

FOLLOW-THROUGH

Small Group Discussion around the Sunday Message
Matthew 25:1-13, The Parable of the Foolish Bridesmaids
November 19, 2006

Introduction

1. Read Matthew 25:1-13. Share any thoughts, comments or questions that come to mind.
2. The context of this parable is a traditional Jewish wedding. The bridesmaids/virgins are waiting for the groom to come. No one knows the hour, the groom always comes as a surprise or it has been said, "as a thief in the night." What is the main difference in attitude between the wise and the foolish bridesmaids?
3. In many ways this is a story of procrastination. The foolish ones never did the extra step ahead of time, so they were found not ready when their moment came. Share a story of your (or your spouses) procrastination. A time when it was a last minute wonder. Or something that you always seem to put off until the last minute.
4. Many have made allegorical connections for each thing and person mentioned in the parable. Some scholars disagree on what each thing represents. But, no one disagrees on the main point that Jesus is making in this parable. The key is in verse 13, what do you think that it is?
5. Jesus is the groom who will come again. He will come at an unexpected time, the question is will we be ready? Why do you think the foolish bridesmaids were not allowed in when they came knocking on the door? What implications does that have for us and our faith lives?



Getting Inside the Parable

1. If Jesus were to come back today, what kind of feelings would that evoke in you? What kind of things would you want to do or not do? What would be the most important thing on your mind?
2. This parable comes in the middle of a discourse Jesus has with his disciples about his second coming. In the parable following this one Jesus says you will be held accountable for the "talents" you have been given. In this one he says, he could come back at any time and it will be a surprise. Yet, it seems that we don't talk or think much about his imminent return. Why do you think that most Christians do not have a sense of urgency about Jesus' return?
3. The foolish bridesmaids made a lazy and selfish decision not to bring extra oil with them. They made the comfortable choice. I think that one of the greatest enemies of an active faith is comfort. Can you think of some faith side effects of becoming too comfortable with the world, or too focused on yourself?
4. If Comfort leads to Apathy and Apathy (spiritually speaking) leads to death, then could the inverse be true, that Discomfort leads to Clarity and Clarity leads to Life. What I mean by that is that often our prayers are focused on saving us from our discomforts and smoothing the path in front of us. What if those hard things are the things that keep us focused on our real needs? What if those hard things are what God uses to discipline and lead us to Him? There is no testimony without the test. Can you share a story or example where you have seen God make or do something awesome in the midst of or through hardship?

Digging Deeper

1. Read Isaiah 45:8-11. What things does this passage say come from God? What significance does this have to his eternal plan for us?
2. This week is Thanksgiving. I want to challenge you not only to thank God for the blessings but also for the hardships. Because through them he works all things to his purposes (Romans 5:3) In your group share both a blessing and a burden that you are thankful for.
3. When we start looking at things through the eternal lens we begin to recognize how insignificant so many things that we spend our time on are. One of the things we lack by not thinking about the imminent return of Jesus is our urgency to fulfill the mission he has given us. (Matthew 28) Are you ready for his return or would he catch you off guard? What are some things we can do to regain our sense of urgency and conviction.
4. Topics like this are easy to talk about and hard to live. Pray for each other and also pray for the ability to live this, not just talk about it.