

The purpose of this leader's guide is to be a tool for ABF and Life Group leaders to follow the sermon series with their group. Our hope is that this guide will give you a head start for your study and will allow your group to respond to what they've heard and apply it for life.\*

**Why Parables?.** In Definition the word parable comes the Greek word 'parabole,' which means "a placing beside" and therefore is a comparison or an illustration. The gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke contain about 30 of these stories while John's gospel contains no parables but does use figures of speech. A parable is a story taken from real life (or real life situation) from which a moral or spiritual truth is drawn. They are not fables (talking animals/walking trees). They are not allegories where every detail has hidden meaning. They are basically an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.

## **Parable of the Ten Virgins**

### **Read Matthew 25:1-13 - Introduction and observation questions**

#### **Introductory Questions:**

Has there been a time when you anticipated the return of a loved one? If so explain what that was like?

How did the anticipation of a person's return change your everyday life leading up to the return?

#### **Introduction and Context:**

After Jesus warned His disciples about the coming destruction of Jerusalem (Matthew 24), He proceeds to teach them two additional parables. The first is the Parable of the Ten Virgins. Just as God referred to himself as the "husband" of Israel in the OT (Isa. 54:4-6), so Jesus pictures Himself in this parable as a bridegroom. Normally in Jewish culture, the bridegroom with some close friends left his home to go to the bride's home. At the home there were various ceremonies, followed by a procession through the streets – after nightfall – to his home. The ten virgins may be bridesmaids who have been assisting the bride; and they expect to meet the groom as he comes from the bride's house. There has been much debate about all the details of this parable, but we can clearly understand that Jesus is the bridegroom, He is returning at an unknown hour, and He calls those who are waiting to be watchful and be ready for when He arrives.

### **Observation and Questions for Matthew 25:1-13**

#### **Observation of the text:**

The five virgins who have the extra oil represent the truly born again who are looking with eagerness to the coming of Christ. Jesus description of all the virgins falling asleep does not speak to readiness, but more to the surprise element of His return (vv. 5-6). The wise virgins have saving faith and have determined that, whatever occurs, be it lengthy time or adverse circumstances, when Jesus returns, they will be looking with eagerness. They "prove" their saving faith by persevering to the end and being ready no matter the length of the wait. The five virgins without the oil represent false believers who enjoy the benefits of the Christian community without true love for Christ. Their hope is that their 'association' with true believers ("give us some of your oil" of verse 8) will bring them into the kingdom at the end. This, of course, is never the case. One person's faith in Jesus cannot save another. The "Lord, Lord" and "I do not know you" of verses 11 and 12 fit very well with Jesus' condemnation of the false believers of

Matthew 7:21-23. Jesus calls us to be ready. Being ready for Christ's return ultimately involves one major thing which manifests itself in several areas of our lives. If we would be ready for Christ's return, we must be born again through saving faith in Jesus Christ...His death, burial and literal resurrection from the dead (John 3:16; 14:6; Romans 10:9 and 10; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Ephesians 2:1-10). Saving faith in Jesus Christ will manifest itself in every aspect of our lives. The fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22) will begin to show. A true believer will show a greater desire for holiness and a greater awareness and repentance of sin. Those who walk with Jesus will have a growing desire to see their Savior again. One of the best passages articulating what saving faith looks like in a believer's life is found in Titus 2:11-14.

### **Observation Questions:**

1. Describe the events in this parable.
2. What is the main theme or the central point of this parable?
3. How does this parable compare to the following passages:
  - a. 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6.
  - b. 2 Peter 3:10-12.
  - c. Revelation 3:2-3.
4. The five wise virgins could not share their oil with the foolish. Is it possible for us to "share" our "good works of the Spirit" with others? Explain.
5. What was the final warning of Jesus and how does it apply to us today (Matthew 25:13)?

The application for this parable is that spiritual preparation for His return cannot be bought or borrowed. Our relationship with God must be an individual decision to follow Jesus and this decision through the filling of the Holy Spirit will not only show outward evidence, but will also prepare us to meet Jesus, the bridegroom of the church.

### **General Reflection:**

- 1) What does this passage teach us about God?
- 2) What does this passage teach us about mankind?
- 3) What is a command to obey in this passage? What has God revealed in your life that needs changing? What truth can be applied to your life about the gospel?

### **Personal Reflection/Application**

- 4) What keeps people today from being prepared for Christ's return? Busyness, belief, cares of this world.
- 5) How can we help people be prepared for one of the most important days they will ever face?
- 6) If this parable is true, how should it change the way we live? How should it change the way we relate to our neighbor, co-worker, family, etc.?
- 7) What is one thing that you can change that will better prepare you for Jesus' return?

### **Prayer**

Father, keep me from being distracted by busyness, the cares of this world, and a heart of unbelief. Thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Help me to "keep in step" with the Spirit as I

keep watch. Father give me a longing for the return of Christ and keep my eyes focused on the prize that is set before me.

Close by Reading Paul's charge to Timothy and the testimony of his life in 2 Timothy 4:6-8.

\*Resources and quotes used for this study guide: [searchingthescrptures.net](http://searchingthescrptures.net) and the ESV study bible.