

## Parable of the Wise and Foolish Builders



**Warm up** Have a look at a picture of Salisbury Cathedral. It's huge and looks pretty strong, yes? Actually, it was not built with good foundations, and like the leaning tower of Pisa it could start to lean, and fall at any time. A lot of care goes into keeping both buildings standing. Foundations are hidden from sight but are really important.



**Reading** Today's parable comes from St Matthew's gospel, at the end of the passage known as the "Sermon on the Mount".

<sup>21</sup> "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. <sup>22</sup> Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' <sup>23</sup> Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

<sup>24</sup> "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. <sup>25</sup> The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. <sup>26</sup> But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. <sup>27</sup> The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

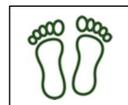
<sup>28</sup> When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, <sup>29</sup> because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law. Matthew 7 24-29



1. Jot down any questions you have about this passage. You can ask them now, or hang onto them and see if you can answer them after you have thought a bit more.
2. Have another look at v21 What does Jesus say is the measure of a true believer? What do they do?
3. How can we know what "the will of my father who is in heaven is?"

4. This first paragraph contains quite a frightening idea, that there might be church teachers, and prophets who call Jesus "Lord" but who do not really know Him! The good news, of course, is that Christians believe that God never leaves us alone when something is frightening, or dangerous. He always provides an answer. Reading the Psalms, you will see the phrase that God is our 'rock' over 20 times. He is the answer! Christians believe that God is the rock we can rely on! So, if you ever meet someone who claims to be a Christian, but who says or does things that don't seem right to you – you know who to rely on, who you can turn to.

5. In verse 27, Jesus says "Anyone who hears these words and does not put them into practice is like the foolish man." When he says "these words" Jesus may well mean his teaching all the way through the sermon on the mount. Look back at Matthew chapters 6 and 7. There is some great advice there – words of advice from Jesus himself, as to how to live. But He doesn't just ask us to believe his words. He asks us to "put them into practice." What can you see from Matthew 6 and 7 that would be good for you to put into practice in your life?



**Apply understanding** – how does this all relate to our lives in school? What do you think you might do differently, if anything, having read and thought about this?

**Memory verse** It's really good to memorise verses from the Bible. Take 5 minutes now to try this one. We can see if you still remember it next week.

"Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock" Matthew 7:24



**Prayer** *Father God, thank you that we are able to read the words of Jesus, showing us how to live our lives. Thank you that when we put these words into practice, we know we are building our lives on the rock that never crumbles, that will never let us down.*  
*Amen.*

## Parable of the Sower



**Warm up** Last week's memory verse was from the parable of the wise and foolish builders. Can you complete the gaps?

Everyone who ----- these words of -----  
and puts them into ----- is like a ----- man  
who built his house on the ----- M ----- 7:24  
Then, can you cover it over completely and type it  
into chat, correctly?

**Reading** Today's parable comes from St Mark's gospel, Chapter 4. Jesus describes the word of God as a seed scattered by the farmer, and looks at the environment, the soil, in which these seeds grow strong – or not.



### **The Parable of the Sower**

<sup>2</sup> He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: <sup>3</sup> "Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed.<sup>4</sup> As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path and the birds came and ate it up. <sup>5</sup> Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. <sup>6</sup> But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. <sup>7</sup> Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. <sup>8</sup> Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times . . . ."

<sup>13</sup> Then Jesus said to them . . . "The farmer sows the word. <sup>15</sup> Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. <sup>16</sup> Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. <sup>17</sup> But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. <sup>18</sup> Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; <sup>19</sup> but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. <sup>20</sup> Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word and accept it, and produce a crop – some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown."



3. Are there any questions you have about this passage? You can ask them now, or hang onto them and see if you can answer them later on.

4. So, this parable compares people to a plant which can yield a great crop for the farmer. Some of the seeds develop deep roots, which hold firm to the ground during wind and storm, and which draw up essential water and nutrients from the soil, to help them to survive and grow strong. For a Christian, what do you think the equivalent is of: strong roots, good soil and what are those nutrients which we need every day?

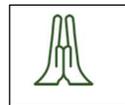
5. What does Jesus say we should avoid or be wary of, in order to prepare that soil so that Christians who hear the word of God can grow strong? Think of your school or your village as that field. What barriers do you think there are for new believers? What can we pray for?

6. On the next sheet is a short drama sketch about sharing our faith, to read together, and discuss.



**Apply understanding** – how does this all relate to your lives in school? What do you think you might do differently, if anything, having read and thought about this sketch and parable today?

**Memory verse** "Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word and accept it, and produce a crop – some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown" Matthew 4:20



**Prayer** *Father God, thank you for those who have shared your word with us, and for those who prepared the way, so that we can grow as Christians and know more of you. Help us to be eager to do the same for others, and always open to opportunities to invite others along. Amen*

Nic and Sam are walking along the street discussing the upcoming event at their church youth club on Friday Night. Robbie is stood at the bus stop, further along on the other side of the road.

Nic: So Sam, are you going to the youth club on Friday night?

Sam: Yeah, I'm hoping to, especially with that group from Manchester coming over.

Nic: Yeah, there's a band, an acting group and apparently a really good speaker too. It should be a good outreach event.

Sam: Are you thinking of inviting anyone to it?

Nic: Hopefully. I was thinking of asking my neighbours. I reckon they may come to it with it being a bit of a different night.

Sam: Hey, look over there at the bus stop, that's Robbie isn't it?

Nic: Looks like it, you don't usually see him on his own, he's always with his mates.

Sam: Yeah, always making a load of noise and messing about. Do you remember when they pinched that For Sale sign out of that garden and put it up outside school, over the weekend?!

Nic: Yeah, I bet a lot of the kids were hoping that would happen, that we might even get a new building, one of those new fancy-shaped ones like off 'Grand Designs', rather than that concrete block from the 1970s that we have. Hey, why don't we ask Robbie to the meeting on Friday night?

Sam: Are you kidding? He'll probably bring all his mates and start messing about and really spoil the whole thing.

Nic: Not necessarily. He may just come on his own. Come on let's go over and ask him.

Sam: No, really! He smokes as well. It won't be his kind of thing. I don't think we should. He'll probably just laugh at us.

Nic: There's no harm in trying. Graham said to us all last week that we should think about inviting someone new to the event. Let's give it a go!

Sam: I know Graham said to ask around but he didn't mean to invite trouble-makers. You can, I'm not. He'll just make fun of us. Like I said, even if he did come, he'll just make it hard work for everyone else. It's not fair on that group from Manchester, he'll spoil the whole night. It's meant to be a special night for the youth, he'll just ruin it.

Nic: Well I think we should. I'm going over to ask him.

Sam: Well you can go on your own, I'm not coming with you. And don't say I didn't warn you. I can't believe you're going to ask him! Why can't you just ask nice kids along rather than that sort!

Nic crosses the road to the bus stop to have a word with Robbie.

Nic: Hi, Robbie, fancy seeing you out here on your own.

Robbie: Huh, oh hi, I'm just waiting to get the bus into town.

Nic: Erm, I know this may seem kind of weird, but I was wondering if you wanted to come along to the church youth club next Friday night. There's a group coming from Manchester; a band, an acting group and someone who's going to speak. The band are meant to be really good.

Robbie: Do you know what? I saw that advertised in the shop window the other day and I wondered if I should maybe go along and see what it was about. What time does it start?

Nic: Doors open at 7. I think the event starts at half-past. It would be good to see you there. I'm sure it's going to be a really good night.

Robbie: You know, I may just come along. Nic: Good, hope you do.

Nic walks off, glad to have asked.

Robbie: Hey, thanks again for asking!

## Parable of the Good Samaritan: Luke 10 25-33

Let's start reading straight away this week. It's quite long so its chopped up into sections to discuss

<sup>25</sup> On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

<sup>26</sup> "What is written in the law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

<sup>27</sup> He answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind,' and, 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'"

Q1. v25. Not a question but a comment. This person wanted 'to test Jesus', to try to show him up, or to win an argument with him. If someone asks you about your faith they may *really* want to know, or they may want an argument or just want to tell you what they believe. You can still talk to them, of course. And pray for them, that they might learn about God and how to recognise Him and his amazing love for us all. This person certainly did!

Q2, v26 Have you noticed that when people asked Jesus questions he often replies with a question back for them? Why do you think he does that? (Is there anything we can learn from that?)

<sup>28</sup> "You have answered correctly," Jesus said. "Do this and you will live."

<sup>29</sup> But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?"

<sup>30</sup> In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. <sup>31</sup> A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man he passed by on the other side. <sup>32</sup> So too a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. <sup>33</sup> But a Samaritan, as he travelled, came to where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. <sup>34</sup> He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. . . ."

Q3 The robbed man was left looking "half dead" – ie you couldn't tell by looking if he were dead or alive – you would need to go near, and take a pulse. Did you know that if a priest touched a dead body in those days, the priest would have to stay in Jerusalem, isolate for 7 days and then be made clean with special water from the Temple? So this priest had a problem, right? He was on a journey and had somewhere to go. He just couldn't stop!

On the next sheet is a short, but true story, for us to discuss, before we read on.

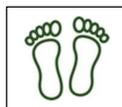
Q4. Fortunately, some of those students did stop to help the injured man, just as the Good Samaritan did. Have you ever met a Good Samaritan? Do you know people who "go the extra mile" to help other people, people who just seem to be full of love? How do you think that we can gain more love, so that we too can really "Love your neighbour as yourself"?

<sup>36</sup> "Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

<sup>37</sup> The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him."

<sup>38</sup> Jesus told him "Go and do likewise."

Q5. v37. We are reminded again about who Jesus is talking to – an "expert in the law." What do you think that he spent his time doing usually? Now look at what Jesus says in v38. How do you think Jesus wants him to change?



**Apply understanding** – does this all relate to your lives in school? What do you think you might do differently, if anything, having read this?

**Memory verse** 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind' and 'Love your neighbour as yourself'.

**Prayer** Let's pray for ourselves and for one another.

### Glossary

To justify = to make himself look right, or holy.

A Levite = an expert in the Law

The law = God's laws from the Old Testament

## The Princeton Experiment

Inspired by the parable of the Good Samaritan, two University teachers ran a remarkable experiment in the 1970s. They studied how students at the Princeton Theological Seminary (training to be priests or pastors) got on when they were asked to deliver a sermon on the parable of the Good Samaritan, as part of their course. It was important. They were going to be graded on this.

The students were told to be ready to give the sermon in another building nearby. The researchers were particularly curious about whether time pressure would affect the students' helpful nature. After all, the students were being trained to become priests; they are presumably inclined to care for and help other people.

As each student finished preparing his talk in a classroom, the researchers gave them one of three instructions:

1. "You're late. They were expecting you a few minutes ago...You'd better hurry. It shouldn't take but just a minute." This was the *high-hurry* condition.
2. "The (studio) assistant is ready for you, so please go right over." This was the *intermediate-hurry* condition.
3. "It'll be a few minutes before they're ready for you, but you might as well head on over. If you have to wait over there, it shouldn't be long." This was the *low-hurry* condition.

As each student walked by himself from the classroom to the other building to give his talk, he encountered a 'victim' in a deserted alleyway just like the wounded traveller in the parable of the Good Samaritan. This victim (actually a friend of the experimenters) appeared to be homeless, was slouched and coughing and clearly in need of help. The students were offered a chance to apply what they were about to preach – to do something, rather than just to talk about it. But guess what happened?

You have got it! Lots of them walked on by. Why do you think these students behaved as they did? What do you think that you would have done yourself, on the way to an exam?)

Only 10% of the students in the high-hurry situation stopped to help the victim! Almost half of the students in the intermediate-hurry and 63% of the students in the low-hurry situations helped the victim.

The researchers found that when we are stressed or under pressure of time, it can really change how we behave. A person not in a hurry may stop and offer help to a person who is in distress. A person in a hurry is likely to keep going. Thinking about the Good Samaritan did not increase helping behaviour, but being in a hurry, like the priest, who did not want to stop for 7 days and miss out on whatever he was journeying to, made it much less likely that he would stop and help.

In light of their training the experimenters felt that the students' failure was probably not due to being uncaring or cruel. The main cause seems to be time pressure. Most of the students who believed they had enough time to stop did stop. In contrast, most of those who thought they were late did not stop to help. In other words, the idea of time pressure or "having limited time" resulted in behaviour which went against to their education and career: the devotion to help others. There may also be an element of the Levite here though. These were students, taught to think, and to argue and to be right. They had to learn a lot, remember a lot, know a lot. But that perhaps left them with a bigger problem. . . .

Remember, we are all broken, can all get things wrong. And how do we avoid it? Well the Good Samaritan follows a very interesting verse in Luke. 'Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children."'

It's in staying close to the Father that we can know what really matters. By remaining close to his heart, we are less likely to be distracted, or miss the truth.

## The Parable of the Lost Son – part 2



**Warm up** Here is last week's memory verse. Can you complete the gaps describing the lost son's arrival home, in Luke ch 15?

"But while he was still a \_\_\_\_\_ way off,  
his \_\_\_\_\_ saw him and was filled with  
\_\_\_\_\_ for him; he \_\_\_\_\_ to his son,  
threw his \_\_\_\_\_ around him and kissed him."



**Reading** We continue with the second part of the parable of the Prodigal, or Lost, son from Luke 15:1-2 and 25-32

### **The Parable of the Lost Son**

<sup>1</sup>Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. <sup>2</sup>But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." . . .

<sup>25</sup> "Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup> So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. <sup>27</sup> 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'

<sup>28</sup> "The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. <sup>29</sup> But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. <sup>30</sup> But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'

<sup>31</sup> "' My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. <sup>32</sup> But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'"

Q1. To recap, why did Jesus tell this parable? See v 1-2.



Q2. Whom do the father and the two sons in the parable represent?

Q3. Why do think the older son hadn't noticed his brother's return? See v 25 and compare v 20.

Q4. Why was the older brother angry at the celebrations? See v 28-30.

Q5. What do the older brother's words to his father show us about his attitude to his father?

Q6. Compare the older brother's attitude to his father with that of the younger son in v 12.

Q7. How were the Pharisees and teachers of the law like the older brother?

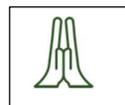
Q8. How might we be like the older brother?

Q9. How can we enjoy a close relationship with God like the younger brother had with his father in the end?



**Apply understanding** – how does this all relate to our lives in school? What do you think you might do differently, if anything, having read and thought about this?

**Memory verse** "Celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found."



**Prayer** It's always so good to pray together, to thank God for all that he has revealed to us in this parable, last week and this, and to bring our own needs and each other's needs to the Lord in prayer . . .