



Epiphany

Revealed in His Stories

Spring

A guide for small groups, families, & individuals

2019

“For the imaginative mind, a story is a joy forever; and for the unimaginative, it has the power to ‘enter in at lowly doors.’ Lodged in the mind it is not inert like a nugget of gold; it is vital, like a seed-plot continually bringing new flowers to bloom... Jesus is the Master of the parable because He is the Master of Life. To know these incomparable stories is to know the teaching of Jesus, the heart of the Teacher.”

–George A. Buttrick

“Each one of the parables is like a casket, itself of exquisite workmanship, but in which jewels richer than itself are laid up; or like fruit, which, however lovely to look upon, is yet more delectable in its inner sweetness.”

–Richard Chenevix Trench

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This little guidebook is designed for individual, family, and small group use during the 2019 Epiphany season at Redeemer Anglican Church. It tracks with our Epiphany Sermon Series on the Parables of Jesus—helping us reflect, pray, and act on what we are learning about the Gospel through this beautiful, surprising, creative stories. The theme for this series is Revealed in His Stories—which points towards the way Jesus used parables to reveal something of Himself, His coming Kingdom, and our place in it.

Week 1 Revealing What is Required of Us

Week 2 Revealing God's Patience & Plan

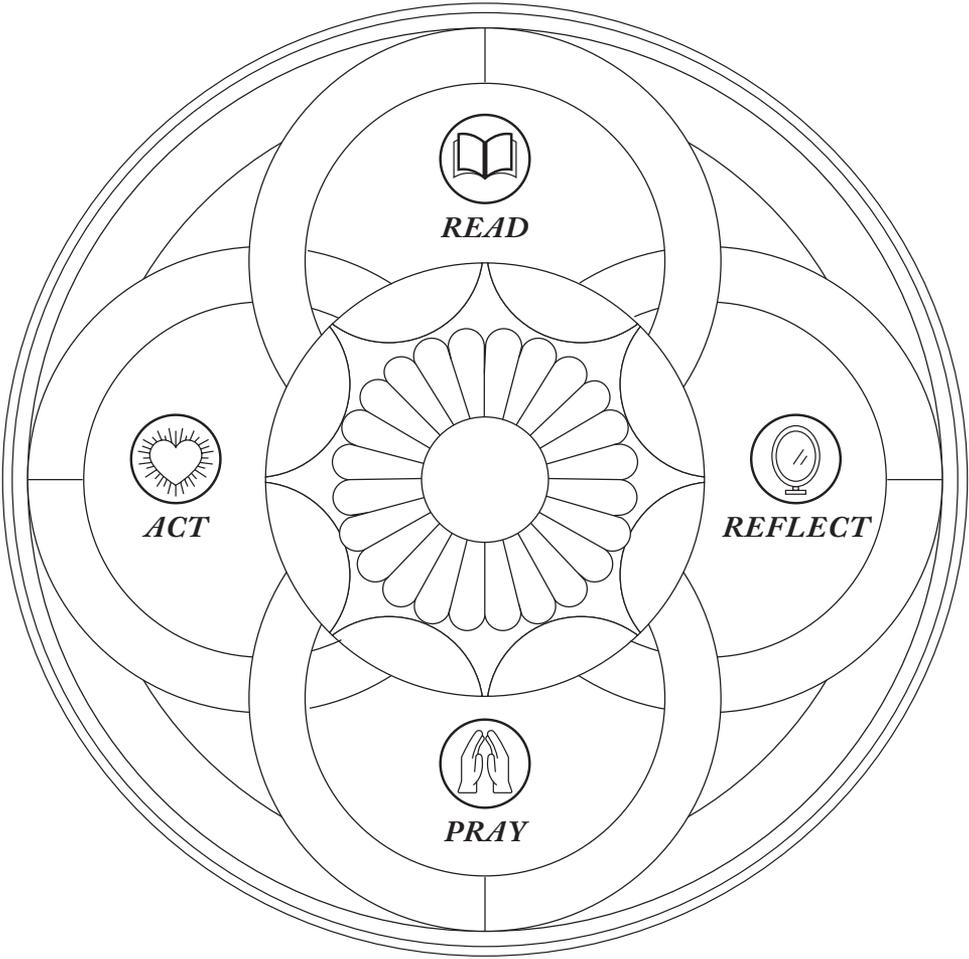
Week 3 Revealing How the Kingdom Grows

Week 4 Revealing the Incomparable Value of the Gospel

Week 5 Revealing the Reality of Judgment

Week 6 Revealing the Very Personal Love of God

Week 7 Revealing the Priority of Forgiveness





READ

For each week, there is a parable assigned from Gospel of Matthew.



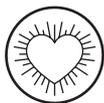
REFLECT

After reading the parable, take a moment to reflect on what you have read. *Slow down*. Allow your imagination to explore the story—especially the parts that surprise you or seem mysterious. Could you retell the parable in contemporary language with people, places, and things from your life? There are a handful of questions provided to stimulate reflection (and discussion with your Small Group).



PRAY

The time of prayer follows a simple liturgy: a call to prayer, a time of confession and forgiveness, a time of supplication (making requests to God), the Lord's Prayer, and a benediction. This liturgy can be prayed alone, with others in your household, and with your Small Group.



ACT

When we truly receive the good news of the Gospel, we are motivated to embrace new habits and extend the good news to others. The love of God to us in Jesus overflows within us and spills out to our neighbors. Each week there are suggested actions that help us receive, embody, and extend the Gospel.

WEEK 1 | Revealing What is Required of Us



READ

The Parable of the Sower in Matt.13:1-9, 18-23



REFLECT

- What are the action verbs in this story? What is *happening*? (or not happening?)
- What do the three areas where the seed does not thrive represent: 1) generally, and 2) specifically in your life in Richmond in 2019?
- Is good soil born or made? How does one become good soil?

NOTES:



PRAY

Call | Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. —**Philippians 1:2**

Confession | Confessing aloud our sinful tendencies to...

- Hear God's word without processing it in our hearts and allowing it to re-order our loves.
- Be satisfied with a shallow faith that only thrives when life is easy.
- Love the good gifts of God more than God Himself.

Forgiveness | Thank you Lord Jesus that your stories reveal your love and mercy towards us.

Supplication | *[Bringing our specific requests to Christ Jesus who welcomes us.]*

Lord's Prayer | *[It is suggested that, if prayed as a household or small group, the members hold hands during the Lord's Prayer]*

*Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name.*

*Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.*

Give us this day our daily bread.

*And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those
who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.*

Benediction | The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore. **Amen. —2 Corinthians 13:14**



ACT

• We all know that we can control what we do, but not the results. In the same way, our part in bearing good fruit is cultivating good soil—which is a heart that has been transformed by the Gospel. What is one practice you can begin (or continue) doing that cultivates love for God?

WEEK 2 | Revealing God's Patience & Plan



READ

The Parable of the Weeds in Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43



REFLECT

- What strikes you first in this story? Which part is most surprising to you? It is often the things we do *not* expect from Jesus that reveal something to us about ourselves.
- Often Jesus' parables contain both confrontational and comforting elements. What do you find confrontational and/or comforting about this parable?
- What does this story show us about the *character* of Jesus?

NOTES:



PRAY

Call | I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord." –**Philippians 1:2**

Confession | Confessing aloud our sinful tendencies to...

- On one hand, be impatient and frustrated with how God seems to just let people get away with evil.
- On the other hand, be offended and scandalized by the idea of God's judgement.

Forgiveness | Thank you Lord Jesus that your stories reveal your love and mercy towards us.

Supplication | *[Bringing our specific requests to Christ Jesus who welcomes us.]*

Lord's Prayer | *[It is suggested that, if prayed as a household or small group, the members hold hands during the Lord's Prayer]*

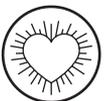
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Benediction | May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing through the power of the Holy Spirit.
Amen. –Romans 15:13



ACT

• One of the main takeaways from this parable for all Christians of all times is a *tempering of expectations* for what life will be like in the church and in the world. In what ways do you need to temper your expectations for life in order to grow faithfully in and amongst people who disagree or are even set against you?

WEEK 3 | Revealing How the Kingdom Grows



READ

**The Parables of the Mustard Seed & Leaven in
Matt. 13:31–33**



REFLECT

- What do the garden and bread flour have in common? What might they represent? Think of a few potential answers.
- What do a seed and leaven (yeast) both require and what might that show us about how God works in our lives and in the world?
- The mustard plant provides shelter and rest, the bread provides food that satisfies—where are you still waiting for the shelter, rest, and sustenance of God's kingdom to be revealed in your life?

NOTES:



PRAY

Call | “ Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.” –**Psalm 19:14**

Confession | Confessing aloud our sinful tendencies to...

- Be disappointed with the apparent smallness of God's kingdom.
- Be frustrated with the slowness of God's process.
- Look for God's kingdom outside of our city instead of in the midst of our city.

Forgiveness | Thank you Lord Jesus that your stories reveal your love and mercy towards us.

Supplication | *[Bringing our specific requests to Christ Jesus who welcomes us.]*

Lord's Prayer | *[It is suggested that, if prayed as a household or small group, the members hold hands during the Lord's Prayer]*

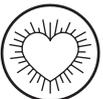
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forever and ever. Amen.*

Benediction | Glory to God whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more that we can ask or imagine: Glory to him from generation to generation in the Church, and in Christ Jesus forever and ever. **Amen.**



ACT

• This story shows us the where, when, how, and why of kingdom growth. One of the most important parts of this story, that we often miss, is the where. So we must ask, are we “mixed” in with our neighborhood and city or are we living separate from those who need the Kingdom? What is one way you can be present to your neighbors or to our city in this season of life?

WEEK 4 | Revealing the Incomparable Value of the Gospel



READ

The Parables of the Hidden Treasure & Pearl of Great Value in Matt. 13:44-46



REFLECT

- There is an inherent *searching* in both of these parables. What do you feel like people are searching for today? What are you searching for in this season of life?
- There is a *singularity* in the finding in both of these parables. What is that one thing and how does that cut against the grain of our current cultural moment?
- There is a cost in the purchasing in both of these parables? What is that cost for people like us today?

NOTES:



PRAY

Call | Send out your light and your truth, that they may lead me, and bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling. —**Psalm 43:3**

Confession | Confessing aloud our sinful tendencies to...

- Search for life in all the wrong places.
- Avoid the singularity of the Gospel and look for alternatives.
- Want the kingdom without the cost.

Forgiveness | Thank you Lord Jesus that your stories reveal your love and mercy towards us.

Supplication | *[Bringing our specific requests to Christ Jesus who welcomes us.]*

Lord's Prayer | *[It is suggested that, if prayed as a household or small group, the members hold hands during the Lord's Prayer]*

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forever and ever. Amen.*

Benediction | The almighty and merciful Lord, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit bless us and keep us. *Amen.*



ACT

• In both of these parables, there is a high cost—a giving up of everything in order to possess the most important thing. What rivals does Jesus have in your life in this particular season? How might you surrender those things in order to be more fully devoted to Him.

*Note: This will rarely, if ever, means walking away from responsibilities or relationships. Rather, it will mean a fundamental change in the way we approach our responsibilities and relationships.

WEEK 5 | Revealing the Reality of Judgment



READ

The Parable of the Net in Matt. 13:47–50



REFLECT

- What sort of feelings does this parable stir up within you?
- What do those feelings tell you about yourself?
- Remember, the one who told this story is the same one who gave up his own life for us. How do the realities of the cross and resurrection of Jesus on our behalf interact with the reality of judgement?

NOTES:



PRAY

Call | The Lord is in his holy temple; let all earth keep silence before him. —**Habakkuk 2:20**

Confession | Confessing aloud our sinful tendencies to...
• Flat out deny the reality of judgment.
• Live as if we can have the kingdom without judgement and the resurrection without the cross.

Forgiveness | Thank you Lord Jesus that your stories reveal your love and mercy towards us.

Supplication | *[Bringing our specific requests to Christ Jesus who welcomes us.]*

Lord's Prayer | *[It is suggested that, if prayed as a household or small group, the members hold hands during the Lord's Prayer]*

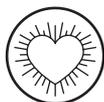
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Benediction | Lord Jesus Christ—fill us with your Spirit and send us out with confidence in your word, to tell the world of your saving acts, and bring glory to your name. *Amen.*



ACT

• Through the transforming power of the Gospel, “bad fish” can become “good fish.” This story is humbling to us, it reminds us of the grace of the Lord Jesus to us, and sends us out into our neighborhoods, workplaces, and social groups motivated that there is still time for those who have not yet give themselves in faith to Jesus. Think of one person with whom you have a relationship who is not yet a Christian and commit to praying for them every day in this season of life. Add this prayer to your Google calendar, daily planner, Outlook calendar, etc.

WEEK 6 | Revealing the Very Personal Love of God



READ

The Parable of the Lost Sheep in Matt. 18:10-14



REFLECT

- Why do you think Jesus found it necessary to tell this parable? What problem or issue do you think He was trying to counteract?
- Who are you most likely to either despise or consider unworthy of your time and attention?
- Who are the little ones in our city?
- What does this story reveal to us about the character of Jesus?

NOTES:



PRAY

Call | The hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship him.
—**John 4:23**

Confession | Confessing aloud our sinful tendencies to...

- Look down on certain kinds of people as unworthy of our attention and time.
- Believe in God's love in a general, abstract sense but miss the deeply personal affection he feels for us.
- Simply forget about the little people in our city.

Forgiveness | Thank you Lord Jesus that your stories reveal your love and mercy towards us.

Supplication | *[Bringing our specific requests to Christ Jesus who welcomes us.]*

Lord's Prayer | *[It is suggested that, if prayed as a household or small group, the members hold hands during the Lord's Prayer]*

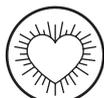
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forever and ever. Amen.*

Benediction | Father, take us and use us to love and serve you and all people, in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*



ACT

• Who are the little people in our city that we may intentionally or unintentionally ignore or look down on? Who is someone to whom you could give your time—knowing that it won't increase your productivity or further your goals?

WEEK 7 | Revealing the Priority of Forgiveness



READ

**The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant in
Matt. 18:21–35**



REFLECT

- This parable touches on the theme of hypocrisy. Where have you witnessed Christian hypocrisy and what have been its consequences?
- OK now turn inward—is there any unforgiveness in your heart? Without inappropriately gossiping about someone else’s wrongdoings, try sharing one thing that has been particularly difficult for you to forgive. (Leave the offender’s name out.)
- Forgiveness takes place with both the mouth and the heart. Which of these is more difficult for you? Why? What steps might you take to grow in forgiveness?

NOTES:



PRAY

Call | Come to me all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. —**Matthew 11:28**

Confession | Confessing aloud our sinful tendencies to...
• Refuse to forgive _____ for the wrong they have done, even though—in Christ—God has forgiven me.

Forgiveness | Thank you Lord Jesus that your stories reveal your love and mercy towards us.

Supplication | [*Bringing our specific requests to Christ Jesus who welcomes us.*]

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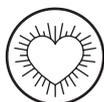
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Benediction | May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen.**
—**Romans 15:5-6**



ACT

- If you have been harboring unforgiveness towards someone *and they are aware of it*—then reach out to them, meet with them, and humbly offer forgiveness.
- If you have been harboring unforgiveness towards someone *and they are not aware of it*—then reaching out would actually create hurt where there is none. So instead of meeting with him or her, simply pray—and ask the Lord to help you forgive that person in your heart.



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