

Of Sons, Sowers and Samaritans

Five Steps for Interpreting Parables

Introduction: What Are Parables?

Allegory: a story with both a literal and a metaphorical meaning.

- Example: *The Pilgrim's Progress*, by John Bunyan

Every time Jesus explains a parable, he explains it as an allegory.

- Example: Parable of the Sower (Mark 4:1-9, 13-20)

- 1. Understand the situation that the parable is addressing.**
- 2. Look for a statement at the end that briefly explains the parable.**
- 3. Identify the main characters.**
- 4. Determine what each main character symbolizes.**

Usually the main characters are symbolic, while the minor characters and details are merely incidental to the story.

- An important safeguard.

The protagonist is often the key.

A character does not have to be a person (e.g. Parable of the Sower).

- 5. Discover the main points of the parable. There will typically be one main point for each main character.**

Simple 3-Point Parables

Authority Figure
(king, master, father)

OR

Authority Figure
(king, master, father)

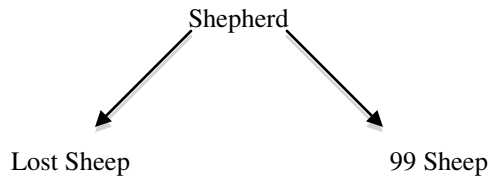
Good Subordinate

Wicked Subordinate

Primary Subordinate

Secondary Subordinate

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

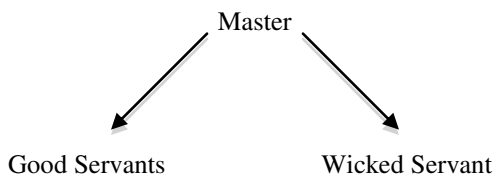


1. Shepherd: God goes to great lengths to save the lost.
2. Lost Sheep: the salvation of lost people is a cause for great celebration.
3. The 99: God's people have no excuse for not seeking out the lost.

Complex 3-Point Parables

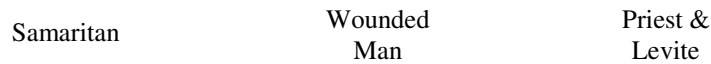
The good or wicked subordinate is illustrated with multiple examples.

Parable of the Talents



1. Master: God entrusts all people with a portion of his resources, and he expects them to be good stewards.
2. Good Servants: God's people will be rewarded when they act as good stewards.
3. Wicked Servant: those who fail to be good stewards will be punished with separation from God.

Parable of the Good Samaritan



2-Point Parables

Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector
(God)

OR

Parable of the Pharisee Persistent Widow
Judge

Tax Collector

Pharisee

Persistent
Widow

1-Point Parables: Parable of the Hidden Treasure

Application: The Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32)