of the story, and how Jesus applies it.

REFLECT

Where has comparison with other people replaced honest confession before God?

DISCUSS

1. What is the Pharisee actually doing while he appears to pray?
2. What does the tax collector understand about himself and God?
3. Why is spiritual comparison so attractive?
4. How can good practices such as prayer, fasting, and giving become sources of pride?
5. What would a prayer of humble dependence sound like from you today?

GO DEEPER

- Luke identifies the audience as people confident in their own righteousness who looked down on others.
- The Pharisee lists virtues; the tax collector asks only for mercy.
- Jesus says the tax collector, not the Pharisee, goes home justified.

PRAY

God, be merciful to us. Deliver us from comparison and spiritual pride. Give us honest hearts that depend wholly on Your grace. Amen.

SHARE

Privately affirm someone you might otherwise compare yourself against, and share the episode if it would encourage humility.

LEADER NOTE

Do not let the group become proud of not being like the Pharisee - which simply repeats the parable's problem in another form.

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BENEATH THE OLIVE TREE
PARABLE DISCUSSION GUIDE

30. THE WORKERS IN THE VINEYARD

Matthew 20:1-16

WATCH

Watch The Workers in the Vineyard before beginning the discussion. Watch the full episode on YouTube

BIG IDEA

God's generosity exceeds human calculations of merit. Grace unsettles our instinct to compare what we receive with what others receive.

READ

Read Matthew 20:1-16. Read the surrounding verses as time allows. Notice the setting, the people Jesus addresses, the movement of the story, and how Jesus applies it.

REFLECT

When God's generosity to someone else bothers me, what does that reveal about my heart?

DISCUSS

1. Why are the first workers dissatisfied even though they receive the agreed wage?
2. What does the landowner's question reveal about envy?
3. Where does comparison turn gratitude into resentment?
4. How does grace challenge our sense of spiritual seniority or entitlement?
5. How can we learn to celebrate God's generosity toward others?

GO DEEPER

- The landowner keeps going out to bring workers into the vineyard.
- The first workers receive justice; the later workers receive surprising generosity.
- The conflict arises when generosity toward others is interpreted as unfairness toward self.

PRAY

Generous God, free us from envy and entitlement. Make us grateful for Your grace and joyful when Your goodness reaches others. Amen.

SHARE

Celebrate someone else's blessing this week without comparing it to your own.

LEADER NOTE

Do not force the parable into a modern wage-policy framework. In context, Jesus is exposing Kingdom attitudes about grace, reward, and comparison.

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BENEATH THE OLIVE TREE
PARABLE DISCUSSION GUIDE

31. THE TWO SONS

Matthew 21:28-32

WATCH

Watch *The Two Sons* before beginning the discussion. Watch the full episode on [YouTube](#)

BIG IDEA

Jesus exposes the gap between words and obedience. A reluctant 'no' followed by repentance can be nearer God's will than a respectful 'yes' that never acts.

READ

Read Matthew 21:28-32. Read the surrounding verses as time allows. Notice the setting, the people Jesus addresses, the movement of the story, and how Jesus applies it.

REFLECT

Where am I saying yes to God with my words while saying no with my actions?

DISCUSS

1. What changes in the first son's response?
2. Why is the second son's polite answer ultimately empty?
3. How does repentance turn a wrong beginning into obedience?
4. What religious words can substitute for actual obedience?
5. What specific 'yes' to God needs to become action this week?

GO DEEPER

- The father's will is clear to both sons.
- The first son changes his mind and goes; the second speaks correctly but does not go.
- Jesus applies the story to people whose unexpected repentance contrasts with religious refusal.

PRAY

Father, make our obedience more than words. Give us grace to repent when we have refused You and courage to do what You ask. Amen.

SHARE

Take one concrete action on something you already know God has been asking you to do.

LEADER NOTE

Keep the discussion focused on repentance and obedience, not on labeling groups of people as one son or the other.

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**BENEATH THE OLIVE TREE
PARABLE DISCUSSION GUIDE**

32. THE WICKED TENANTS

Matthew 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19

WATCH

Watch The Wicked Tenants before beginning the discussion. Watch the full episode on YouTube

BIG IDEA

The tenants act as though the vineyard belongs to them, rejecting the owner's messengers and finally his son. Jesus warns against rejecting God's rightful authority and His Son.

READ

Read Matthew 21:33-46. Read the surrounding verses as time allows. Notice the setting, the people Jesus addresses, the movement of the story, and how Jesus applies it.

REFLECT

What have I begun to treat as mine when it actually belongs to God?

DISCUSS

1. What does the owner provide before entrusting the vineyard to the tenants?
2. How does the tenants' response escalate with each messenger?
3. What does sending the beloved son reveal about the owner - and the tenants?
4. Where are we tempted to act as owners rather than stewards?
5. How should recognizing Jesus as the Son reshape our response to God?

GO DEEPER

- The vineyard is carefully prepared and entrusted, not abandoned.
- The tenants repeatedly reject the owner's legitimate claim.
- Jesus' listeners recognize the judgment in the story, while the Gospel context connects the rejected son with Jesus.

PRAY

God, everything we have belongs to You. Forgive our resistance to Your authority. Teach us faithful stewardship and wholehearted response to Your Son. Amen.

SHARE

Identify one area of life you need to return consciously to God's ownership and stewardship.

LEADER NOTE

Read the surrounding Gospel context. Avoid anti-Jewish generalizations; the parable confronts particular leaders and, more broadly, every hearer's response to God's authority.

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BENEATH THE OLIVE TREE
PARABLE DISCUSSION GUIDE
33. THE WEDDING FEAST
Matthew 22:1-14

WATCH

Watch The Wedding Feast before beginning the discussion. Watch the full episode on YouTube

BIG IDEA

The King's invitation is astonishingly wide, yet grace is not casual. The parable holds together generous invitation and the seriousness of responding appropriately.

READ

Read Matthew 22:1-14. Read the surrounding verses as time allows. Notice the setting, the people Jesus addresses, the movement of the story, and how Jesus applies it.

REFLECT

Have I mistaken being invited for having truly responded to the King?

DISCUSS

1. What do the first invited guests reveal by refusing the king's summons?
2. What does inviting people from the roads reveal about the king's generosity?
3. Why is the improperly dressed guest a sobering second movement in the parable?
4. How can we receive grace without treating it casually?
5. What does a genuine response to the King's invitation look like?

GO DEEPER

- The feast is prepared; refusal dishonors the king who invites.
- The invitation expands dramatically to people not originally expected.
- The wedding garment scene warns that entering the gathering is not the same as honoring the king.

PRAY

King Jesus, thank You for Your gracious invitation. Give us hearts that receive Your grace with gratitude, reverence, and genuine allegiance. Amen.

SHARE

Invite someone to encounter Jesus through this episode, especially someone who assumes they are outside the invitation.

LEADER NOTE

Do not over-speculate about every detail of the wedding garment. Preserve the parable's twin emphasis: generous invitation and accountable response.

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BENEATH THE OLIVE TREE
PARABLE DISCUSSION GUIDE

34. THE BUDDING FIG TREE

Matthew 24:32-35; Mark 13:28-31; Luke 21:29-33

WATCH

Watch The Budding Fig Tree before beginning the discussion. Watch the full episode on YouTube

BIG IDEA

Just as budding branches signal an approaching season, Jesus calls His disciples to attentive discernment and confidence that His words will not pass away.

READ

Read Matthew 24:32-35. Read the surrounding verses as time allows. Notice the setting, the people Jesus addresses, the movement of the story, and how Jesus applies it.

REFLECT

Am I more interested in predicting the future than faithfully hearing what Jesus actually said?

DISCUSS

1. What can ordinary observation of a fig tree teach about discernment?
2. Why does Jesus call His disciples to notice signs without giving them permission for careless speculation?
3. What comfort is found in 'My words will not pass away'?
4. How can end-times teaching produce faithfulness rather than fear?
5. What does attentive, hopeful discipleship look like today?

GO DEEPER

- The illustration depends on recognizable seasonal signs.
- The surrounding discourse includes both warning and reassurance.
- Jesus places ultimate confidence not in human calculations but in the durability of His words.

PRAY

Lord Jesus, make us attentive without anxiety, discerning without speculation, and firmly anchored in Your enduring word. Amen.

SHARE

Share the episode with someone who is anxious about the future and encourage them toward confidence in Jesus' words.

LEADER NOTE

Keep the group from date-setting. The guide should cultivate watchful faithfulness and trust, not prediction.

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**BENEATH THE OLIVE TREE
PARABLE DISCUSSION GUIDE**

35. THE FAITHFUL AND EVIL SERVANTS

Matthew 24:45-51; Luke 12:42-48

WATCH

Watch The Faithful and Evil Servants before beginning the discussion. Watch the full episode on YouTube

BIG IDEA

The Master's apparent delay reveals the servant's true character. Faithfulness means caring responsibly for what and whom the Master has entrusted to us.

READ

Read Matthew 24:45-51. Read the surrounding verses as time allows. Notice the setting, the people Jesus addresses, the movement of the story, and how Jesus applies it.

REFLECT

What am I doing with the responsibility Jesus has entrusted to me while He seems absent?

DISCUSS

1. What does the faithful servant do during the master's absence?
2. How does the evil servant's thinking change when he says, 'My master is delayed'?
3. Why does hidden conduct reveal genuine character?
4. What responsibilities has God entrusted to you for the good of others?
5. How can you practice faithfulness when no one is watching?

GO DEEPER

- Delay is the testing environment in the story.
- Faithful stewardship is expressed in caring for others at the proper time.
- Abuse of entrusted authority is treated with severe seriousness.

PRAY

Master, find us faithful. Guard us from using responsibility for ourselves and teach us to care well for the people and work You entrust to us. Amen.

SHARE

Do one unseen act of faithful service for someone who depends on your stewardship.

LEADER NOTE

Leaders should allow the parable to examine leadership itself. Do not soften its warning about misuse of authority.

COME. SIT. LISTEN. SHARE.

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BENEATH THE OLIVE TREE
PARABLE DISCUSSION GUIDE
36. THE TEN VIRGINS
Matthew 25:1-13

WATCH

Watch The Ten Virgins before beginning the discussion. Watch the full episode on YouTube

BIG IDEA

Jesus calls His followers to a readiness that cannot be borrowed at the last moment. The Bridegroom's delay tests whether preparation is real.

READ

Read Matthew 25:1-13. Read the surrounding verses as time allows. Notice the setting, the people Jesus addresses, the movement of the story, and how Jesus applies it.

REFLECT

What part of my spiritual life am I assuming I can prepare for later?

DISCUSS

1. What do all ten bridesmaids have in common?
2. What distinguishes the wise from the foolish before the bridegroom arrives?
3. Why can't readiness simply be borrowed from someone else?
4. How can delay expose whether our faith is sustained or superficial?
5. What practice helps keep your 'lamp' ready over the long haul?

GO DEEPER

- All ten wait and all become drowsy; the decisive issue is preparation.
- The delay is part of the test.
- Jesus ends with a direct command to keep watch because the timing is unknown.

PRAY

Bridegroom and Lord, make us ready for You. Give us enduring faith, not borrowed faith, and teach us to live prepared through every season of waiting. Amen.

SHARE

Encourage someone whose faith has grown weary in a long season of waiting.

LEADER NOTE

Do not turn the oil into an elaborate code unless the text warrants it. The central emphasis is personal readiness for the Bridegroom.

COME. SIT. LISTEN. SHARE.

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BENEATH THE OLIVE TREE
PARABLE DISCUSSION GUIDE

37. THE TALENTS

Matthew 25:14-30

WATCH

Watch The Talents before beginning the discussion. Watch the full episode on YouTube

BIG IDEA

God entrusts different measures to His servants and expects faithful stewardship. Fearful preservation is not the same as faithful use.

READ

Read Matthew 25:14-30. Read the surrounding verses as time allows. Notice the setting, the people Jesus addresses, the movement of the story, and how Jesus applies it.

REFLECT

What has God entrusted to me that fear has kept buried?

DISCUSS

1. What does the master do before leaving?
2. Why is comparison between the servants unnecessary?
3. What motivates the third servant's inaction?
4. How can a distorted view of the master produce fearful stewardship?
5. What entrusted ability, opportunity, resource, or responsibility can you put to faithful use now?

GO DEEPER

- The amounts differ, but each servant receives a real trust.
- The first two servants receive the same commendation despite different totals.
- The third servant's fear and view of the master lead to inactivity.

PRAY

Lord, everything we have is entrusted by You. Free us from fear and comparison, and make us faithful with what You have placed in our hands. Amen.

SHARE

Use one neglected gift or resource this week to serve someone else.

LEADER NOTE

Avoid equating 'talents' only with natural abilities; in the story they are money, while the stewardship principle can extend more broadly.

COME. SIT. LISTEN. SHARE.

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BENEATH THE OLIVE TREE
PARABLE DISCUSSION GUIDE

38. THE SHEEP AND THE GOATS

Matthew 25:31-46

WATCH

Watch The Sheep and the Goats before beginning the discussion. Watch the full episode on YouTube

BIG IDEA

Jesus portrays the Son of Man judging the nations and identifies compassionate response to 'the least of these' with response to Him.

READ

Read Matthew 25:31-46. Read the surrounding verses as time allows. Notice the setting, the people Jesus addresses, the movement of the story, and how Jesus applies it.

REFLECT

When I encounter someone hungry, lonely, sick, imprisoned, or vulnerable, do I recognize an opportunity to serve Christ?

DISCUSS

1. What acts of compassion does Jesus name?
2. Why are both groups surprised by the King's explanation?
3. What does this passage reveal about the seriousness of embodied mercy?
4. Who are the vulnerable people easiest for your community to overlook?
5. What concrete act of service could become part of your normal discipleship?

GO DEEPER

- The scene is explicitly one of judgment by the Son of Man.
- The listed acts are ordinary, tangible forms of mercy.
- Jesus closely identifies Himself with those described as 'the least of these.'

PRAY

King Jesus, open our eyes to meet You in people who are hungry, lonely, sick, imprisoned, or overlooked. Make our faith visible in merciful action. Amen.

SHARE

Choose one concrete work of mercy this week, ideally with a person or group you might otherwise overlook.

LEADER NOTE

Christians differ on the precise identity of 'the least of these.' Acknowledge that interpretive question while preserving the passage's unmistakable seriousness about allegiance to Christ and merciful action.

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BENEATH THE OLIVE TREE
PARABLE DISCUSSION GUIDE
39. THE SEED THAT DIES
John 12:24

WATCH

Watch The Seed That Dies before beginning the discussion. Watch the full episode on YouTube

BIG IDEA

Jesus uses a grain of wheat to reveal a Kingdom paradox: through His death comes abundant life, and His followers are likewise called away from self-preservation toward surrendered, fruitful life.

READ

Read John 12:24. Read the surrounding verses as time allows. Notice the setting, the people Jesus addresses, the movement of the story, and how Jesus applies it.

REFLECT

What am I protecting so tightly that it may be preventing deeper fruitfulness?

DISCUSS

1. What happens to a grain of wheat if it never falls into the earth?
2. How does this image illuminate Jesus' approaching death?
3. Why is surrender so often experienced as loss before fruit becomes visible?
4. What is the difference between faithful self-giving and unhealthy self-destruction?
5. Where might Jesus be inviting you to release control for the sake of love and fruitfulness?

GO DEEPER

- John places the saying as Jesus speaks about the hour of His glorification through death.
- The seed's 'death' is not meaningless loss; it becomes the path to multiplied life.
- The verses that follow connect Jesus' path with discipleship and service.

PRAY

Jesus, thank You for giving Your life so that we might live. Free us from fearful self-preservation and teach us wise, loving, fruitful surrender. Amen.

SHARE

Share the episode with someone facing a costly but faithful act of service or surrender.

LEADER NOTE

Keep Jesus' own death at the center. Also distinguish Christlike self-giving from remaining in abusive or dangerous situations; sacrifice should not be used to justify harm.

COME. SIT. LISTEN. SHARE.

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