



# Christianity Illustrated

---

Storying the Parables of Jesus



**Eastside Community Church**  
**2010 Catalpa Loop Road**  
**Richmond, Kentucky 40475**  
**859.624.9646**  
**[www.eastside-cc.com](http://www.eastside-cc.com)**

---

## Small Group Training: How do I Prepare for a Story?

1. **Pray** that the Holy Spirit would illuminate His truth in your understanding of the Scriptural passage.
2. **Read *three* translations** of the story. Two readings of each translation are recommended. Below is a suggested list of translations:
  - a. English Standard Version (ESV)
  - b. New King James Version (NKJV)
  - c. New American Standard Bible (NASB)
  - d. New Living Translation (NLT)
  - e. New International Version (NIV 1984)
3. **Mirror Time:** Tell the story aloud as if you were telling your small group.
4. **Take notes of each main point** you make.
5. **Review** your notes against the ESV translation and make adjustments in your notes.
6. **Be prepared** to tell the story without looking at your Bible or notes. If possible, tell the story to others.
7. **Initially avoid use of commentaries.** It is important to allow the Holy Spirit to reveal God's truth before you look at other resources.
8. **For Parents of School-Age Children:** You can discuss the Family Devotion questions with your child as you go through your day. Bath time, car time, and dinner time are all great times of the day that you can talk to your children about these parables.

---

**Week 1**

**God's Story: Overcoming Growth Barriers**

*Matthew 13:1-10, 18-23*

**Transition:**

Here is the story from God's Word...*the Parable of the Sower*.

**Pre-Story Question**

When have you recently wrestled with unbelief?

**Chronological Questions**

1. Why would a farmer allow precious seed to land on the path, or rocks, or among thorns? Is he an irresponsible farmer scattering seeds at random?
2. What happened to each group of seeds?
3. How much of the parable did the people understand? How much did the disciples understand? (13:9-10) Why didn't the people or the disciples understand this parable?
4. Did Jesus design his parables to have trick meanings, hidden meanings, or more than one basic interpretation? Why do some listeners discover the truth in a parable and others do not?
5. Why do you suppose that this was among the first parables that Jesus told?
6. What kind of people today might be represented by the seed that fell on the path? (13:19) Why couldn't those who received the word with joy stay faithful? (13:20-21) What choked those who were represented by the seed that fell among the thorns?
7. What kind of soil do you most resemble right now? What worries or temptations have hindered your growth as a Christian recently?

**4Q's**

1. What do we learn about God in this story?
2. What do we learn about man in this story?

3. What new thing did you discover in this story?
4. What should I do differently because of this story?

### Questions for Family Devotions

1. What is this parable teaching us?
2. What kinds of ground did the farmer plant the seeds on?
3. Where did Jesus teach the parable in our story today?
4. Why did Jesus speak to the people in parables?
5. Who asked Jesus to explain the parable?
6. What did Jesus say the Seed was?
7. Explain the different kinds of ground that the seed landed on: rocky ground, thorny ground and good ground.
8. Which soil does God want you to be like?

### Prayer Requests / Praise Reports

---

---

---

---



Who should be sitting in yours?

---

---

---

---

Week 2

**God's Story: Facing Reality**

*Luke 16:1-9*

**Transition:**

Here is the story from God's Word...the *Parable of the Dishonest Manager*

**Pre-Story Question**

Have you ever rationalized a dishonest behavior?

**Chronological Questions**

1. Who is the audience for this parable? (Luke 15:1-2, 16:1)
2. Who did the Rich Man's creditors think was being generous to them? Why would the shrewd manager gain from lowering the bills of his master's creditors?
3. After the manager lowered the bills, what choices did the master have?
4. What does "shrewd" mean? Is it bad to be shrewd?
5. Is Jesus commending dishonesty? (16:8)
6. What is Jesus saying about (or to) "the children of the light?" (16:8, Matt 10:16)
7. Why is it so difficult to keep a proper perspective on money? Is there some way that God wants you to change the way you handle your resources? What resources do you have that you can use to help people in need?

**4Q's**

1. What do we learn about God in this story?
2. What do we learn about man in this story?

3. What new thing did you discover in this story?
4. What should I do differently because of this story?

### Questions for Family Devotions

1. What is this parable teaching us?
2. Who does the rich man represent and who the manager?
3. How many masters are there in the parable?
4. What master was the manager serving?
5. What masters must Christians chose between?
6. Give your children an example of something or someone that has been a master in your life instead of Christ.

### Prayer Requests / Praise Reports

---

---

---

---



Who should be sitting in yours?

---

---

---

---

Week 3

**God's Story: Overcoming Resentment**

*Matthew 20:1-16*

**Transition:**

Here is the story from God's Word...the *Parable of Laborers in the Vineyard*

**Pre-Story Question**

What would happen if God gave each of us what we deserve?

**Chronological Questions**

1. What do you think of deathbed or death-row conversions to faith in Jesus?
2. What wage was agreed upon by the landowner and workers early in the morning? (Vs 20:2) What wage was agreed upon by those hired later? (Vs 20:4)
3. What explanation did the last group of workers give when asked why they were standing around doing nothing? What else might they have been doing? How do you see this as applying to you or others today?
4. What did the landowner tell the foreman to do at the end of the day? (Vs 20:8)
5. Was anyone underpaid or cheated? Why then did the workers complain? Was anyone overpaid?
6. With which group of workers do you personally identify—with those hired at 9:00 a.m., at noon, at 3:00 p.m., or those hired at 5:00 p.m.?
7. How does it make you feel to know that heaven will include murderers, child molesters, swindlers, and crooked politicians that put their trust in Christ only minutes before their death?

**4Q's**

1. What do we learn about God in this story?
2. What do we learn about man in this story?



3. What new thing did you discover in this story?
4. What should I do differently because of this story?

### Questions for Family Devotions

1. What is this parable teaching us?
2. How is a person saved? (by faith)
3. What two questions did Jesus answer before He told the parable of the laborers? (Who can be saved? What will be our reward?)
4. What is a parable? (a story that Jesus told to help disciples understand God's ways)
5. What time did the landowner hire his first group of workers? (6 a.m.)
6. What did he agree to pay them? (a denarius)
7. What other times did the landowner hire workers? (9 a.m. noon, 3 p.m. and 5 p.m.)

### Prayer Requests / Praise Reports

---

---

---

---



Who should be sitting in yours?

---

---

---



---

**Week 4**

**God's Story: Defeating Spiritual Complacency**

*Matthew 25:1-13*

**Transition:**

Here is the story from God's Word...the *Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids*

**Pre-Story Question**

When was a time you were late to an important event? Why were you delayed? Could you have avoided being late? How?

**Chronological Questions**

1. Why were some of the bridesmaids described as foolish? What made the others wise?
2. What did the foolish bridesmaids ask of the others? How did the wise ones respond when asked to help the ones who had not prepared? Was this fair?
3. In what ways do you tend to count on more mature Christians or ride on their coattails?
4. How did the bridegroom respond when some of the bridesmaids want to come to the wedding late? (Matthew 25:12)
5. What responsibility does each Christian while waiting? (Matthew 25:13, Hebrews 10:23-25, 13:1-5, James 1:22-25, 4:7-10)
6. Why do we tend to think and act like we have all the time in the world before Christ's return?
7. What are the possible consequences of putting off thinking about Christ and spiritual growth until later? Why is continual preparation for Christ's return better than "last minute cramming?"

**4Q's**

1. What do we learn about God in this story?
2. What do we learn about man in this story?

3. What new thing did you discover in this story?
4. What should I do differently because of this story?

### Questions for Family Devotions

1. What is this parable teaching us? (Jesus is teaching us the urgent need for us to always be prepared for His second coming)
2. Who does the Bridegroom represent? (Jesus Christ)
3. Who do the girls represent? (the church; some have a relationship with Christ and some do not)
4. Do you think the five wise brides were selfish when they didn't share their oil?
5. Have you in the past (or present) tried to live off the oil of someone else's faith? If so, who? (parents, friends, church)
6. What two key points did Jesus want the listeners to know about His future return?
7. How does it make you feel that not everyone will enter Heaven?

### Prayer Requests / Praise Reports

---

---

---

---



Who should be sitting in yours?

---

---

---

---

Week 5

**God's Story: The World's Most Passionate Evangelist**

*Luke 14:15 – 25*

**Transition:**

Here is the story from God's Word...the *Parable of the Great Banquet*

**Pre-Story Question**

How do you feel when you plan a big event and it is poorly attended? What kind of excuses do you most resent others using?

**Chronological Questions**

1. In Jesus' days, it was customary to send two invitations to a party—the first to announce it and the second to tell the guests that everything was ready. How does this aid in your understanding of the parable?
2. How does the parable of this party (banquet) fit into Israel's history?
3. How did the character of the banquet change given the new guest list?
4. There are many people in this parable: the master, his servant, those invited the first time, the crippled and blind, others on country roads. Who do you identify with and why?
5. What does this parable tell us is the main thing we should fear with respect to attending the banquet, i.e., entering heaven?

**4Q's**

1. What do we learn about God in this story?
2. What do we learn about man in this story?
3. What new thing did you discover in this story?
4. What should I do differently because of this story?

**Questions for Family Devotions**

1. What is this parable teaching us?
2. What is your favorite excuse to use when trying to get out of something?
3. Why did the invited guest refuse to come?
4. Who were invited instead? (poor, crippled, blind and lame)
5. What things in our family keep us from spending quality time with God?
6. How would you feel if your friends decided at the last minute to not come to your party that you had planned?

**Prayer Requests / Praise Reports**

---

---

---

---



Who should be sitting in yours?

---

---

---

---

**Week 6**

**God's Story: Heart-Healing Forgiveness**

*Luke 7:36-50*

**Transition:**

Here is the story from God's Word...the *Parable of a Sinful Woman Forgiven*

**Pre-Story Question**

What does it mean to be forgiven?

**Chronological Questions**

1. What is the condition of the Pharisees heart as revealed in this passage?
2. How is the sinful woman different from the Pharisee?
3. What point is Jesus trying to make for his dinner host?
4. How did the hospitality of the Pharisee reveal his heart?
5. What is the response of those who understand forgiveness?
6. What should our response be to Christ's forgiveness? Where do we hold back?
7. Who have we withheld the gospel from because of their sin?
8. In light of God's grace in our lives, what would joining his mission look like for us?

**4Q's**

1. What do we learn about God in this story?
2. What do we learn about man in this story?
3. What new thing did you discover in this story?
4. What should I do differently because of this story?

---

### Questions for Family Devotions

1. What is this parable teaching us?
2. Who is the most affectionate person in your family?
3. Why do you think the woman came to the Pharisee's home? (to ruin the party, to upset the Pharisee, to seek forgiveness)
4. How would you have felt watching the woman anoint Jesus?
5. Who can you identify with in this story? Why? (Woman, Pharisee or Jesus)
6. What is the hardest thing about dealing with sin? (Admitting sin, receiving forgiveness, feeling guilty)
7. What do you need to do to receive forgiveness? (This may be a great place to talk about the plan of salvation with your child.)
8. Sometimes our friends can do things to hurt our feelings; is there something you need to forgive your friends for? (Talking about hurts can help a child learn to forgive others.)

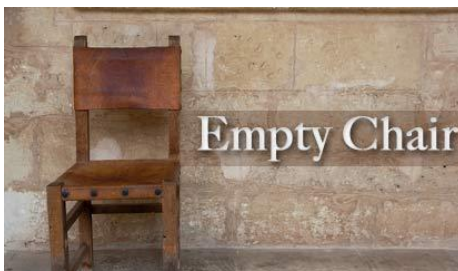
### Prayer Requests / Praise Reports

---

---

---

---



Who should be sitting in yours?

---

---

---

---

Week 7

**God's Story: A Reward Worth Living For**

*Matthew 25:14-30*

**Transition:**

Here is the story from God's Word...the *Parable of the Talents*

**Pre-Story Question**

What are your five best traits or greatest attributes? Where are you able to invest your talents (money and abilities)? What people can benefit most from the talents you have?

**Chronological Questions**

1. In Verse 25:14, the word "it" refers to the kingdom of heaven. To what did Jesus liken it in this parable?
2. On what basis did the master decide to give different amounts of money to each of the three servants? What was a talent worth? How did the word "talent" come to mean an ability, skill, or aptitude?
3. There are four important elements in this parable: time, money, work, and profit. That seems pretty worldly. What can we say about each element?
4. The master says three things to reward each of the first two servants. They are:
5. What is the main characteristic of the third servant that differentiates him from the first two?
6. What was the third servant's excuse for not investing his talent? How did the master respond to his explanation? (25:24-28)
7. What was the ultimate outcome of the third servant?
8. God rejoices in his servants making a profit. What does a *profit* mean to God?
9. Is it important to God how much talent you have? (2 Corinthians 8:10-12)



**4Q's**

1. What do we learn about God in this story?
2. What do we learn about man in this story?
3. What new thing did you discover in this story?
4. What should I do differently because of this story?

**Questions for Family Devotions**

1. What is your favorite subject or activity in school?
2. Do you like to save money or spend money?
3. What did each of the servants do with their money?
4. Which of the three servants in this parable can you relate to?

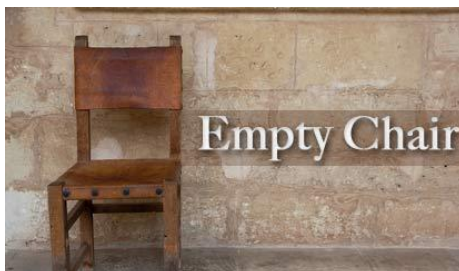
**Prayer Requests / Praise Reports**

---

---

---

---



Who should be sitting in yours?

---

---

---

---

Week 8

**God's Story: What Makes Prayer Powerful**

*Luke 11:5-13*

**Transition:**

Here is the story from God's Word...*The Lord's Prayer*

**Pre-Story Question**

Do you feel confident when you pray?

**Chronological Questions**

1. In the analogies that Jesus gives, what is similar about the request being made?
2. What does the image of the loaves teach us about persistence in prayer?
3. How does Jesus portray the Father in his response to our prayers?
4. How does the Father's inclination differ from the sleeping friend?
5. What do these differences teach us about God's willingness to respond to our prayers?
6. In what ways has the Holy Spirit been the greatest gift from God in your life?
7. Recall a time when God answered a prayer and share it with the group.
8. Why does Jesus want us to be persistent in prayer.
9. What do these verses reveal about God's nature? Is this consistent with your view of Him?
10. What are we praying for today?
11. How are those things aligned with the purposes of God?
12. Pray for Jesus to continue to teach us how to pray.

**4Q's**

1. What do we learn about God in this story?
2. What do we learn about man in this story?
3. What new thing did you discover in this story?
4. What should I do differently because of this story?

**Questions for Family Devotions**

1. Ask your children what they are praying for right now?
2. Do you sometimes pray and God doesn't do what you want Him to?
3. Recite the Lord's Prayer with your child.
4. Encourage your child to continue to pray and ask God for what they need.
5. Make everyone's prayer request visible. Use a dry erase board in your home to write prayer request on. Take time to pray together as a family.

**Prayer Requests / Praise Reports**

---

---

---

---



Who should be sitting in yours?

---

---

---

---

**Week 9**

**God's Story: The Gamble to Compassion**

*Luke 10:25-37*

**Transition:**

Here is the story from God's Word...the *Parable of the Good Samaritan*

**Pre-Story Question**

What neighbors does God want us to serve that we walked past?

**Chronological Questions**

1. What was the intention of the Lawyer who was questioning Jesus? Why is the lawyer hung up on the definition of neighbor?
2. What is the significance of the Samaritan responding with mercy in contrast to the priest and Levite?
3. What lengths did the Samaritan go to help the man in need?
4. How would this parable have challenged the worldview of the lawyer?
5. How do you justify ignoring the practical and spiritual needs of people in your life?
6. Who do we see loving people in the ways that Jesus calls us?
7. How can we go and do likewise as a community group?
8. Pray for opportunities to serve others in our neighborhood and eyes to see them.
9. Pray that Jesus would be made much of because of our presence in this neighborhood.

**4Q's**

1. What do we learn about God in this story?
2. What do we learn about man in this story?
3. What new thing did you discover in this story?

4. What should I do differently because of this story?

### Questions for Family Devotions

1. What is this parable teaching us?
2. How can you show love to people in your lives?
3. Have you ever done something kind for a friend?
4. Have you ever shared something with someone who needed it more than you?
5. When you do kind things, who deserves the praise for your kindness? (God, not me)
6. *Agree or Disagree:* Tell the children that you are going to read some statements that might be ways to love your neighbor. Ask them to stand if they agree. If they disagree they should sit down with arms crossed. Relate each example back to the idea of loving your neighbor.
  - a. We should be extra nice to kids at school who have trouble making friends.
  - b. We should obey our parents right away.

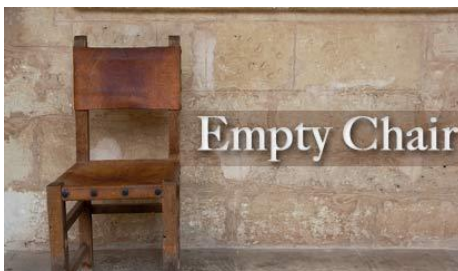
### Prayer Requests / Praise Reports

---

---

---

---



Who should be sitting in yours?

---

---

---

---

**Week 10**

**God's Story: Love for the Rebellious Heart**

*Luke 15:11-24*

**Transition:**

Here is the story from God's Word... the *Parable of the Prodigal Son (Part 1)*

**Pre-Story Question**

When have you felt most like a rebel in your life?

**Chronological Questions**

1. What is the sin of the younger son?
2. What is the sin of the older son?
3. What attributes of God are revealed in the father? (Any surprises?)
4. Why do you think the older son had such a hard time rejoicing for his brother?
5. How would the audience from verses 15:1-2 have taken this parable?
6. How do you relate to the younger son?
7. How do you relate to the older son?
8. How have you experienced the joyful embrace of the Father?
9. Who is God calling you to forgive or experience joy for the grace they received?

**4Q's**

1. What do we learn about God in this story?
2. What do we learn about man in this story?
3. What new thing did you discover in this story?

4. What should I do differently because of this story?

### Questions for Family Devotions

1. What does *prodigal* mean? (To be wayward and wasteful.)
2. What did the prodigal son do with his inheritance? ([Luke 15:12-13.](#)) Why do you think some people decide to live this way?
3. How do you think the father felt while his son was gone? How would you feel if someone in your [family](#) acted like the prodigal son? (Be sensitive to children who might have family members who are not keeping the commandments.)
4. What did the prodigal son do to get food when his money ran out? ([Luke 15:14-16.](#))

### Prayer Requests / Praise Reports

---

---

---

---



Who should be sitting in yours?

---

---

---



---

**Week 11**

**God's Story: Love For the Bitter Heart**

*Luke 15:25-32*

**Transition:**

Here is the story from God's Word...the *Parable of the Prodigal Son (Part 2)*

**Pre-Story Question**

Have you ever been in a situation when you felt like you were not wanted?

**Chronological Questions**

1. What did the younger son ask of his father?
2. How do you explain the son's life change?
3. In returning home, what did he fear? Did the father confirm those fears? Explain.
4. What was the older brother's reaction to the return of his brother?
5. How does the father explain his actions?

**4Q's**

1. What do we learn about God in this story?
2. What do we learn about man in this story?
3. What new thing did you discover in this story?
4. What should I do differently because of this story?

**Questions for Family Devotions**

1. Why do you think the son decided to return to his father? ([Luke 15:17-19.](#)) What kind of master was his father? ([Luke 15:17.](#))

2. How did the father feel when his son came home? ([Luke 15:20.](#)) What did he do for his son? ([Luke 15:22-24.](#))
3. How did the older son feel when he learned that his younger brother was home? ([Luke 15:28-30.](#)) Why is it important to continue to love family members who disobey the commandments?
4. What did the father promise the older brother? ([Luke 15:31.](#)) What example did the father set of how to treat those who have sinned but have repented? ([Luke 15:32.](#)) How do you feel when you see someone repent and turn from wrong to right? How should we treat people who have not kept the commandments but who are sincerely sorry?

### Prayer Requests / Praise Reports

---

---

---

---



Who should be sitting in yours?

---

---

---

---

## Week 12

### Story: Spiritual Sincerity

*Matthew 21:28-32*

#### Transition:

Here is the story from God's Word...the *Parable of the Two Sons*

#### Pre-Story Question

Why do we so often drag our feet in doing what God wants?

#### Chronological Questions

1. What is the best illustration—positive or negative—that you've ever seen of the old saying, "*actions speak louder than words*"?
2. Who are the people in the parable? Who did they represent when Jesus told it? Who do they represent today?
3. Was the behavior of either son commendable?
4. Why doesn't religious knowledge or information guarantee that we will do what God wants us to?
5. When, if ever, is it too late to do the right thing? What does it mean to repent? Is it ever too late to repent?

#### 4Q's

1. What do we learn about God in this story?
2. What do we learn about man in this story?
3. What new thing did you discover in this story?
4. What should I do differently because of this story?

### Questions for Family Devotions

1. Share with your children of times your parents had to get onto you for not doing what you were told.
2. What does the father ask his sons to do?
3. What does each son say and do? Why?
4. Which son is most like you?

### Prayer Requests / Praise Reports

---

---

---

---



Who should be sitting in yours?

---

---

---