

Jesus' Parables in Chronological Order (#5 - 6) ~ Scripture

Parable #5 — Luke 7:41-43 — The Moneylender
(The parable is only 3 verses; the 10 verses before and after put it in context.)

³⁶ Now one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. ³⁷ When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, ³⁸ and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.

³⁹ When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner."

⁴⁰ Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you."

"Tell me, teacher," he said.

⁴¹ "Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴² Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?"

⁴³ Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled."

"You have judged correctly," Jesus said.

⁴⁴ Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵ You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. ⁴⁶ You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. ⁴⁷ Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little, loves little."

⁴⁸ Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

Parable #6 — Luke 8:16-18 — The Lamp on a Stand

¹⁶ "No one lights a lamp and hides it in a jar or puts it under a bed. Instead, he puts it on a stand, so that those who come in can see the light. ¹⁷ For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open. ¹⁸ Therefore consider carefully how you listen. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has will be taken from him."

Parables in Chronological Order (#5 - 6) ~ Discussion Questions

Parable #5 — Luke 7:41-43 — The Moneylender

1. What options did the moneylender have with people who owed him money?
2. Why do you think the woman came to the Pharisee's house? (a) to upset the Pharisee, (b) to ruin the party, (c) to seek forgiveness, (d) to minister to Jesus, (e) to confront her oppressors, (f) something else.
3. Jesus' parable about the moneylender seems an odd response to the Pharisee who was thinking that it was strange that Jesus allowed a sinful woman to touch him. What was Jesus actually saying to Simon? (a) you can't know grace because you don't think of yourself as a sinner, (b) you are a bigger sinner than the woman but you don't know it, (c) you may have sinned less than the woman, but you still need forgiveness, (d) the more you've sinned, the more your love for God, (e) the more you've been forgiven, the more your love for God.
4. Have you even felt like Simon when confronted with a person of questionable morals?
5. Who do you identify with in the parable (moneylender, small debtor, large debtor)?
6. Parables make you peel off layers of meaning, but usually have a basic lesson. What is the fundamental lesson of this parable?

Parable #6 — Luke 8:16-18 — The Lamp on a Stand



1. In Jesus' story about the lamp, what does the lamp represent?
2. Each of the three verses of this parable adds to the meaning of the whole. What do each of the lines mean? NO short answers! Elaborate!
3. What sorts of things would God have you bring "out into the open?" (Vs 17)
4. Have you ever tried to hide your Christian identity or beliefs from other people?

Parables in Chronological Order (#5 - 6) ~ Leader's Guide

Parable #5 — Luke 7:41-43 — The Moneylender — Notes to Leader

1. What options did the moneylender have with people who owed him money?

The moneylender could demand payment, possibly in a form other than money such as livestock or valuable objects. He could have the debtor put in prison until the debt was paid by his family or friends. Or he could actually make the debtor his slave. Or, of course, he could forgive the debt, which was actually required in Old Testament law: at the end of every seven years, creditors were to cancel all the debts they were owed by fellow Israelites.

The Bible contains hundreds of verses on how God wants us to treat money, and this includes the lending of it. Moses addressed this issue in Deuteronomy several times. Essentially, the Israelites were not permitted to charge interest when they loaned money to an impoverished brother. Apparently, however, they could charge interest on loans made to other, more affluent Jews and to foreigners. This rule was part of the Mosaic Law: “If you lend money to one of my people among you who is needy, do not be like a moneylender; charge him no interest.” (Exodus 22:25)

Depending upon the amount owed, a moneylender might have quite different responses, which is, of course, true today also. The loan of 500 denarii was a huge amount, equivalent to about two years wages for a day laborer. In first century Galilee, poor people were often heavily indebted to the wealthy.

2. Why do you think the woman came to the Pharisee's house? (a) to upset the Pharisee, (b) to ruin the party, (c) to seek forgiveness, (d) to minister to Jesus, (e) to confront her oppressors, (f) something else.

This question could be difficult to answer, except the short parable in the middle of the story makes it much easier. We can obviously rule out answers a, b, and e but then we have to decide whether she was (c) seeking forgiveness, (d) ministering to Jesus, perhaps in thanks for the forgiveness that she perceives she has already received, or (f) something else. Another hint: forgiveness from God and Jesus is free—you can't buy it. So now, what's the answer?

3. Jesus' parable about the moneylender seems an odd response to the Pharisee who was thinking that it was strange that Jesus allowed a sinful woman to touch him. What was Jesus actually saying to Simon? (a) you can't know grace because you don't think of yourself as a sinner, (b) you are a bigger sinner than the woman but you don't know it, (c) you may have sinned less than the woman, but you still need forgiveness, (d) the more you've sinned, the more your love for God, (e) the more you've been forgiven, the more your love for God.

Stuck into the middle of a story about a dinner and sinful woman, the parable itself is almost trivial: forgiving a large debt means more than forgiving a small one. That's true

today too: if someone forgives you a debt of \$1,000, you're going to feel more loving toward him than a person who forgives you a debt of \$100. But let's go beyond that and see how Jesus extends it.

Look at what Jesus says in Verses 44 to 46. He points out that Simon did not provide water (or a servant) to wash Jesus' feet. He probably didn't provide it to the other guests either. It was a common courtesy in those days or dusty roads, but perhaps not actually that big a deal. You'd then normally greet a guest with a kiss on both cheeks, something still common in much of the Middle East, the Mediterranean, Southern, Central and Eastern Europe, and even ethnic neighborhoods in the U.S. It was definitely rude for Simon to ignore that custom. Anointing a person's head with olive oil was a way to honor a respected guest. Although Simon invited Jesus to dinner (vs 36), he may not have regarded him as the guest of honor. All in all, Simon was definitely rude but not guilty of any major sin. More to the point, in Verse 39 it seems clear that Simon was judging the woman as being a sinner and, in a sense, putting himself above it.

Concluding his remarks in Verse 47, Jesus put the message of the parable in perspective when he says to Simon, "Her sins, which are many, have been forgiven; but he who is forgiven little, loves little." For his rudeness, Simon was in the position of having been forgiven little, but the message that he also loved little must have been sobering to him. In his commentary, John Nolland writes, "... it is possible that the parable was composed to confront the unforgiving Pharisee (vs 39) with the limitless of God's readiness to forgive, now being brought to effective expression in the ministry of Jesus." In the context of the narrative, the woman's lavish actions are the result of her great debt that has been forgiven; in contrast, Simon's stingy actions stem from his failure to realize that he needs to be forgiven.

[In Verse 47, the first sentence ends by saying "...for she loved much," but the NLT has what may be a better interpretation, "...so she has shown me much love." It was not that her great love for Jesus caused him to forgive her but that the forgiveness that she had already received from Jesus prompted her love.]

To Luke's original readers, the parable and the narrative clearly interpreted each other. It would have been very easy for them to identify the sinful woman of the story as the debtor forgiven much in the parable. They would also compare Simon the Pharisee with the debtor forgiven little.

The next step for the original reader would be to see the incredible graciousness, mercy, and forgiveness of God, like the creditor who forgave both debtors. Thus, the theme of the parable is one of *God's forgiveness and grace*.

To apply this parable to our lives, we also must see the incredible forgiveness of God. For some, seeing God's mercy is easy because their past is like that of the sinful woman or the debtor with the large debt. They know their past made them unworthy to be in relationship with God; and yet out of His great love, they have been welcomed into His presence. Out of incredible gratitude and love, they respond lavishly, honoring Jesus in every imaginable way.

However, some of us have "grown up in the church." We paid attention in class. We weren't the bullies in school. We are much more like Simon the Pharisee, who was compared to the debtor with the smaller debt. Like Simon, we too have difficulty seeing that we need forgiveness. Also, like Simon, we perhaps fail to honor Jesus. He is simply

not the number 1 “guest of honor” in our lives.

We struggle to realize that our “little debt” is still beyond our ability to pay, which puts us on equal ground with those that have “big debts.” We stand in need of a Savior, who is willing to forgive, if only we will accept His grace. Then, we can respond to Jesus in love, out of gratitude for what He has done in our lives.

4. Have you even felt like Simon when confronted with a person of questionable morals?
5. Who do you identify with in the parable (moneylender, small debtor, large debtor)?
6. Parables make you peel off layers of meaning, but usually have a basic lesson. What is the fundamental lesson of this parable?

As mentioned above, the basic theme of the parable is one of *God’s forgiveness and grace* and the love for God that should come as a result of this forgiveness.

Parable #6 — Luke 8:16-18 — The Lamp on a Stand

1. In Jesus’ story about the lamp, what does the lamp represent?

Visualize the setting: in dark houses in Galilee, a small clay lamp burned olive oil drawn up by a wick. It was set either in a high wall alcove or on a small high stand. From dusk on, it was the only source of light for the house. Jesus elaborated on this a little by saying that anyone who came into the house would see the light. Notice he did not say that people would see the lamp, but they would see the *light*. If the wick was not lit, the lamp would look like a non-descript small flat pitcher. Nobody would notice it.

2. Each of the three verses of this parable adds to the meaning of the whole. What do each of the lines mean? NO short answers! Elaborate!

Verse 8:16 – “No one lights a lamp and hides it in a jar or puts it under a bed. Instead, he puts it on a stand, so that those who come in can see the light.”

All of us has lamps at home and where we work. We have table lamps, floor lamps, reading lamps, decorative lamps, flood lamps, spot lamps, ceiling lamps, and even closet lamps. But, I doubt if anyone has an “under the bed lamp.” No one turns on a lamp and then hides it under the bed—and this was especially the case in Jesus’ time when all lamps burned with flames.

Lamps are for light. That is what lamps do.

Here, Jesus is talking about his followers—his disciples back then, all Christians now. He is telling us to brightly shine. Let everyone see the light of Jesus Christ through us. Our Christian faith is not some private, secret, hidden thing. It is designed to be open, public, and brilliant.

Sometimes we misunderstand how this works. We think that shining brightly for Jesus requires special training in evangelism, theological education, an outgoing personality

and exceptional spiritual courage. This is not so.

Lamps don't need classes or a formal education to light up. They don't need fancy engineering to do the job. Just hold a match to the wick and light it and it gives off light. The only way to stop a lamp from giving light is to intentionally shut it off or put it in a jar or under a bed. These are not natural or normal things to do. If you don't stop a lamp from burning, it will always give off light.

Christians shine like Jesus. We can't help it. The only way for a Christian to not love like Jesus, talk about Jesus, and be like Jesus is to make a special effort to turn off. We have to hide our faith on purpose.

All a Christian needs to do is let the light of Jesus shine. Let other people see the changes. Let others know how much you trust God. Tell them about the new perspective. They might see that you give away money you would have kept in the past. You are kind when you might have been cruel. You tell the truth when you could have lied. You have a new set of sexual ethics and behavior. You pray and read the Bible. You have a joy that glows even through your darkest days.

What you are doing is "putting your lamp on a stand so that those who come in can see the light."

Verse 8:17 – "For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open."

This sounds a little like a warning or even a threat, but it is not. Jesus is simply stating a fact. There are few secrets. Sooner or later the secrets we thought we could keep are brought out in the open for others to see and know. Most of them are exposed in this life. But if there are any left over, God will expose them for everyone to see at the judgment to come.

This teaching of Jesus has been painfully demonstrated in one political crisis after another; not just in the U.S., but around the world. What was intended to be kept secret became front page news. What's true for presidents, governors, and prime ministers is true for us. There are no permanent secrets.

This is not to say that there should be no privacy. That is not what Jesus is saying. There is a place for privacy and we should all be careful to respect the privacy of others. What Jesus is saying is that Christians should live lives as if we are open books. We should think as if our thoughts can be read. We should speak as if everyone can hear what we say. We should act as if our whole lives were televised to the whole world. Assume full disclosure.

What might this practically mean?

A. Manage your money as if it were public information. There should be no reason why any Christian would be ashamed or embarrassed if his check log or canceled checks were passed around the church service or the office staff meeting for everyone to read.

B. Use your computer the way Jesus would use your computer. No Christian should ever need to worry about another person booting up your computer and clicking your favorite or last 10 Internet web pages visited.

C. There should be no need for secrecy about relationships. Our business dealings, our sexual contacts, our private conversations about other people, and every other relationship could be audited without regrets.

D. No significant discrepancy should appear between who we present ourselves to be and who we actually are. There should be no problem for you to see how I behave in my home or with my friends compared to the way I behave in a church service or in my office.

These are powerful and pointed teachings in Verses 16-17 from Jesus, but they sure raise a lot of serious questions in our minds. What if our lives are nothing like what has been described? What if we have more secrets than the phone book has names? What if we think the best thing we can do for the reputation of Jesus is hide under a bed so that no one will ever think a Christian could do the things we have done? What if our lamps are flickering at best?

Good questions! And here is Jesus' non-nonsense answer in the next verse. Verse 8:18 – “Therefore consider carefully how you listen. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has will be taken from him.”

This verse is not talking about money or possessions. Jesus is talking about the powerful word of God in our lives.

God gives every Christian his word. It is like seeds planted in our souls. If we use what God gives us, he gives us more. If we don't use what God gives us, he doesn't give us any more.

The principle is simple: use it or lose it!

What happens to our muscles if we exercise? We grow stronger and stronger. What happens to our muscles if we don't exercise? We grow weaker and weaker.

What happens to our minds if we keep learning? We get smarter and smarter. If we don't keep learning, we become dumber and dumber.

What happens if we build relationships? We have more and more friends. If we neglect relationships? We have fewer and fewer friends.

What happens if we live by faith? We get more faith. What happens if we don't live by faith? Our faith shrinks.

What happens if we live by God's word? Our lamps brightly shine, our lives can be open books, and we become more and more like Jesus. If we don't live by God's word our lamps are hidden, our lives are secret, and we are less and less like Jesus.

The issue is not how much God has given us so far, it is what we do with what God has given! My question to you is really the question I have for myself—what are you doing with what God has given to you? The question is not so much “What do you have?” The real question is, “what are you doing with it?”

Interestingly Jesus doesn't state this as a promise but as an obvious fact that everyone should know: “Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has will be taken from him.”

3. What sorts of things would God have you bring “out into the open?” (Vs 17)

4. Have you ever tried to hide your Christian identity or beliefs from other people?

Thanks to Leith Anderson on HigherPraise.com for his comments on Luke 8:16-18.