

KINGDOM.

LESSON 35

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] ISAIAH 9,10,11 and 40
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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 (Isaiah 9, 10, 11 and 40). Listen to the person sharing, take him serious and accept him. Do not discuss what he shares. Take notes.

3	MEMORISATION (5 minutes) [KEY VERSES IN ROMANS] (15) ROMANS 10:17
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Review two by two. (15) **Romans 10:17**. Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

4	TEACHING (85 minutes) [THE PARABLES OF JESUS] THE RICH FOOL and THE RICH SHOW-OFF AND THE BEGGAR LAZARUS
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“The parable of the rich fool” in Luke 12:13-21 and the parable of the rich show-off and the beggar Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31 are parables about **EARTHLY POSSESSIONS 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 RICH FOOL

Read Luke 12:13-21.

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 rich man. A certain rich man produced a bumper crop. The Bible does not condemn someone for being rich or successful. Job, Abraham, Solomon and Joseph of Arimathea were all rich people. The text also does not suggest that he became rich by dishonest means (as gambling or lottery). The impression is that God blessed the work of his hands.

Materialistic. What was wrong with this man was not that he was rich, but that he was materialistic! He did not realise that his body was mortal and that he would not live for many years. He also did not take account of the fact that his riches could not satisfy his soul! While his body had many riches, his soul had nothing!

Selfish. This rich man only thought about himself, not about other people. He made plans in which only “I” and “my possessions” had a place. He gave no thought to the very many people in the world who are hungry and he did not consider helping them by sharing with them some of his riches.

Atheist. This rich man did not thank and glorify God for his wealth and success. He behaved like an atheist. King David said, “Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits” (Psalm 103:2)! But this rich man said to himself (to his soul), “Soul, you have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take it easy, eat, drink, and have a good time” (Luke 12:18-19)! He did not regard all his benefits as things entrusted to him by God’s grace. James 1:17 says,

“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights (the starry sky), who does not change like the shifting shadows”.

Unexpected death. That same moment God said to him, “You fool! This very night your life (your soul) will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?” How God spoke to him, is not stated, but it could have been directly (by an audible voice or his Spirit), in his conscience or through a prophet. Important is that God called him “a fool”, because he seemed to think that he had no need for God.

He thought that he was the captain of his soul and the master of his destiny. God was going to take his soul away from his body (that is: he is going to die), not after many more years of a happy life, but that very same night! He was a fool to think that he was in control of the destiny of his life and the time when his life would end! He never gave a thought to the words of the prophet Isaiah, “A voice said, ‘Cry out!’ And I said, ‘What shall I cry?’ ” “All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field. The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the Lord blows on them. Surely the people are like grass. The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of God stands for ever” (Isaiah 40:6-8).

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 Luke 12:4-7,13-15.

Worrying about physical death. Jesus had warned the crowd against worrying about the death of their bodies. He said, “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. But I will show you whom you should fear. Fear him, who after the killing of the body has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him” (Luke 12:4-5)! Jesus encouraged his disciples concerning the question of physical death. He said that the worst their enemies can do is killing their bodies. They cannot kill their soul. Their power to do evil against Christians is limited to their physical body here on earth. More power than that they do not have! But Jesus warned people against eternal death! The power to bring about temporary physical death is certainly not to be compared with the power to cast into never-ending punishment in hell.

Worrying about money. Someone in the crowd asked Jesus to intervene in an inheritance dispute. The Old Testament regulations concerning the division of an inheritance in Israel are written in Deuteronomy 21:15-17, Numbers 27:8-11 and Numbers 36. It is possible that in the present case the older brother was not willing to give one third of the inheritance to his younger brother. Anyway, it seemed as if injustice was done, and because Jewish teachers of the law sometimes settled matters of this nature, Jesus was asked to arbitrate in this matter.

But Jesus refused to comply, probably because he did not wish to ignore the authorities who were supposed to deal with this matter and also because his task of seeking and saving the lost was far more important. Jesus knew that this man’s preoccupation with material affairs had its root in greed. Therefore he told the parable of the rich fool to the entire crowd listening.

(2) The story of the parable is contained in Luke 12:16-20.

(3) The explanation or application of the parable is contained in Luke 12:20-21, partly in the story and partly in Jesus’ final warning.

Jesus said that only a fool thinks that he is in control of the destiny of his life and the time when his life would end! Life is something, which not even the rich can possess or control! Jesus warned that anyone who is only concerned with material riches and ignores the spiritual riches is a fool and will die as the fool in the parable. The rich fool’s fundamental mistake was that he thought that he could build up his life on the basis of his earthly possessions!

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 not 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 only gives “**the rich man**” a particular meaning. He represents every person who stores up money and material possessions for himself, but is not rich in God’s sight.

4. Identify the main message of the parable.

Introduce. The main message 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 rich fool in Luke 12:13-21 teaches about “earthly possessions in God’s kingdom”.

The main message of this parable is the following. “People must not live for themselves, but must reckon with God in every aspect of their lives. They must be thoroughly conscious of their dependence on God, especially in the matter of earthly possessions and eternal life.”

Dependence on God for one’s daily life is one of the basic characteristics of God’s kingdom. The genuine people of God’s kingdom do not build up their lives on the basis of their material possessions, but in complete dependence on God.

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.

(1) How does the Bible view material wealth?

- Nowhere in the Bible does God condemn material wealth as such.
- Abraham was very wealthy in livestock and precious metals (Genesis 13:2).
- God gave king Solomon not only wisdom, but also riches and honour (1 Kings 3:10-13).
- Job owned so much that he was known as the greatest man among the people of the East (Job 1:3; 42:12).
- Joseph of Arimathea was a disciple of Jesus and he was also a rich man (Matthew 27:57).
- God commands those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant and not to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God. It is God who richly provides people with everything for their enjoyment. God commands those who are rich to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves in the coming age of the new heaven and the new earth (1 Timothy 6:17-19; cf. Matthew 6:19-21)!

(2) What are some dangers of wealth?

- Wealth may cause a person to become proud and forget the Lord (Deuteronomy 8:11-14).
- Wealth may cause a person to put his trust in things and become unfaithful to God (Job 31:24-28).
- Wealth may cause a person to become dissatisfied with what he has and to give his whole life only to the increase of his materialistic possessions (Ecclesiastes 5:10-11).
- Wealth may hinder a person from entering God’s kingdom (Mark 10:21-26).
- Wealth may cause a person to become arrogant, threatening, oppressive or selfish, stingy and unjust (Psalm 73:2-12; James 5:1-6).

(3) How does what each of these Bible passages teach, compare to what the parable teaches?

- Psalm 37:4-6. Whoever trusts in the Lord and delights in him, to him the Lord will give the desires of his heart and make his righteousness visible to other people.
- Proverbs 16:2-3. Whoever commits to the Lord whatever he does, to him the Lord will make his plans succeed.
- Matthew 6:33. Whoever first seeks God’s kingdom and righteousness, to him God will give all the other necessities of life.
- 1 Corinthians 10:31. Whatever you do, do it for the glory of God.
- Colossians 3:24-25. Whatever you do, do it with all your heart as working for the Lord, not for people. Then you will receive, not an earthly inheritance from people, but an inheritance from the Lord! This inheritance consists, among other things, of the new heaven and the new earth!

(4) How does Matthew 6:19-24 compare to what the parable teaches?

Whoever serves God, stores up treasures in heaven for himself. The people of God’s kingdom (Christians) must continually focus on storing up treasures in heaven for themselves.

The treasures on earth are destroyed by moth and rust. “Moth and rust” represent those agencies and processes that cause earthly treasures to diminish in value and finally to cease completely to serve their purpose. Thus, bread becomes mouldy (Joshua 9:5), clothing wears out (Psalm 102:26), fields become weed-infested (Proverbs 24:30), walls and fences break down (Proverbs 24:31), roofs cave in so that houses begin to leak (Ecclesiastes 10:18) and gold and silver become tarnished and perish (1 Peter 1:7,18). Likewise, termites, typhoons, earthquakes, floods, plant diseases, soil erosion, human mistakes and accidents, etc. cause havoc in earthly treasures. Thieves break through the clay walls of

houses and steal. Inflation, oppressive taxation that may amount to confiscation, bank failures, stock market slumps and crashes, expenses in connection with prolonged illnesses, these and many similar woes have the same effect. Also the human body, including that of the strongest people, gradually wears away (Psalm 32:3; 39:4-7; 90:10; 103:14-16). When a man dies, all his earthly treasures on which he had planned his hopes vanish with him.

The treasures in heaven cannot be destroyed and cannot be taken away. They include the many blessings of God's kingdom, like the following: a faithfulness which endures forever (Psalm 138:8); a life that will never end (John 3:16); a spring of water that will never cease to bubble up within the one who drinks of it (John 4:14); a gift that will never be lost (John 6:37-39); a strong and protecting hand out of which none of Christ's sheep can ever be snatched (John 10:28); a chain of God's sovereign actions that will never be broken (Romans 8:28-30); a love from which God's chosen ones shall never be separated (Romans 8:37-39); a calling that will never be revoked (Romans 11:29); a foundation that will never be destroyed (2 Timothy 2:19); a kingdom that cannot be shaken (Hebrews 12:28; Daniel 2:44); and an inheritance that will never fade out (1 Peter 1:4-5).

"The eye is the lamp of the body". Just as the physical eye brings a person in contact with his earthly environment, so his spiritual eye or mind keeps him in contact with the heavenly Father and guides him in spiritual and moral matters. However, the strong craving for earthly treasures can cause a person to become blind to the spiritual and moral issues. By missing what should have been his goal, namely, to promote the glory of God, this person will miss everything!

6. Summarise the main teachings of the parable.

Discuss. What are the main teachings or messages of this parable? What did Jesus Christ teach us to *know* or to *believe* and what did he teach us to *be* or to *do*?

Notes.

(1) Independence from God.

People today save up for their old age and contribute to pension schemes. They take out life insurances and insurances for almost everything they possess or do. But on the human plain there can never be assurance of life itself! There cannot be assurance of a secure income, or health, etc. due to sickness and death, inflation or the collapse of an economy, or wars and famine. Life on earth can be ended in one moment! Enjoyment of earthly possessions can be spoiled by sickness or an accident. It is utterly foolish to think that one has done everything for his future on earth, while he has totally neglected to prepare for his eternal future after death! Everyone who excludes God from his life or work is a fool (Psalm 14:1-3).

(2) Greed.

Greed leads to independence from God. Nothing is said about this rich man committing ethical sins, like dishonesty, cheating, stealing, corruption, etc. We may take for granted that he was honest in gaining his riches. But his downfall was that he had *the wrong spiritual attitude: he planned his life without God!* He did not show gratefulness to God for his blessings, but only praised his own hard work (1 Corinthians 4:7). He was not content, because he always wanted more wealth (Philippians 4:11-12). He did not share, but lived for his own enjoyment (1 Corinthians 15:32). He did not trust God or surrender his life to God, because he kept worrying about his possessions (Matthew 6:31-34). And he never gave a thought to the transience of life. If life itself is gone, then what is left to worry about (Matthew 16:26)? He ran after the temporary and perishable, and neglected to seek the eternal and imperishable (2 Corinthians 5:7). In summary, he lived a life of indifference! His human desires, very understandably, are not necessarily objectionable, but they came to stand at the top of his value-system. For the rich fool, making a profit became a higher value than truth, justice and mercy.

(3) Slave of money.

Wealth has a way of growing stronger than the one who owns it, so that it eventually comes to own him. Wealth finally causes him to lose his moral and spiritual freedom and he becomes a slave of material possessions.

B. THE PARABLE OF THE RICH SHOW-OFF AND THE BEGGAR LAZARUS

Read Luke 16:19-31.

1. Understand the natural story of the parable.

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

Notes.

The life of the rich man and the beggar before death is true to life in the present. Their life after death is Jesus' figurative description of life in the hereafter.

The rich man and the beggar before death. This man was very rich, because he could afford to be dressed in purple and fine linen. The purple dye was obtained from the shellfish and was a very expensive process. Often only the royalty wore such purple robes. He wore such expensive clothes and lived such an extravagant life of luxury every day, because

he wanted everybody to know that he was rich! This man was a show-off. But this rich man was not only a show-off; he was also merciless, insensitive and selfish.

At the gate of this rich man was a beggar. He was laid there every day, because he evidently could not walk. His name “Lazarus” was derived from the Hebrew name “Eleazar” and means “God has helped”. Jesus probably gave him this name in the story, because he wanted to indicate that this beggar, in all his distress, had put his trust in God. This man was totally unable to provide for his own needs. He was not only hungry, he was also covered in sores, which the street dogs came and licked. This could hurt and be very irritating.

The rich man must have seen the beggar every day, because he was lying at his gate! He had an excellent opportunity to show pity and offer some help. Nevertheless, he did not even give the beggar the leftovers of his food. He only lived for himself!

The beggar and the rich man after death. The beggar died. Nothing is said about his burial. If there was a burial, it must have been so obscure and dismal that it was passed by in silence. However, what happened to his soul was all-important! Angels immediately carried his soul to Abraham’s bosom (Hebrews 1:14). “Abraham’s bosom” is a Hebrew expression, which is derived from their practice to recline on couches at dinners and festivals, and reclining at someone’s bosom (the right hand side) indicated special favour (Luke 14:7; John 1:18). The beggar’s soul was brought to heaven where he reclined at heaven’s feast-table in a place of great honour!

The rich man also died and was buried. He was probably given a splendid funeral on earth. A lot of care was given to his dead body, but nothing is said about his soul! What his family and friends on earth did not know was what happened to him after death! The rich man opened his eyes in “Hades”, the Greek word denoting three possible places, depending on the context:

- the disembodied state of death
- the grave as the place of the body of the departed person
- hell as the place of eternal punishment.

In this context, the rich man opened his eyes in hell, because he was suffering agony and torment in its fire.

The irreversible destiny of man. Although the rich man saw Abraham and Lazarus in the distance, and although the conversation between the rich man and Abraham was respectful (they addressed one another as “father” and “son”), it did not bring any relief to his suffering. The rich man showed that his character had not changed - he still viewed Lazarus as a servant, who should do him a favour even although he never showed any favour to Lazarus himself! He pleaded with Abraham to send Lazarus over to his side to relief his suffering!

Abraham denied his request as improper and impossible! Firstly, it would be improper, contrary to the requirements of justice, to bring relief to the rich man’s suffering, because the rich man was now receiving what he deserved! While he lived on earth, he had the wrong priorities. He had not helped Lazarus, that is, he had not lived a life useful for his fellow men and to the glory of God. Secondly, it would be impossible. Crossing over from one to the other side was forever and absolutely impossible. In Israel there are deep ravines between valleys, and Jesus used this as a graphic and unforgettable symbolical representation of the irreversibility of a person’s lot after death! This chasm was intended for rendering the crossing over impossible.

The only message of warning for man. Then the rich man pleaded with Abraham to send Lazarus from the dead to his brothers on earth to warn them, because he was afraid that his brothers would later also blame him for the bad example he had given to them. The rich man was still selfish - he did not think of people in general, but only of his own family!

Abraham replied that they have Moses and the Prophets, that is, the Old Testament. In the Old Testament the life, which is the exact opposite of that which the rich man had lived, is commended. The Bible exhorts all people to trust in God, to love other people and to especially care for the underprivileged and despised people in the world.

The rich man said that people would be converted if someone from the dead would go to them. He was wrong, because when Jesus raised other people from the dead, like another Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, many people were not converted. Instead, they plotted to kill that Lazarus (John 12:10) and were more determined than ever before to kill Jesus (John 11:47-50). Also after Jesus Christ himself was resurrected from the dead, many still refused to believe in him (Acts 4:2; 17:18). Abraham said to the rich man, that if people did not want to listen to the warnings in the Bible, they would certainly not listen to anybody who came from the dead to them!

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 the parable is contained in Luke chapters 15 and 16.

In Luke chapter 15, Jesus told three parables about the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son, in which he taught God’s attitude towards the lost people in the world. This was in response to the bad attitude of the Pharisees and

teachers of the law towards the tax collectors and sinners. In these three parables, Jesus exposed the sinful attitude towards people!

In Luke chapter 16, Jesus told two parables. In the parable of the shrewd manager, Jesus exposed the sinful attitude towards material possessions (money). In the parable of the rich show-off and the beggar Lazarus, he exposed the wicked handling of both people and money! The rich show-off completely neglected to make friends for himself by using worldly wealth (Luke 16:9). He was the kind of person who was highly valued among men, but detestable in God's sight (Luke 16:15). He was the exact opposite of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37).

(2) The story of the parable is contained in Luke 16:19-31.

(3) The explanation or application of the parable is not given.

It must be deduced from the story and the setting.

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

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

Notes.

(1) Allegorising. Explaining a parable as an allegory.

An example of a wrong interpretation of this parable is the interpretation of Gregory the Great (A.D. 540-604). He treated the parable as an allegory. Because his interpretation cannot be deduced from the context, it must be rejected.

He interpreted the parable as follows: "The rich man represented the Jews, who made a cult of exterior things and misused the law for their own vain motives. Lazarus covered with sores represented the Gentiles, who were ashamed to confess their sins. The proud Jews refused to admit the Gentiles to the knowledge of the law. And the dogs represented the preachers who cure wounds of the soul by preaching God's Word and listening to the confessions of sinners."

While the allegorical interpretation of Gregory cannot be accepted, there is much more in favour with his moral interpretation of this parable. Gregory warned against the outward show of possessions and exalted the virtue of poverty. He admonished his hearers to lose no opportunity for doing works of mercy. He said, "Learn to despise all the things of earth; scorn all transient honours and seek the glory which endures. Respect all the poor you meet, and when you see them ignored by the world, treat them as friends of God. Share your riches with them ... Why are you slow to give, when everything you give to the poor man on earth, you give to him who is in heaven?"

(2) The irrelevant details.

Jesus does not give any particular meaning to the following details and thus they are not essential or relevant for the understanding of the parable. The condition of people after death and the communication between them is presented in literal terms in order to create a vivid impression. But all these details may not be interpreted literally. For example: "the lifting up of eyes and seeing", "the dipping of a finger" and "the touching of a tongue" are not literal and only enhance the story of the parable. One may also not conclude that "the persons in hell and the persons in heaven are able to talk to one another", because any further teaching on this subject is lacking in the Bible. All such details in the story of the parable only serve to enhance the story and do not teach specific truths.

(3) The relevant details.

Nevertheless, this parable does convey certain truths concerning the life after death, because these truths are also taught in other passages of the Bible. The fact that people who have died are not asleep, but fully conscious, is relevant.

That some people are definitely saved and in heaven with God, while others are suffering in hell, is a relevant fact. Also relevant is the fact that God does not allow people on earth to communicate with the spirits of dead people (Deuteronomy 18:9-13) and also does not allow any spirit of dead people to communicate with people on earth (Job 14:21; Ecclesiastes 9:5-6; Isaiah 63:16)! God desires that all people listen to his Word as revealed in the Bible (Isaiah 8:19-20)!

Being a rich man living in luxury. This is a relevant detail. Being rich in itself is not sinful, but being selfish and not using one's riches for the benefit of others is sinful. The rich man was not condemned because he did something evil, but because he neglected to do something good to his neighbour!

Lazarus, being carried to Abraham's bosom. This is a relevant detail. Abraham represents "the father of all believers" (Romans 4:11)! The fact that the beggar was carried to Abraham's bosom represents him as being welcomed in heaven. In heaven the spirits of the saved people are together in God's presence (Hebrews 12:22-23). The fact that Jesus gave the beggar the name "Lazarus", which means "God has helped", is relevant. It shows that the beggar, in spite of his earthly sufferings, trusted in God.

Being in hell where the rich man was in torment. This is a relevant detail. In harmony with the teaching of other passages in the Bible, hell really exists and represents the place of the eternal destiny of the unbelievers and the wicked.

A great chasm that no one can cross. This is a relevant detail. In harmony with the teaching of other passages in the Bible, the eternal destiny of every person, which is either heaven or hell, is determined by whom a person trusted and

how he lived while he was still on earth. This destiny is absolutely irreversible! After death, there is no second chance for people to choose for Jesus Christ!

4. Identify the main message of the parable.

Discuss. What is the main message of this parable?

Notes.

This parable of the rich show-off and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31 teaches about “materialism in God’s kingdom”.

The main message of this parable is the following. “The consequences of a person’s life-style before death in this present world are irreversible after death! Every person’s eternal destiny (either heaven or hell) is determined by in whom he believed and whom he served in the world before his death! God holds every person responsible for how he relates to especially the underprivileged people in the world and how he uses his material possessions.”

Sharing one’s material possessions with the underprivileged is one of the basic characteristics of God’s kingdom. The genuine people of God’s kingdom live a life-style worthy of their calling (Ephesians 4:1): With respect to material possessions, God called them to share and to give, to be merciful and caring.

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

(1) How does what each of these Bible passages teach compare to what the parable teaches?

Read Psalm 119:105; 1 Corinthians 10:6,11; Ephesians 4:32 to 5:2.

The whole Bible, both Old Testament and New Testament, shows how God wants people to live. It is full of teachings and examples of how Jesus Christ lived and how Christians should live. The rich show-off completely neglected the teachings and examples of the Bible!

(2) Theories about life after death. See manual 5, supplement 2.

C. A SUMMARY OF THE MAIN TEACHINGS OR LESSONS OF THE PARABLES ABOUT EARTHLY POSSESSIONS IN GOD’S KINGDOM

Discuss. What are the main teachings or lessons of the parables about earthly possessions 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 is like.

One great lesson of these parables is they show that God will hold every person responsible for how he relates to especially the underprivileged people in the world and how he uses his earthly possessions in the world. The consequences of his life-style before death in this present world are irreversible after death! Every person’s eternal destiny, which is either heaven or hell, is determined by whom they trusted and served before death in this world (Matthew 6:24; 25:34-46).

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

Another great lesson of these parables is that they show us what God wants us to be and to do. They teach that God wants people not to live for themselves, but to live their lives thoroughly conscious of their dependence on God, especially in the matter of life and in the matter of earthly possessions. He wants people to be sensitive to the needs of people and to show pity to the underprivileged people in the world.

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.

6	PREPARATION (2 minutes)	[ASSIGNMENT] FOR NEXT LESSON
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(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 rich fool” and the parable of “the rich show-off and the beggar Lazarus” together with another person or group of people.

3. Personal time with God. Have a quiet time from half a chapter of **Isaiah 41, 42, 45 and 46** each day.
Make use of the favourite truth method. Make notes.
4. Memorisation. Daily **review** the last 5 memorised Bible verses. (11) Romans 8:1, (12) Romans 8:38-39, (13) Romans 10:9-10, (14) Romans 10:9-10, (15) Romans 10:17.
5. Bible study. Prepare the next Bible study at home. **Romans 10:1-21**.
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.