1. The Samaritan woman at the well

An account · John 4:4-30, 39-42 (WEB)

Short summary

Jesus sat by Jacob’s well and asked a Samaritan woman for a drink. He spoke with her about living water, worship and the Messiah. He told her that she had had five husbands and that the man she now had was not her husband. Jesus identified himself to her as the Messiah. She left her water pot, went into the city and invited people to come and see him. Many Samaritans believed because of her testimony, and more believed after hearing Jesus themselves.

From the passage

but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never thirst again; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.”

John 4:14 · World English Bible

Lesson to consider

Jesus speaks truthfully with the woman and offers living water. Her response invites reflection on listening to Jesus and telling others what he has said.

Reflect or discuss

What does Jesus say about the water he gives, and how does the woman respond to meeting him?

2. Mary and Martha

An account · Luke 10:38-42 (WEB)

Short summary

Martha welcomed Jesus into her house. Her sister Mary sat at Jesus' feet and heard his word. Martha was distracted with much serving and asked Jesus to tell Mary to help her. Jesus answered that Martha was anxious and troubled about many things, but that Mary had chosen the good part, which would not be taken away from her.

From the passage

but one thing is needed. Mary has chosen the good part, which will not be taken away from her."

Luke 10:42 · World English Bible

Lesson to consider

Mary gives her attention to Jesus while Martha is anxious and distracted. Consider how you can make room to hear his word amid everyday responsibilities.

Reflect or discuss

What responsibilities compete for your attention, and what does Mary choose to do in this passage?

3. The persistent widow and the unjust judge

A parable · Luke 18:1-8 (WEB)

Short summary

Jesus told this parable about a judge who did not fear God or respect people. A widow repeatedly asked him for justice against her adversary. He refused for a time, then decided to give her justice because she kept bothering him. Jesus contrasted the judge's response with God's care for his chosen ones who cry to him day and night. He ended by asking whether the Son of Man would find faith on the earth when he comes.

From the passage

He also spoke a parable to them that they must always pray and not give up,

Luke 18:1 · World English Bible

Lesson to consider

Jesus gives the purpose at the start: people ought always to pray and not give up. The widow's persistence introduces his teaching about God hearing those who cry to him.

Reflect or discuss

How does the opening verse guide your understanding of the whole parable?

4. Lydia hears the message and offers hospitality

An account · Acts 16:13-15 (WEB)

Short summary

On the Sabbath, Paul and his companions went outside the city gate to a riverside place of prayer and spoke to the women gathered there. Lydia, a seller of purple from Thyatira and a worshipper of God, listened. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to Paul's message. After she and her household were baptised, she urged the travellers to stay in her house.

From the passage

A certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, one who worshiped God, heard us. The Lord opened her heart to listen to the things which were spoken by Paul.

Acts 16:14 · World English Bible

Lesson to consider

The account credits the Lord with opening Lydia's heart. Her invitation also gives a concrete example of hospitality following her response to the message.

Reflect or discuss

What does the passage say the Lord did, and what did Lydia then offer?

5. The workers in the vineyard

A parable · Matthew 20:1-16 (WEB)

Short summary

Jesus compared the Kingdom of Heaven to a householder who hired labourers at different times of day. The first workers agreed to a denarius for the day. At evening, those hired last received a denarius, and the first workers expected more. When they received the agreed amount, they complained. The householder said he had done them no wrong and asked whether they resented his generosity.

From the passage

Isn’t it lawful for me to do what I want to with what I own? Or is your eye evil, because I am good?’

Matthew 20:15 · World English Bible

Lesson to consider

In this parable about the Kingdom of Heaven, the householder keeps his agreement and chooses to be generous. Consider how comparison can turn another person’s good fortune into a cause for resentment.

Reflect or discuss

Why do the first workers complain even though they receive the amount they agreed to?

6. Peter walks towards Jesus on the water

An account · Matthew 14:22-33 (WEB)

Short summary

Jesus came towards the disciples' boat walking on the sea. Peter asked Jesus to command him to come on the water. Jesus told him to come, and Peter got out of the boat and walked towards him. When Peter saw the strong wind, he was afraid and began to sink. He called for the Lord to save him. Jesus immediately stretched out his hand and took hold of him.

From the passage

Immediately Jesus stretched out his hand, took hold of him, and said to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?"

Matthew 14:31 · World English Bible

Lesson to consider

Peter calls to Jesus when he begins to sink, and Jesus immediately reaches for him. The account offers a starting point for reflecting on fear, faith and asking the Lord for help.

Reflect or discuss

What does Peter ask when he is afraid, and how quickly does Jesus respond?

7. Jesus describes the good shepherd

Jesus' teaching · John 10:1-18 (WEB)

Short summary

Jesus described a shepherd who calls his own sheep by name and leads them. He identified himself as the door of the sheep and as the good shepherd. The hired hand runs away when the wolf comes because he does not care for the sheep. Jesus says that he knows his own and lays down his life for the sheep.

From the passage

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

John 10:11 · World English Bible

Lesson to consider

Jesus identifies himself as the good shepherd who knows his sheep and lays down his life for them. His words invite reflection on his care and on hearing and following him.

Reflect or discuss

What distinguishes the good shepherd from the hired hand in Jesus' description?

8. The servants entrusted with talents

A parable · Matthew 25:14-30 (WEB)

Short summary

A man going on a journey entrusted his goods to three servants, giving five talents, two talents and one talent according to each servant's ability. The first two traded and gained as much again. The third dug a hole and hid his master's money. When the master returned and settled accounts, he praised the first two as good and faithful servants. The third returned the single talent and was rebuked.

From the passage

"His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a few things, I will set you over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'

Matthew 25:21 · World English Bible

Lesson to consider

The parable calls attention to faithfulness and accountability for what is entrusted. A talent here is a quantity of money, rather than the modern English word for an ability.

Reflect or discuss

What is the same about the master's praise for the servants who began with different amounts?

9. Samson and Delilah

An account · Judges 16:4-22 (WEB)

Short summary

The Philistine rulers offered Delilah money to discover how Samson could be bound. She repeatedly questioned him. Eventually he told her that no razor had come on his head, because he had been a Nazirite to God from his mother's womb. While he slept, a man shaved off his seven locks. Samson tried to go out as before, but the passage says that he did not know the LORD had departed from him. The Philistines seized him, blinded him and imprisoned him.

From the passage

She said, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" He awoke out of his sleep, and said, "I will go out as at other times, and shake myself free." But he didn't know that the LORD had departed from him.

Judges 16:20 · World English Bible

Lesson to consider

Samson expects to go out as before, but he does not know that the LORD has departed from him. His presumption invites serious reflection on dependence on God and the consequences of his choices.

Reflect or discuss

What detail in verse 20 would be missed if the story were described only as losing strength through a haircut?

10. The rich man asks about eternal life

An account · Mark 10:17-27 (WEB)

Short summary

A man ran to Jesus, knelt and asked what he should do to inherit eternal life. Jesus spoke about the commandments. The man said he had kept them from his youth. Jesus looked at him and loved him, then told him to sell what he had, give to the poor and follow him. The man went away sorrowful because he had great possessions. When the disciples asked who could be saved, Jesus said that all things are possible with God.

From the passage

Jesus, looking at them, said, “With men it is impossible, but not with God, for all things are possible with God.”

Mark 10:27 · World English Bible

Lesson to consider

The passage brings the man’s attachment to possessions into the open while also recording Jesus’ love for him. Read the ending about God’s power along with the call to give and follow.

Reflect or discuss

Which parts of Jesus’ response challenge you, and what does verse 27 add to the discussion?