

THE HEALING ACADEMY

THE PARABLES OF JESUS

TEACHER & LEADER EDITION

WHAT IS A PARABLE?

Answer Key • Exegetical Notes • Teaching Guidance

TEACHER PURPOSE

Equip the teacher to guide beginning students beyond familiarity with parables toward disciplined observation, contextual interpretation, and faithful application.

This companion is designed to be used alongside the Student Edition. It provides model answers, expanded notes, teaching cautions, and suggested ways to explain difficult ideas without overwhelming beginning students.

Do not read the answer key to students before they work with the text. Let them observe first. The purpose of the Teacher / Leader Edition is not to replace discovery, but to help you guide it responsibly.

SECTION OUTCOME

- Students should be able to give a workable definition of a parable.
- Students should understand that parables reveal Kingdom truth and also expose the hearer's response to truth.
- Students should learn to identify the central message before assigning meaning to individual details.
- Students should distinguish exegesis from eisegesis in plain language.
- Students should accept Scripture's own explanation as controlling when Jesus interprets a parable directly.

TEACHER REMINDER

Model humility. If a familiar interpretation cannot be demonstrated from the text, say so. The class should learn that revising an interpretation in light of Scripture is evidence of maturity, not failure.

PREPARE TO TEACH

Primary Texts

Matthew 13:1-3, 10-17; Matthew 13:36-43. Keep the KJV visible as the controlling classroom text. If another translation is used for clarity, identify it and return to the KJV wording for interpretation.

Key Terms

PARABLE - PARABOLĒ

A comparison, story, or picture placed alongside a spiritual reality. For beginners, emphasize comparison and Kingdom truth rather than technical lexical detail.

EXEGESIS / EISEGESIS

Exegesis draws meaning from the text. Eisegesis reads a preferred idea into the text. The goal is to make this distinction practical, not merely academic.

Suggested Teaching Movement

- Begin with familiar parables students already know and ask what they think makes a parable a parable.
- Move to Matthew 13 and let students discover that Jesus' use of parables involves both revelation and response.
- Introduce the central-message-first rule before discussing symbols.
- Use Jesus' explanation of the Wheat and the Tares to demonstrate why Scripture must govern symbolism.
- Close by teaching exegesis and eisegesis as habits of reading, not merely vocabulary words.

TIMING GUIDE

This section can be taught in approximately 60-75 minutes when students complete the exercises in class. For a shorter setting, assign Matthew 13:1-17 as pre-reading and preserve the Wheat and Tares exercise for class discussion.

ANSWER KEY: MATTHEW 13

Student Questions 1-5

1. Where was Jesus when He began teaching?

Suggested answer: He went out of the house and sat by the seaside. Because the crowd became very large, He entered a ship and sat while the people stood on the shore.

Teaching emphasis: Do not overcomplicate the geography. The point is to train students to notice setting before interpretation.

2. Who gathered to hear Him?

Suggested answer: Great multitudes gathered unto Him.

Teaching emphasis: Help students see that the public audience is broader than the disciples who later ask Jesus privately about His method of teaching.

3. According to verse 3, how did Jesus teach many things to the people?

Suggested answer: He spoke many things unto them in parables.

Teaching emphasis: This is the textual observation that introduces the literary form before students begin defining it.

4. What question did the disciples ask Jesus in verse 10?

Suggested answer: “Why speakest thou unto them in parables?”

Teaching emphasis: The disciples themselves recognized that Jesus’ use of parables required explanation. Their question gives us permission to ask what function parables serve.

5. What differences do you notice between those who receive Jesus’ teaching and those who do not?

Suggested answer: The disciples are described as being given knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom, while others hear and see without truly understanding or perceiving. Verses 13-15 describe a resistant condition in which the heart has become dull and the people do not receive what is before them.

Teaching emphasis: Avoid implying that Jesus withholds truth arbitrarily from sincere seekers. In Matthew’s context, the issue includes response, receptivity, and growing resistance to Jesus.

TEACHER NOTE: WHY PARABLES?

A common beginner-level explanation says that Jesus used parables because stories make difficult spiritual ideas easy to understand. That can be true at times, but Matthew 13 will not allow us to stop there.

Jesus' explanation shows that parables function within a divided response to His Kingdom proclamation. They reveal to receptive disciples while also leaving resistant hearers without the understanding they assume they possess. The parable therefore does more than simplify information; it confronts the hearer.

DO NOT OVERSTATE

Do not teach that parables were designed only to hide truth. Neither should you teach that they were merely simple illustrations. Hold both functions together: revelation and judgment, illumination and exposure, depending on the hearer's response.

How to Explain This to Beginners

You might say: "The same sunlight that softens wax can harden clay. The issue is not that the light changed, but that the materials responded differently. In a similar way, the teaching of Jesus reveals truth while also exposing what is happening in the heart of the hearer."

Use the illustration only as an aid. Do not make the illustration carry more authority than Matthew 13 itself.

Discussion Prompt

Ask the class: "What attitudes make a person teachable before Scripture? What attitudes make a person resistant even when the text is clear?" Allow practical answers, then return to the biblical emphasis on hearing, understanding, and responding.

ANSWER KEY: JESUS INTERPRETS THE PARABLE

Matthew 13:36-43 - Wheat and Tares

ELEMENT IN THE PARABLE	JESUS' EXPLANATION
The one who sows the good seed	The Son of man
The field	The world
The good seed	The children of the kingdom
The tares	The children of the wicked one
The enemy	The devil
The harvest	The end of the world / age
The reapers	The angels

6. Why can we be especially confident about the meaning of these particular elements?

Suggested answer: Because Jesus explains them directly in the passage. We are not dependent on speculation or later symbolic invention.

Teaching emphasis: This is a foundational interpretive habit: the inspired explanation supplied in the text carries decisive weight.

7. Which interpretation should govern your understanding if someone says the field is the church, while Jesus says the field is the world?

Suggested answer: Jesus' explanation must govern: "the field is the world" (Matthew 13:38).

Teaching emphasis: Use this question to establish interpretive submission. A familiar sermon tradition cannot overrule an explicit statement in the text.

TEACHING CAUTION

Do not use this example to dismiss church discipline or other passages about correction in the church. The point is narrower: in this parable, Jesus explicitly identifies the field as the world. Interpret this passage according to His explanation.

THE CENTRAL MESSAGE AND THE DETAILS

Beginning students often swing between two extremes. Some want every detail to carry a hidden spiritual meaning. Others react so strongly against allegorizing that they assume no individual detail can ever carry symbolic meaning. Scripture requires a more disciplined approach.

RULE TO REINFORCE

Identify the central truth first. Give details additional significance only when Jesus' explanation, the literary context, or strong biblical evidence supports doing so.

Three Questions for Symbolic Details

- Does Jesus or the biblical writer explicitly identify what the detail represents?
- Does the surrounding literary context strongly connect the detail to a particular meaning?
- Can the proposed symbolism be supported without requiring imagination to do the heavy lifting?

Teacher Example: The Good Samaritan

If a teacher says, “The oil is the Holy Spirit, the inn is the church, and the donkey is ministry,” students should learn to ask whether Luke 10 actually identifies those meanings. Those ideas may function as later devotional or homiletical applications, but they should not automatically be presented as the original meaning of Jesus' parable.

This distinction is especially important for this course because some traditional preaching approaches to parables are rich in spiritual imagination. We do not need to mock those traditions. We simply teach students to label categories honestly: exegesis, theological reflection, typology, illustration, or application.

TEACHER LANGUAGE

A helpful phrase is: “That may be a meaningful preaching connection, but it is not something we can prove Jesus intended from this text.” This protects both pastoral sensitivity and interpretive integrity.

ANSWER KEY: EXEGESIS AND EISEGESIS

Student Questions 8-11

8. In your own words, what is a parable?

Suggested answer: A suitable answer should identify a recognizable story, comparison, or picture used to communicate spiritual or Kingdom truth through comparison. Student wording does not need to match the study definition exactly.

Teaching emphasis: Reward accurate understanding, not memorization alone.

9. Before interpreting individual details, what should you identify first?

Suggested answer: The central message or central truth of the parable.

Teaching emphasis: The central message provides the frame that keeps individual details from becoming disconnected symbolic inventions.

10. What is the difference between exegesis and eisegesis?

Suggested answer: Exegesis draws meaning from the biblical text in its context. Eisegesis reads an idea into the text that the passage does not adequately support.

Teaching emphasis: Ask students to give an example. If they can explain the difference in ordinary language, the concept is taking root.

11. Why should Jesus' own explanation of a parable take priority over a symbolic interpretation proposed by someone else?

Suggested answer: Because Jesus' explanation is part of the inspired biblical text and directly identifies the meaning of the imagery. Our interpretations must submit to what Scripture states clearly.

Teaching emphasis: This answer becomes a governing principle for the rest of the course.

A Simple Classroom Illustration

EXEGESIS

You read a letter and ask, "What is the writer actually saying, and how do the surrounding sentences help me understand it?"

EISEGESIS

You decide what you want the letter to say and then select phrases that can be made to support your preferred conclusion.

DO NOT SHAME BEGINNERS

Students may discover that something they have believed about a parable came from eisegesis. Correct the method without embarrassing the person. The goal is formation, not winning an argument.

ANTICIPATE STUDENT QUESTIONS

“Does this mean pastors should never use creative applications?”

No. Application, illustration, typology, and pastoral reflection can be valuable. The issue is labeling. A teacher should not present a creative application as though it were the historical meaning of the text unless the passage supports that claim.

“Can a parable have more than one lesson?”

A parable normally has a central thrust, but that central message can include subordinate truths that arise naturally from the story and its context. The safest approach is to identify the main message first, then evaluate supporting observations in relation to that message.

“Why do different teachers interpret parables differently?”

Differences can arise from theology, assumptions, cultural background, translation choices, historical claims, or the degree to which a teacher allows context to control interpretation. Teach students to evaluate interpretations by evidence rather than personality, popularity, or emotional impact.

“What if I cannot determine what a detail means?”

Do not force an answer. It is better to say, “The text does not tell us enough to assign a specific symbolic meaning here,” than to create certainty the passage does not provide.

PASTORAL POSTURE

Confidence and humility belong together. Teach clearly where the text is clear. Speak cautiously where the evidence is limited. Students should learn that saying “we cannot prove that from this passage” is a mark of honesty, not weakness.

TEACHING PLAN AT A GLANCE

TIME	MOVEMENT	TEACHER EMPHASIS
5-10 min	Opening / definition	Draw out what students already think a parable is.
15 min	Matthew 13:1-17	Let students observe before you explain revelation and resistance.
10 min	Central-message rule	Clarify the danger of forcing symbolism.
15 min	Wheat and Tares exercise	Let Jesus' own explanation establish the interpretive standard.
10 min	Exegesis / eisegesis	Use plain language and examples.
5-10 min	Review / discussion	Ask students to state the governing principles in their own words.

Closing Charge to the Class

End the section by reminding students that careful interpretation is an act of discipleship. We study responsibly because we want to hear Christ accurately, not merely because we want to become better at Bible trivia.

BRIDGE TO SECTION TWO

Now that students understand what a parable is and how to resist uncontrolled symbolism, the next step is to teach them how audience, occasion, literary setting, and historical world govern interpretation.