

The Stories of Jesus- Week 4

God Time – The Parable of the Ten Virgins

These scriptures are selected to help you gain a deeper understanding of who Jesus is. They are intentionally designed for you to engage in your time alone with God. You will find them complementary to the teachings on the weekend (gatherings) and to the LIFE Group materials.

Some tips:

Use a Bible that is easy to read. The ESV or The NLT are both good translations.

Use a prayer journal. After you read the passages jot down what “jumped out” at you while

There are only five days of reading provided so if you miss a day you have time to catch up. Do not get legalistic! If you miss a day or even a week...God still loves you!

Monday: John 6:35-37

Tuesday: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-2

Wednesday: 1 Corinthians 4:3-5

Thursday: Acts 1:7-9

Friday: Revelation 3:20-22

Diving Deeper

The Stories of Jesus - he Parable of the Ten Virgins
Read Matthew 25:1-13.

Have you heard of weddings that have gone awry? The groom shows up late or doesn't make it at all? The bride is swept away by someone else, leaving

the despondent groom standing helplessly confused at the altar. The wedding cake slips off the table. The musicians are late. You could go on and on, but the bottom line is that weddings don't always go as expected. And we find that to be the case in Jesus' story of the Ten Virgins. This parable is used by Jesus to tell a certain truth about his Second Coming. When you look at the passages of this parable, I direct your attention to what is considered to be the one phrase that should immediately catch your attention. "And the door was shut." There is a sense of finality to those words. It means the door is shut and locked and will never be opened again. Those on the inside are safely inside; and those on the outside could never get in no matter how hard they tried.

There is a door that leads to heaven. It is the door of God's grace, held open by the bloody cross of Jesus Christ. For over 2,000 years that door has been open to the entire world and it is open even today. Over the door are these wonderful words. "Whosoever will, may come." Anyone, anywhere, anytime can go in that door and find new life, salvation, forgiveness, freedom, and eternal life.

But know that the door will not remain open forever. This door of opportunity will certainly shut upon death. For when we die, the only thing left is to face God in judgment (Hebrews 9:27). One does not have a second chance beyond death, for those who have rejected Christ in this life, will surely perish and face the fury of God. They will never enter through the door of opportunity. Either you go through it alive, or you will never go through it.

Jesus, however, uses this parable of the ten virgins to remind us that the door will be shut when he returns to the earth. Weddings during Jesus' day were special events – the engagement that was typically arranged by the parents, the wedding ceremony that would come up to a year later, and then there was the wedding banquet that could come the night of the wedding or weeks later. When it came time for the wedding banquet the groom would take his bride and walk to the groom's house. The roadside would be lit with lamps held by the wedding party.

The focus of the story is on the ten virgins. Five were wise and five were foolish. Five were ready and five were not. Five entered the wedding banquet and five were returned. All of this is to teach us that some people will be ready, and others won't be ready.

One of the most striking aspects of this story is how similar the ten virgins appear on surface.

All had been invited and all had responded quickly. All ten had gone out to wait for the bridegroom. All of them had their lamps with them. All the virgins wanted to see the bridegroom. All were in the right place at the right time for the right reason. All of them wanted to go to the wedding banquet. All had some oil in their lamps in the beginning. All fell asleep while waiting for the bridegroom. All were awakened by the midnight cry. All got up to prepare their lamps. All appeared to be equally prepared for the bridegroom's coming.

So, if you were to line up all ten bridesmaids could you pick out which five were ready and which five were foolish. First, the fact that five were late tells us that they did not have the oil for the lamps, and they probably concluded before they fell asleep that it wasn't that important. But once they arrived and found the door shut, it would not be opened again.

What are the lessons, we can take from this parable?

1. Just because you go to church doesn't mean you are truly born again. Going to church is good; but coming to Christ is better. Being baptized is good; but being born again is better. Being religious is good; but knowing Christ as Savior and Lord is better.
2. No one can borrow from another person's faith. When the foolish virgins asked to borrow some of the other virgins' oil, they were told no. Why? Because if they had shared the oil, no one would have had enough oil. You can't get into heaven living near or knowing someone who has been saved. You must believe in Jesus on your own.
3. When Christ comes back to earth, the door will close. What will you do then? Don't say I will repent later and come to Christ someday. Don't tarry and find that you missed the open door. When the day Christ returns, the last words you hear will either be "Welcome, good and faithful servant; or Depart from Me for I never knew you. Some people find out the value of Christ too late. Today the door of salvation is wide open. Someday it will be shut forever. Make sure you are on the right side of the door when the day comes.

Questions:

1. Do you know you have a saving relationship with Christ?

2. What does Jesus intend for us to learn? What is he really concerned about?
3. This parable teaches a final division among mankind. What is the importance of the wise virgins not sharing their oil with the foolish virgins? How should this impact the way we pray for and witness to unbelievers.
4. How do you obey the Lord's command to "be on the alert"? What are some practical steps you can take to keep watch, to be alert for the Lord's coming?