

KINGDOM.

LESSON 25

1	PRAYER
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Group leader. Pray for God’s guidance through his Spirit, for awareness of his presence and for listening to his voice. Commit your group and this lesson about preaching God’s kingdom to the Lord.

2	SHARING (20 minutes) [QUIET TIMES] PSALMS 84, 90, 91 and 92
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Take turns and share (or read from your notes) in short what you have learned from one of your quiet times with God out of the assigned Bible passages (Psalm 84, 90, 91 and 92). Listen to the person sharing, take him serious and accept him. Do not discuss what he shares. Take notes.

3	MEMORISATION (5 minutes) [GOD’S GREATNESS] (1) ISAIAH 40:25-26
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The eleventh **series (K)** of memory verses is about **“God’s greatness”**. The titles of the five memory verses are:

- (1) God is incomparable. Isaiah 40:25-26.
- (2) God is all-glorious. 1 Chronicles 29:11
- (3) God is sovereign. Ephesians 1:11-12
- (4) God is all-knowing. Hebrews 4:13
- (5) God is almighty. Jeremiah 32:17.

Review two by two.

(1) God is incomparable. Isaiah 40:25-26. To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal? says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.

4	TEACHING (85 minutes) [THE PARABLES OF JESUS] THE BLIND LEADING THE BLIND and THE WISE AND FOOLISH BUILDERS
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**“The parable of the blind leading the blind” in Matthew 15:14
and “the parable of the wise and foolish builders” in Matthew 7:24-27 are parables about
OBEDIENCE TO GOD’S WORD IN GOD’S KINGDOM.**

“A parable” is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. It is a true-to-life story or illustration designed to teach a spiritual truth. Jesus used the commonplace and the events of everyday to illumine the mysteries of the kingdom of God and to confront people with the reality of their situation and their need for renewal. We will study these parables by using the six guidelines for studying parables (See manual 9, supplement 1).

A. THE PARABLE OF THE BLIND LEADING THE BLIND

Read Matthew 15:1-20 and Luke 6:39-42.

1. Understand the natural story of the parable.

Introduce. The parable is told in figurative language and the spiritual meaning of the parable is based on that. Therefore we will first study the words and the cultural and historical facts of the background of the story.

Discuss. What are the true-to-life elements of the story?

Notes.

A guide must be able to see where he himself is going as well as where he is leading others. Otherwise he cannot be a guide! “A blind guide” is therefore a very telling picture of someone claiming to be a guide, yet leading everyone into a pit of destruction!

2. Examine the immediate context and determine the elements of the parable.

Introduce. The context of “the story” of the parable may consist of “the setting” and “the explanation or application” of the parable. The setting of the parable may state the *occasion* for telling the parable, or describe *the circumstances* at the

time of telling the parable. The setting is usually found *before* the story of the parable and the explanation or application is usually found *after* the story of the parable.

Discover and discuss. What is the setting, the story and the explanation or application of this parable?

Notes.

(1) The setting of the parable is contained in Matthew 15:1-12.

This passage is very important with respect to the question of human traditions and their relationship to the Word of God. We will discuss the development of “the tradition of the elders”, Jesus’ view of the tradition of the elders and his view of the people who promoted the tradition of the elders.

The development of the tradition of the elders. “The tradition of the elders” consisted of a vast amount of interpretations of the Old Testament law and especially human opinions and human decisions concerning how to apply these laws in various situations. These opinions and decisions were handed down in the past from generation to generation. Important was that Jews regarded these traditions as equally binding as the Law of God itself, because according to the teachers of the law these traditions showed what the Law of God really meant and how it should be applied to everyday life.

In many cases, these opinions and decisions went far beyond anything demanded by God’s law. For example, according to Matthew 12:1-8 tradition taught that a person may not pick ears of grain on the Sabbath (because that would amount to “working on the Sabbath”). And in other cases the traditions failed entirely to do justice to the real requirements of God’s law. For example, according to Matthew 5:20-48 tradition taught that the outward keeping of the Ten Commandments would be sufficient.

The demand to practice ritual purity in Matthew 15:1-2 is a case in which tradition of the elders demanded far more than was required in the law. The law of God required “holiness” (Leviticus 19:2) and such holiness implied inner holiness that had to be expressed outwardly in ethical conduct as well as in certain elements of ritual conduct.

For example: The people had to wash their clothes before the Lord descended upon Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:10-11). The priests had to take a bath before performing various sacred functions (Leviticus 15:1-33; 16:26,28; 17:15-16). Aaron and his sons were ordered to wash their hands before performing their duties in the tabernacle (Exodus 30:17-21). Under certain specified conditions, God’s law prescribed the rinsing of hands for the people in general (Leviticus 15:11; Deuteronomy 21:6). *But God’s law nowhere prescribes the ritual rinsing of hands before every meal for everybody!* This was strictly a tradition of the elders, not supported by any ordinance of God! Nevertheless, the Pharisees emphasised the rinsing of hands before every meal (Mark 7:3-4). Matters, which are nowhere prescribed in the Law of God in the Bible were nevertheless emphasised to the extent that the essence of the law was lost.

How did this tradition of the elders develop in the history of Israel? The destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 586 B.C. and the Babylonian captivity had violently shocked the Jews. The Babylonian captivity is calculated:

- from the 1st invasion and deportation of exiles by Nebuchadnezzar in 605 B.C. to the 1st return in 537 B.C.
- or from the destruction of the temple in 586 B.C. to the rebuilding of the temple in 516 B.C.

The God-fearing people among them realised that the exile was a punishment, because Israel had departed from the LORD their God. They realised that their only hope of reconciliation and restoration was to return to the LORD with all their heart (Jeremiah 29:13-14). They believed and hoped that if they obeyed God’s law, as revealed in the first five books of the Bible (the Law), God’s favour would again rest on them.

- During the exile, the prophets Ezekiel and Daniel led the way.
- After the exile, the scribe Ezra and the prophets Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi led the way.

The new conditions seemed to require new applications of God’s law.

For a while all went well.

However, soon a party or sect, called “the Pharisees” (meaning “those that separate themselves”) arose. They made the proclamation and spreading of all kinds of regulations, ostensibly based on God’s law, their speciality. They delighted so much in the thinking out of new regulations that they began to regulate for the sake of regulating! The highest honour was bestowed upon the most famous rabbis or teachers among them. Whatever these rabbis have said was passed on from generation to generation. The teachers of the law in schools connected to synagogues taught the children how to read and how the law was interpreted by the famous rabbis of the past. Matthew 5:21 refers to these “people long ago”, Their method of teaching was to memorise what these rabbis had taught and then to repeat it endlessly. The students had to repeat it back to their teacher. The amount of material to be memorised snowballed year by year, until at last it became so enormous that in about 200 A.D. Rabbi Jehuda committed “the tradition of the elders” to writing in the “Mishna” (the word means: “to repeat”). After this, the Mishna had to be explained and augmented. The commentaries on the Mishna were called the “Gemara” (the word means: “to complete”). By combining the Mishna with its Gemara the “Talmud” (the word means: “to learn”) was produced. The rabbinical school in Jerusalem produced “the Jerusalem Talmud” and the rabbinical school in Babylonia produced “the Babylonian Talmud”. They are two enormous books. The Babylonian Talmud contains four times more material than the Jerusalem Talmud and is generally regarded as more authoritative.

What Jesus says about the tradition of the elders. The Pharisees constantly promoted the tradition of the elders. In the setting of Matthew 15, some Pharisees and teachers of the law had probably been delegated by their colleagues in Jerusalem to try and stop the ministry of Jesus. They noticed that the disciples of Jesus did not follow the tradition of the elders, because they did not wash their hands in the way these Pharisees and teachers of the law taught everyone to do.

The tradition of the elders was only concerned with *outward things*. It had nothing to do with modern hygiene, but everything with ritual purity. They demanded that before people ate any meal, they should go through a ritual purification ceremony with respect to their unclean hands. On the market they had been in contact with the Gentiles whom they regarded as “unclean” (cf. Acts 10:28). The ceremonial way of washing hands was as follows: with their one uplifted hand they poured water on and over the other hand! Or someone poured water on and over the hands of another (2 Kings 3:11) while he turns “his fist” in the other hand (Mark 7:3) (Greek: pugmé nipsóntai). Thus, the Pharisees, teachers of the law and their followers substituted mere legalism for true piety and outward conformity to the tradition of the elders for the inner attitude of the heart.

Jesus said that in the eyes of the Pharisees his disciples had transgressed the tradition of the elders, but the Pharisees had transgressed the Word of God! He accused the religious leaders that they had subordinated God’s Word to the tradition of the elders! They had made the opinions of men more important than the revealed Word of God!

As an example, Jesus reminded them of the way they dishonoured their parents by not supporting them. If children did not want to give their parents something they needed, they *just had to say*: “My money is a gift or offering to the Lord! According to the Pharisees, merely this pronouncement released them from the obligation of supporting their parents. This was the method to keep all the money for themselves. This tradition of the elders is completely opposed to the commandment of God: “Honour you parents” (Exodus 20:12)! That is why Jesus said, “You have made the word of God null and void for the sake of your tradition. Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: ‘These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men’” (Matthew 15:6-9). Jesus regarded the traditions of the elders as opinions and teachings of mere men and not of God! Every opinion, teaching and application of man should be tested by the Word of God and subordinated to the Word of God!

What Jesus says about people who promote the tradition of the elders. Jesus regarded the Pharisees as “hypocrites”. They pretended to be pious and devout, but in reality they were hypocrites! Honouring God was a mere outward show (Matthew 6:5; Luke 18:11). Inwardly they were corrupt and their hearts were far removed from the living God! Jesus said that the worship of God by such people with human religious rules (laws) is completely in vain.

Then Jesus turned away from the Pharisees and teachers of the law and called the crowd of people to him. He told them, “What goes into a man’s mouth (even by using unwashed hands) does not make him *unclean*, but what comes out of his mouth makes him unclean.” Later, he explained to his disciples that the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart and these make a man unclean. The problem of man is not external pollution, but internal pollution! And inward pollution leads to outward pollution. The heart of man employs the mouth as its instrument for the outward expression of all kinds of sins. Out of the heart of man come evil thoughts or wicked schemes and these wicked schemes reveal themselves in wicked words and deeds.

Thus Jesus Christ exposed the Pharisees publicly as “hypocrites” and “transgressors of God’s Word”. These religious leaders pretended to be “teachers of God’s law”, but in reality they were only “promoters of human traditions”! Because Jesus put the Word of God (the Bible) above the tradition of the religious leaders and teachers, they lost their influence on the people. That is one of the reasons why they plotted to kill Jesus.

The people of God are regarded as:

- “a luxuriant tree” (Psalm 1:3; 92:12)
- “God’s vineyard” (Isaiah 5:7)
- “a well-watered garden” (Isaiah 58:11)
- “God’s field” (1 Corinthians 3:9).

Such a planting can only grow and thrive if God himself is the planter (John 3:3-8; 6:44)!

Alas, there are also other plantings that have not been planted by God, for example, “the weeds among the wheat” (Matthew 13:25,39). Jesus does not regard the Pharisees as born again. He said, “Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by its roots” (Matthew 15:13)!

Every plant which the God of the Bible has not planted, will be uprooted and thrown into the fire of hell (Matthew 3:10-12; 13:42; John 15:5-6; Jude 12). This will certainly happen in the final judgement. In the mean time, people can recognise a tree by its fruit (Matthew 7:15-20) or a vine by its fruit (John 15:4-6). Jesus regarded the religious leaders of the Jews as “blind guides”. At this point, Jesus told “the parable of the blind leading the blind”.

(2) The story of the parable is contained in Matthew 15:14.

(3) The explanation or application of the parable is contained in Matthew 13:15-20.

3. Identify the relevant and irrelevant details of the parable.

Introduce. Jesus did not intend every detail in the story of the parable to have some spiritual significance. Parables are no allegories. The relevant details are those details in the story of the parable that reinforce the central point or main theme or lesson of the parable. Therefore, we should not ascribe independent spiritual significance to every detail of the story of the parable.

Discover and discuss. Which of the details in the story of this parable are really essential or relevant?

Notes. Jesus describes “hypocrites” like the Pharisees and teachers of the law as “blind guides”. This detail is certainly essential and relevant.

4. Identify the main message of the parable.

Introduce. The main message (the central theme or lesson) of the parable is found either in the explanation or application or from the story itself. From the way Jesus Christ himself explained or applied the parables, we know how we should interpret parables. A parable normally has only one main lesson, one central point to make. Therefore, we should not try to find a spiritual truth in every detail of the story, but instead look for the one main lesson.

Discuss. What is the main message of this parable?

Notes.

The parable of the blind leading the blind in Matthew 15:14 teaches about “obedience to God’s word in God’s kingdom”.

The main message of the parable is the following: “Following blind religious leaders who depend on human traditions instead of the Word of God, will lead to disaster.”

Knowing, understanding and obeying God’s Word is one of the basic characteristics of God’s kingdom. The genuine people in God’s kingdom have eyes that have been opened by the Holy Spirit in order to see spiritual truths (1 John 2:26-27). But all people, who have not been planted by God of the Bible (that is, who are not born again), remain spiritually blind.

5. Compare the parable with parallel and contrasting passages in the Bible.

Introduce. Some parables are similar to one another and can be compared. However, the truth in all the parables has parallel or contrasting truth taught in other passages of the Bible. Try to find the most important cross-references that help us to interpret the parable. Always check the interpretation of a parable with the direct clear teaching of the Bible.

Discover and discuss. How does what each of these Bible passages teach, compare to what the parable teaches?

(1) The blindness of the Pharisees.

Read John 9:35-41; Romans 2:17-24. After Jesus had restored the physical sight of the man born blind, he also restored his spiritual sight. The man could not only see the physical reality, but he could now also see the spiritual reality! He recognised Jesus as the Messiah and Saviour! And he believed and worshipped Jesus Christ.

The Pharisees, however, claimed to understand the spiritual truths, while in reality they were spiritually blind! They did not recognise Jesus as the Messiah and Saviour of the world. And consequently they did not believe, but opposed Jesus Christ. Therefore Jesus said, “For judgement I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind” (John 9:39). The blindness of the Pharisees was spiritual!

The blindness of hypocrites like the Pharisees is *self-inflicted*, because they continually harden their own hearts against God’s Word (the Bible). When a person continues to harden his heart against the God of the Bible and the Bible, a time will come when his heart becomes completely hardened, so that he can no more understand God’s Word and can no longer repent and be saved (Matthew 13:11-15; John 3:19-20)!

The blindness of hypocrites like the Pharisees is *self-deluding*. In their blindness they continue to regard themselves as spiritual leaders of people and think that only they are able to see the spiritual realities (John 7:47-49; Romans 2:17-24)!

(2) The plank in the eye.

Read Luke 6:39-42. Jesus said, “Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? ... First, take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.” Whoever desires to become a guide for others in spiritual matters must first be regenerated and converted! He must first allow God to deal with his own hypocrisy, transgression of God’s Word and personal sins. Only after God has opened his eyes to see the spiritual truths and he has allowed God to transform his inner life, will he be able to help others.

B. THE PARABLE OF THE WISE AND FOOLISH BUILDERS

Read Matthew 7:15-27 and Luke 6:43-49.

1. Understand the natural story of the parable.

Discuss. What are the true-to-life elements of the story?

Notes.

The story consists of three parts:

The manner in which the two builders build. Two people built their own house. The kind of houses to which Jesus referred was not constructed as sturdily as many present day building regulations demand. Thieves were able to dig through a wall (Matthew 6:19). The roof was made of wooden poles on which earth and grass was packed, and it could easily be broken open (Mark 2:4; Psalm 129:6). Everything therefore depended on the foundation!

These two builders built their houses in a valley containing the bed of a watercourse. During the dry season this riverbed is dry or almost dry, with the result that it cannot damage these houses. The first builder is wise, sensible, and *thinks about the future*. He reckons with the fact that after the dry season, the wet season will come. So he builds his house to stand in every season of the year. He removes the sand or loose gravel and digs down to the rock bottom (Luke 6:48). Then he lays the foundation of his house on this rock bottom. The second builder is foolish, because he *does not consider what will happen in the future*. He builds his house directly on the sand or loose gravel layer, which lies in various thicknesses on the rock bottom.

The test to which their houses are subjected. During the rainy season, the strong wind drives thunderstorm upon thunderstorm inland from the Mediterranean Sea in the west. Beside the strong winds, there are cloudbursts and the water level in the riverbed in the valley rises rapidly. The strong winds batter against the walls and the water flushes the sand and gravel around the foundation away.

The result of the test and the reason of this result. The water cannot undermine the foundation of the first house, because its foundation is built on the rock. But it quickly washes the sand or gravel under the foundation of the second house away. Although the strong winds batter the walls of the house built on the rock, it cannot topple it, because the strong foundation keeps it in place. But the walls of the second house collapse immediately into the torrent of water and the whole house is completely swept away!

2. Examine the immediate context and determine the elements of the parable.

Discover and discuss. What is the setting, the story and the explanation or application of the parable?

Notes.

(1) **The setting of this parable is found in Matthew chapter 5-7, the Sermon on the Mount.**

It has four parts:

The contrast between the broad and narrow way. In Matthew 5:1-16, Jesus describes the righteousness of the kingdom of God. Living according to the culture of the kingdom of God makes people blessed in God's eyes. The citizens in the kingdom of God are the salt of the earth that keeps decay away, heals wounds and gives taste to everything. They are as lights in the darkness of this world. Jesus explains why the Ten Commandments are much more than merely outward obedience to laws (reckoning with the penal law). Jesus imparts righteousness through his sacrifice of atonement and demands righteousness in how the citizens of God's kingdom ought to live.

Finally he spurs people on to enter into the kingdom of God through the narrow gate (Matthew 7:13-14). He warns against prophets and religions who teach only outward righteousness (Matthew 7:15-20) or who have a religion without Jesus Christ (Matthew 7:21-27).

The contrast between the false prophets and the true prophets. In Matthew 7:15-20, Jesus teaches what false prophets do. A false prophet is not sent by the God of the Bible. He brings his own message and tells people what they like to hear (Isaiah 30:10; Jeremiah 23:9-32; 2 Timothy 4:3-4). He pretends that he is sent by God and claims that he speaks the truth.

People will be able to recognise a false prophet by the fruit he bears (Matthew 7:15-10), how he lives: especially how he kills people (in anger) (Matthew 5:21-26), how he looks at women (Matthew 5:27-30), how he views divorce (Matthew 5:31-32), how he speaks lies and keeps changing his message (Matthew 5:33-37), how he takes revenge (through so-called holy wars) (Matthew 5:38-42) and how he hates his enemies (Matthew 5:43-48).

The righteousness of true prophets is more than that of religious hypocrites as the Pharisees (Matthew 5:20,47)!

The contrast between the talkers and the doers. In Matthew 7:21-23 Jesus warns the citizens of the kingdom of God against the pretenders in the religions of the world. A talker speaks as if he knows God, but he does not do the will of the God of the Bible. He is a nominal Christian and not a born-again Christian (John 3:7). Jesus does not deny that non-Christians can perform certain miracles due to God's permissive will (for example, Judas Iscariot in Matthew 10:1) or through Satan's power (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10) or through the trickery and illusions which people create in order to

deceive the people). The reason why these people are condemned, is not because their preaching had been wrong or their miracles had been spurious, but because they had not practised what they preached (Matthew 23:3)! A doer is a person who says and does what is pleasing to God. He preaches the truth and practises the truth he preaches. A true doer is known by his life!

The contrast between the doers and the hearers. In Matthew 7:24-27, Jesus warns the citizens of God's kingdom against the foolish people. A foolish person hears what Jesus teaches, but does not put it into practice. A wise person always puts the teachings of Jesus into practice.

(2) The story of this parable is contained in Matthew 7:13-14 in the form of an exhortation.

(3) The explanation or application of this parable is actually contained in this exhortation.

Jesus interprets building upon the rock as putting the words of Jesus Christ into practice. These words are recorded in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) and in the rest of the Bible (cf. Matthew 28:19-20).

3. Identify the relevant and irrelevant details of the parable.

Discuss. Which of the details in this parable are really essential or relevant?

Notes. One of the church fathers called Chrysostom (347-407 A.D.) said, "Those who obey Christ's teachings will receive blessings, not only in the future, but here and now. The blessing of the righteous is that he has strength, which present opponents cannot destroy. The truly marvellous thing is that, not simply in fair weather, but especially in violent storms (great turmoil and continual temptations) the righteous person cannot be shaken ever so little." Chrysostom said that "the rain and floods" are metaphorical expressions for all the ills in our life that anyone could mention. The steadfastness of Christ's teachings is "the rock", which sets one above all the waves of human affairs.

The rock and the sand. Jesus does not explain these details in this parable. Therefore we should not speculate about the meaning of these details. Nevertheless, Jesus Christ reveals himself and his will by what he says and commands. Therefore, it is certainly correct to say that, as far as the spiritual meaning of the parable of the wise and foolish builders is concerned, "the Rock" represents Jesus Christ himself (and his teaching: the Word) and "the sand" represents human insights and views.

Building upon the rock or sand. Jesus explains these details and therefore they are essential details. "Building upon rock" represents putting Christ's words into practice. Everyone who lives in accordance with the words of Jesus Christ, builds his life on Jesus Christ! "Building upon sand" represents trusting in oneself, not thinking about the future and especially not putting Christ's words into practice.

The rain, the streams and the wind. Jesus does not explain these details. However, from the context it is clear that they represent "the test". The test may come in the form of false prophets (Matthew 7:15-20), or various trials (Genesis 22, Abraham; Job 1-2, Job), or temptations (Genesis 39, Joseph), or bereavement (Genesis 42:36; Job 1:18-22), or death (Acts 7:59-60; 9:36-37), but it will especially come in the final judgement (Matthew 24:42-44; 25:6,31-33; 1 Thessalonians 5:2).

The house did not fall. Jesus does not explain this detail. In the Bible it is connected to the victory of the obedient Christian. Every wise man that shows by his deeds that he has taken the words of Jesus into his heart and life will never be put to shame (1 Peter 2:6). Even the final judgement day will not be terrible for him, but instead, it will be a day of triumph (1 Thessalonians 2:19-20; 3:13; 4:16-17; 2 Thessalonians 1:7,10; 2 Timothy 4:8; Titus 2:13-14).

The house fell with a great crash. Jesus also does not explain this detail. In the Bible it is connected to the utter defeat of the disobedient people. Every foolish man, who shows his foolishness by rejecting the words of Jesus Christ, will be rejected in the judgement day.

4. Identify the main message of the parable.

Discuss. What is the main message of this parable?

Notes.

The parable of the wise and the foolish builders in Luke 6:43-49 teaches about "obedience to God's word in God's kingdom."

The main message of this parable is the following: "The foundation of a person's everlasting destination must not be sought in man or in man's opinions and traditions, but in Jesus Christ. That foundation is built by putting Christ's teachings into practice."

The man who built his house upon the sand, heard Christ's Word, but nevertheless depended on his own opinions (insight) and traditions. The man, who built his house upon the rock, depended on Christ by obeying Christ's teachings. Every ambition, which a person cherishes, every plan he makes, every thought he thinks, every word he speaks and every deed he performs, are as it were the building blocks of his house. Good building blocks must be built upon the Foundation, Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 3:9-15), especially by obeying (doing) the words of Jesus Christ.

Obedience to Christ and God's Word is one of the basic characteristics of God's kingdom! The genuine people of God's kingdom do not trust in their own abilities or the opinions and traditions of people. They put all their trust in Jesus Christ (God). They do not only hear God's word, but also put it into practice!

5. Compare the parable with parallel and contrasting passages in the Bible.

Discover and discuss. How does what each of these passages teach compare to what this parable teaches?

(1) Rejection of God's Word.

Read Psalm 118:22; Proverbs 1:20-33; Isaiah 5:24; 30:1-2; Hosea 4:6; Luke 7:30.

Hosea 4:6 says, "Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests; because you have ignored the law of your God, I also will ignore your children."

In Proverbs 1:24-28 the wisdom of God's Word says, "Since you rejected me when I called and no one gave heed when I stretched out my hand, since you ignored my advice and would not accept my rebuke, I in turn will laugh at your disaster; I will mock when calamity overtakes you. ... Then you will call to me but I will not answer." These passages warn that one cannot reject God's Word without far reaching consequences.

Isaiah 30:1-2 warns people who carry out plans that are not God's plans, who form relationships without God's Spirit and who follow a direction in life without consulting God.

(2) Obedience to God's Word.

Read Matthew 4:4; Luke 8:15; 11:28; John 14:21,23. In Luke 8:15, the good soil represents Christians who retain God's Word in a noble and good heart and who by perseverance produce a crop. The purpose of God's Word is to bear fruit in the lives of Christians.

(3) Christ as the Rock.

Read Isaiah 28:16; Romans 9:33; 1 Corinthians 3:11; 10:4; 1 Peter 2:6. 1 Peter 2:6 says that Jesus Christ is a chosen and precious cornerstone and that the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame. And 1 Corinthians 3:11 says that Jesus Christ is the one and only foundation for Christians. Both these passages teach that Jesus Christ is the Rock on which Christians must build their lives.

C. A SUMMARY OF THE MAIN TEACHINGS OR LESSONS OF THESE PARABLES ABOUT OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S WORD IN GOD'S KINGDOM

Discuss. What are the main teachings or lessons of these parables about obedience to God's word in God's kingdom? What did Jesus Christ teach us to *know* or to *believe* and what did he teach us to *be* or to *do*?

Notes.

(1) All people must know what God or Jesus Christ is like.

Jesus Christ is the Rock on which people must build their lives. Whoever builds his life on Jesus Christ, will never be shaken! Jesus Christ reveals himself and his will through his teachings. And the teachings of Jesus Christ are recorded in the Bible. Whoever puts Christ's teachings into practice, is building his life and eternal destiny onto Jesus Christ. Whoever builds his life and eternal destiny on himself or someone else, will certainly fail, because Acts 4:12 says that salvation is in no other person than Jesus Christ.

(2) Christians must know what they should be like.

Christians have the responsibility to build their lives on Jesus Christ, the Rock. Christians build their lives firmly on Jesus Christ, the Rock, when they put his teachings into practice. Why is it so attractive to put Christ's teachings into practice? In John 14:21,23 Jesus says, "Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him. ...If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him." By obeying Christ's teachings, a person will know for certain that God loves him and he will experience that God loves him! By obeying Christ's teachings, he will grow in his personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Christ will reveal himself more and more to him and make his divine presence felt. It is not so much the commandment to obey, but it is these great blessings of knowing Christ personally, and of experiencing his love and his presence in one's daily life that really motivates a Christian to obey Christ's teachings!

5	PRAYER (8 minutes)	[REACTIONS] PRAYER IN RESPONSE TO GOD'S WORD
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Take turns in the group to *pray short* to God in response to what you have learned today.
Or divide the group into two's or three's and pray to God in response to what you have learned today.

(*Group leader.* Give the group members this preparation for at home in writing or let them copy it down).

1. **Commitment.** Be committed to make disciples, build the Church and preach the kingdom.
2. **Preach, teach or study** “the parable of the blind leading the blind” and “the parable of the wise and foolish builders” together with another person or group of people.
3. **Personal time with God.** Have a quiet time from half a chapter of **Psalm 101, 103, 104 and 107** each day. Make use of the favourite truth method. Make notes.
4. **Memorisation.** (1) God is all-glorious: **1 Chronicles 29:11**. Daily review the last 5 memorised Bible verses.
5. **Bible study.** Prepare the next Bible study at home. **Romans 7:1-13**. Make use of the five steps method of Bible study. Make notes.
6. **Prayer.** Pray for someone or something specific this week and see what God is doing (Psalm 5:3).
7. **Update your notebook** on preaching God’s kingdom. Include your notes on quiet time, your memorisation notes, your teaching notes and this preparation.