

Luke 16 – The Honest But Astute Manager Part 1 – Study Guide

Study Guide: Foundations of Biblical Parables

I. Definitions of Key Words

- **Parable:** Defined by theologian E.W. Bullinger as a "**likeness developed into action**". It comes from the Greek word *parableo*, meaning "**something cast beside**" or a parallel realm where physical scenarios are used to illustrate spiritual counterparts.
- **Figure of Speech:** A literary device used by God to **highlight and emphasize** what is most important in the Word. They function as "**stop signs,**" signaling the reader to pause and take special notice of the communication.
- **Allegory:** A form of speech that **represents or implies that one thing is another**; it is typically more layered and symbolic than a parable.
- **Simile:** The grammatical foundation of a parable; it likens one thing to another but **never claims the two things are identical**.
- **Mystery of the Kingdom:** Spiritual truths regarding the coming earthly kingdom of Jesus Christ that are **revealed through parables** to those granted understanding, but remain hidden from those "outside".

II. Expansion of Key Points

1. The Critical Nature of Figures of Speech

Figures of speech are not mere decorations; they are essential for understanding the Bible. The source suggests that the Bible is virtually a "**closed book**" without a working knowledge of these devices. When God uses a figure of speech, He is sovereignly marking what **He deems important**, rather than what a human teacher or pastor might prioritize.

2. Knowledge Must Lead to Action

A recurring theme in the teaching is that "**the purpose of knowledge is action**". Parables are dynamic illustrations intended to provoke a response. The speaker warns against "basking in knowledge" without applying truths—

specifically mentioning the lack of action regarding the "death to sin"—as a sign of spiritual stagnation.

3. The Dual Purpose: Revealing and Obscuring

According to the Gospels, Jesus did not use parables to make His message simpler for the general public. Instead, parables serve a dual purpose:

- **To Reveal:** They grant "His followers" and "the 12" insight into the **mysteries of the kingdom.**
- **To Obscure:** They ensure that those "outside" may see but **not perceive**, and hear but **not understand.**

4. The Sovereignty of Understanding

Understanding a parable is not a result of natural intelligence or hard study alone. The Teaching emphasizes that understanding must be **"granted"** or **"given"** by God. Those who do not understand often have **"closed their eyes"** due to the **deceitfulness and power of sin**, which makes the heart dull.

5. Principles of Correct Interpretation

To avoid "off-on-a-tangent" interpretations, students must follow specific guidelines:

- **Search for the Main Idea:** Most parables contain **one main truth.** Do not get lost in "ancillary comments" or try to assign symbolic meaning to every minor detail.
- **Avoid Literalism:** Interpreting figurative language literally leads to **confusion and misinterpretation.**
- **Identify the "New" Revelation:** All parables reveal something new regarding the **coming earthly kingdom of Jesus Christ.**

III. Study Questions

- **Recall:** What is the specific definition of a "parable" provided by E.W. Bullinger?
- **Analysis:** Why does the speaker refer to figures of speech as "stop signs" on a road?
- **Theological Inquiry:** Based on Matthew 13, why does Jesus speak in parables to the crowds but explain them privately to His disciples?

- **Application:** The speaker quotes Aristotle saying, "The purpose of knowledge is action." How does this apply to the study of the "parable of the soils"?
- **Comparative Study:** What is the primary difference between a parable and an allegory as described in the text?
- **Contextual Analysis:** Why is the "parable of the soils" (Mark 4) considered the most important parable to understand correctly?
- **Observation:** According to the source, what is the primary reason people "close their eyes" to the truths of the gospel?

IV. Answer Key

- A parable is **"a likeness developed into action"**.
- They are "stop signs" because they signal the reader to **stop and take account/special notice** of what is being communicated, marking it as something God considers critically important.
- He speaks in parables so that the mysteries of the kingdom are **granted to His followers** but **hidden from those outside**, fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah that they would hear but not understand.
- It is not enough to know there are four types of soil; the "action" is the actual **casting of the seed** (sharing the Word).
- A parable is grounded in **simile** and never claims the two things compared are the same; an allegory represents or **implies that one thing is another**.
- Because the Lord warned that if you get that parable wrong, **everything else (every other parable) will also be wrong**.
- The **deceitfulness and power of sin** makes people want to remain blind and deaf to the truth.

V. Biblical References in the Sources

- **Luke 16:** The Dishonest but Astute Manager (The primary subject of the series).
- **Matthew 13:** Regarding the purpose of parables and the "granting" of understanding.
- **Mark 4:** The context of Jesus speaking to His followers alone about the

parables.

- **Luke 8:** The disciples questioning the meaning of parables and the granting of the mysteries of the kingdom.
- **Galatians 4:24:** Explicitly identified as an allegory in scripture.
- **Isaiah (Prophecy of):** Regarding people having dull hearts and closed eyes.
- **Colossians:** Mentioned as a book requiring foundational truths before "diving in".

VI. Exhortations

- **Act on what you know:** Do not pursue "more knowledge" as a distraction from the truths you have already been given. If you know the gospel, focus on your "**death to sin**" and walking righteously.
- **Be Discernment-Minded:** Always look for what **God deems important** in a text, not what a human teacher wants to fit into a sermon.
- **Maintain Humility:** Recognize that any spiritual insight you possess has been **granted to you by God's sovereignty**, not your own intellect. You cannot take credit for seeing what others do not.
- **Expect Rejection:** Understand that the message of the kingdom and death to sin will **never be a popular message** because of the power of sin in the world. Be "comfortable with rejection" as you cast the seed.