

UNION BAPTIST CHURCH
BIBLE STUDY – CHRISTIANITY 101
TUESDAY, JUNE 10, 2025

Stan Campbell, *Bible to Go: Genesis to Revelation in One Hour*, (New York: Faith Words, 2006)

Jesus's Parables

Although the Sermon on the Mount is clear and simple to understand (if not apply), Jesus also uses parables in His teaching. Jesus' parables are simple stories that carry a weighty religious meaning for those with the faith to understand (Mark 4:10-12; 33-34). Those without spiritual discernment will be unable to understand to the same degree as believers (I Corinthians 2:10-15).

Jesus' parables refer to things that are common in first-century Israel: seeds, fishing nets, sheep, fig trees, and such. The most popular parables seem to pertain to relationships. Two of His parables are the stories of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) and the good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37).

Even in the parable format, it's hard to miss the main points of these stories: a fresh perspective of God as a compassionate, forgiving father, and a higher standard for how we should interact with one another. These two parables emphasize what Jesus says are the greatest commandment of all: to love God wholeheartedly, and to love one's neighbor as oneself (Matthew 22:34-40).

Jesus Verses the Religious Authorities

Reading through the Gospels, we see that sometimes Jesus can be downright confrontational. Many of His teachings are unabashedly bold. Jesus calls His disciples to a deeper commitment to Him – above family and everything else (Luke 9:57-62). Jesus is clear that following Him will require “taking up a cross” (Matthew 10:37-39). He speaks of suffering and death as common expectations (Matthew 10:17-20, 28). And at times Jesus' frank, uncompromising teachings cause many potential followers to walk away (John 6:66).

But perhaps his boldest statements are reserved for the religious leaders who continually oppose Him. If Jesus heals someone on the Sabbath, they overlook the fact that a suffering person is no longer in pain. Rather, they accuse Jesus of “working” on the Sabbath – an infraction of their law (Luke 6:7; Luke 14:3). Time after time they set up situations to try and trap Jesus. But Jesus always sees through their sneakiness and puts them in their place (Mark 12:13; Luke 11:54).

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It has gotten to the point where the law, as interpreted and applied by the religious leaders, seems little more than a long list of rules and regulations. The aspect of developing a relationship with God has been downplayed to the point of nonexistence. One time Jesus even berates (rebuke) the Pharisees with a long series of “woes,” listing their offenses, and calling them “blind guides,” “hypocrites,” “snakes,” and a “brood of vipers” (Matthew 23). Whenever Jesus sees people in authority leading others to sin or twisting God’s truth for their own advantage, He calls them on it. Once He has a young child come forward and says, “If anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea (Matthew 18:1-6).

Some people dwell primarily on the harsh or difficult sayings of Jesus, and they reach inaccurate, perhaps even twisted, opinions about Him. But taken as a whole, Jesus’ teachings are a fascinating body of work, calling his listeners to a more involved life and assuring them that rewards are in store for those who devote themselves to God (Matthew 19:29; Mark 10:29; and Luke 18:29).

By the Grace of God, Next Week’s Focus:

- **Jesus – His Divinity (John 1:18; I John 5:20)**
- **Jesus’ Miracles (John 2:1-11, John 9:1-7; Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 8:43-48, Etc.)**
- **Jesus’ Bold Claims (John 6:35; John 8:12; John 10:11-12; John 14:6-7, 9, Etc.)**

Note: Please read from the above book and identify the chapters, and the verses that fits the passage in the outline in preparation of our Bible Study’s discussion. Your thoughts and feedback help to develop group understanding of the material covered. Please feel free to ask questions, send follow-up emails, and text for further discussion.