

This Wednesday and Thursday we will gather in the Worship Center for our **Encounter** services. We look forward to celebrating what the Lord has done this past year and preparing us for what He wants to do this year. We have designed this three-day study to help you prepare for this Encounter. We recommend you complete this Life Group study one day at a time, starting on Monday and finishing on Wednesday.

This weekend, we learned that Jesus' core message was that the "Kingdom of God" is near — and that we can enter it by "repenting" (surrendering to the rule of God in our lives) and "believing the good news" (listening and following Jesus).

We also learned that Jesus' parables are windows into the Kingdom of God. They show us what is required to enter and live in the Kingdom.

During this three-day study, we will learn more about the Kingdom of God and the parables of Jesus.

## PAUSE

Before we start today's study, take a couple of minutes and ask the Holy Spirit to teach you how to live as a disciple of Jesus through this study.

## WATCH

Scan the QR code or visit [rockypeak.org/disciple](http://rockypeak.org/disciple) to watch a short interview with Pastor Michael on *The Kingdom of God*.



## READ

Read **pages 20-25** in *The Parables of Jesus* by David Wenham. You can also access this reading from the Disciple webpage or by scanning this QR code.



## STUDY

1. What were two or three of your favorite insights about the Kingdom of God from today's reading in *The Parables of the Kingdom*?
2. This weekend (and in today's video), we learned that Jesus' core message was that the long-promised Kingdom of God was breaking into human history. **Read Mark 1:14-15**. What do we need to do to enter the Kingdom?
  - a. What do you think it means to "repent"?
  - b. What do you think it means to "believe the good news"?
3. Jesus claimed that the Kingdom was here and now, and that His miracles and exorcisms backed up this epic claim. **Read Matthew 12:22-28**. What did the religious leaders accuse Jesus of?
  - a. What did Jesus say His power over demonic forces proved?
4. On **page 22** of *The Parables of Jesus*, David Wenham writes,

*To paraphrase 'kingdom of God' with the phrase 'revolution of God' may help us to appreciate something of the excitement of Jesus's message.*

Then on **page 193**, he adds,

*Jesus was not in the entertainment business but was a revolutionary for God who challenged people to join the revolution. 'Repent and believe the good news,' he said (Mk. 1:15); or as we may paraphrase it, 'Turn round, and commit yourself to the message of God's revolution.'*

Did you find this analogy that the Kingdom of God is like a revolution helpful? If so, in what way?

5. On **page 25**, Wenham writes,

*To sum up: In proclaiming the kingdom of God, Jesus was announcing the coming of God's revolution and of God's new world, as promised in the Old Testament. God was at last intervening, Jesus declared, to establish his reign over everything, to bring salvation to his people and renewal and reconciliation to the world. **But fortunately, Jesus did not announce his message in general theological terms; he announced it primarily through vivid, concrete parables.***

Jesus used parables to explain what the Kingdom of God is like and how we can enter and live under the rule of God in our lives. Have you ever looked at the parables of Jesus in this way? How will this impact the way you read the parables?

## RESPOND

We have learned that to enter the Kingdom, we must come under the rule of the King and follow Him. Is there any area of your life where you need to bow the knee to Jesus as we get ready for Encounter this week?

This weekend we learned that the “parables” of Jesus include not only the short stories of Jesus, but also His proverbs, maxims, similes and other types of illustrations. Today, we will focus on the parables, which are short stories that Jesus used to teach us about the Kingdom of God.

## PAUSE

As you begin this study, pause and pray. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you shut out any distractions so that you can hear His voice above any other: and ask the Spirit to teach you what He wants you to learn today.

## WATCH

Scan the QR code or visit [rockypeak.org/disciple](http://rockypeak.org/disciple) to watch a short interview with Tricia Lawley on *The Short Stories*.



## READ

Read **pages 12-18** in *The Parables of Jesus* by David Wenham. You can also access this reading from the Disciple webpage or by scanning this QR code.



## STUDY

1. Based on the reading and today’s interview, how are Jesus’ short stories different from short stories we might tell today?
2. Jesus was a master teacher, and He used short stories that His audience could relate to. On **page 13**, Wenham writes,

Jesus’ stories and sayings reflect vividly the world in which he lived: their stories and sayings about family life ... about agriculture and the natural world ... about trade and commerce, about weddings, rice and poor people, politics and kings.

- a. Read the *Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard*, **Matthew 20:1-16**. Then, in your own words, summarize what happens in this story.
- b. What about this story seems familiar or relatable to you?
- c. The Kingdom of God is often very counter-cultural. Wenham describes it as an “upside-down situation” (p. 115). Read **Matthew 20:15-16** again. What do you think Jesus is trying to teach the crowd and religious leaders about the Kingdom of God?
- d. Do you feel God’s generosity is fair for those who are late to the Kingdom? Explain.

3. Sometimes Jesus uses a surprise element or plot twist in His stories. Read the *Parable of the Good Samaritan*, **Luke 10:25-37**. Circle or highlight anything that seems to stand out to you.
  - a. On **page 156**, of *The Parables of Jesus*, Wenham writes,

*The Samaritans were possibly the Jews' least favorite people ... There was thus a legacy of long-standing mutual hatred between the two peoples in New Testament times, and ... violent clashes between Jews and Samaritans.*

Knowing this background, what would you say is the surprise element or plot twist in this story?

- b. Why do you think Jesus uses a Samaritan to convey His teaching about the Kingdom of God instead of a religious leader or other Jewish person?
- c. How does this story challenge your view of what it looks like to be a loving “neighbor”?

## RESPOND

The short stories of Jesus are meant to reveal our hearts and where we may need deep transformation. Spend some time asking the Lord to reveal any areas of your heart where your values are out of step with the Kingdom. Use these words of King David as part of your time of prayer.

*Search me, God, and know my heart;  
test me and know my anxious thoughts.  
See if there is any offensive way in me,  
and lead me in the way everlasting.*

**Psalm 139:23–24**

This week, we've been learning how Jesus used parables to convey what the Kingdom of God is like through His teachings. Today, we will look at how He used bite-sized proverbs, similes, and other sorts of illustrations to communicate His message. The goal of Jesus' teaching was to make His teaching easy to remember in a way that would lead to transformation.

### PAUSE

Take a moment to pause in the Lord's presence. **Hebrews 4:12** says, "The Word of God is alive and active." Ask the Lord to let the Word speak into the depths of your heart through this study today.

### WATCH

Scan the QR code or visit [rockypeak.org/disciple](http://rockypeak.org/disciple) to watch a short interview with Joel Enyart on *The Proverbs, Similes, and Illustrations*.



### READ

Today, we are reading **pages 21-22** from Dallas Willard's *The Scandal of the Kingdom*. You can also access this reading from the Disciple webpage or by scanning this QR code.



### STUDY

- Let's look at two examples of how Jesus used bite-sized parables. The first is **Mark 4:30-32**. What do you think Jesus was teaching about the Kingdom of God by comparing it to a mustard seed?
  - How would this illustration challenge His listeners' expectations of what the Kingdom of God was like?
- The second example is from **Luke 5:33-39**. In this passage, Jesus tells a "parable" about clothing, patches, and old and new wineskins. What do you think Jesus is teaching about the Kingdom of God with these short parables?
  - What happens when we get stuck in our traditions rather than letting Jesus lead us into new things?
- Let's look at another of Jesus's parables. **Read Matthew 13:44-46**. What point is Jesus making when He compares the Kingdom to a hidden treasure or a precious pearl?
  - On **page 207** of *The Parables of Jesus*, Wenham writes,  
  
*The parable speaks of the man finding the treasure, selling everything he had to buy the field and the treasure ... The kingdom of heaven is the treasure to give everything for.*

How valuable do you believe the Kingdom of God truly is? To what extent are you willing to pursue it?
- The true value of the Kingdom is not always easy to see or fully grasp. The power of these parables lies in their challenge to our thinking about what is most valuable in life and most worthy of living for. Read **Matthew 19:16-30** and **Matthew 6:25-34**.

- a. What are some things that might be holding you back from fully investing in God's Kingdom because they are competing for your time and passion in some way?
- b. What fears do you have in letting these things go to fully "buy in" to the Kingdom of God?

## RESPOND

Jesus says the man who finds the buried treasure sells everything with joy because he realizes the value of what he has found. Spend some time asking God to reveal the deep value and worth of His Kingdom. Ask for eyes to see that you may pursue it wholeheartedly with great joy and pray (as Jesus taught us to pray):

*Your Kingdom come,  
Your will be done  
on earth as it is in heaven.*

**Matthew 6:10**