

# Morning Devotion Parables

## Parable Presentations

The following parables are designed for use in the Morning Devotions as a way to present the theme for the day in a visual way. Use the suggestions to create a worship that will be meaningful to your group.

*Make posters with the theme printed in large letters.*

*Choose songs the campers are familiar with that support the theme.*

*Plan for prayer time.*

*Use the printed version of the parable for the scripture reading.*

*These have been selected specifically for easy understanding.*

*Use the suggestions for presenting the expanded version of the parable in a creative way Practice to make it flow. A drama class would be a great place to prepare for these each day.*

Parables can be acted out, using simple props and costumes. Directions are given at the beginning of each parable for materials needed.

Readers' theater offers an option if preparation time is limited. Each player stands or is seated on a chair or stool facing the audience. The presider introduces each person and identifies the character they represent. The script is then read, using expression and imagination, but without action or movement.

Some scripts may lend themselves to use in an alternate setting such as campfire or evening devotions, if done with the large group. If this is the choice, use only the scripture version in the morning worship.

Make use of the gifts within the campers to create visual elements for the worship.

## Day One: Finding the Road

The tax collectors and sinners all came to listen to Jesus. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law began to complain: "Look, this man welcomes sinners and even eats with them." Then Jesus told them this story. "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep but loses one of them. Then he will leave the other ninety-nine sheep in the open field and go out and look for the lost sheep until he finds it. And when he finds it, he happily puts it on his shoulders and goes home. He calls to his fiends and neighbors and says, be happy with me because I found my lost sheep. In the same way I tell you there is more joy in heaven over one sinner who changes his heart and life, than over ninety-nine good people who don't need to change." Luke 15:1-7, *Youth Bible*

***Suggestions for presenting the parable:*** This story can be acted out simply with two characters and a few props. The actors do not have to speak. They respond to the narrative as it is read.

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Shawn shivered in the predawn dampness. He pulled the pieces of cardboard up over his legs where they had slipped off. This shouldn't be happening to him. He should be home in his bed with blankets. "No," he said aloud, "even if I was in my own house, I wouldn't have been

able to sleep. No one gets any rest in my family!”

Shawn gave up the struggle and sat up. It was beginning to get light and he could make out the clutter around him. He moved out into the street to look for water and something to eat. It seemed like days since he'd had real food. He stopped to wash off the cut on his foot at the hydrant that was leaking water. He hoped it wouldn't get infected, but there was no medicine here like what he could find in the cabinet at home.

“Look's like a bad cut,” said a voice from behind him. “Maybe you could use some of this.” The stranger handed Shawn a tube of ointment.

Shawn hesitated, nervous about meeting strangers. Cautiously he took the tube and mumbled his thanks. After tending to his foot, he returned the tube.

The stranger put the tube in his pocket and looked around. “Whoa! Dismal place, the streets,” he observed. “You look like you could use a hot meal and a change of clothes.”

“It's O.K.,” Shawn said hurriedly. He trusted no one, especially not a stranger,

“Well, in case you change your mind, here's a card with an address on it. This place can help.” The stranger handed Shawn the card.

Shawn looked up defensively. “I don't need any help. I can take care of myself.”

“I know you can, but remember you've got the card if you need anything.” The stranger started down the sidewalk.

“Who do you think I am anyway,” Shawn called angrily toward his back, “the lost sheep or something?”

The stranger turned and smiled. Shawn felt flooded with a warm feeling he had not experienced in along, long time. The stranger waved and continued down the street and around the corner. It was only after he was out of sight that Shawn looked at the card in his hand. It read: *The Shepherd Center.*

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## **Day Two: Along the Road**

A lawyer asked Jesus questions about what he should do to inherit eternal life. Jesus talked to him about the Jewish law, reminding him to love God, himself; and his neighbor. In response to the question, “Who is my neighbor?” Jesus told this story.

A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having

poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, “Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.”

Jesus then asked, “Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.” Luke 10:25-37 adapted

***Preparation for presenting the parable:*** This drama can be a powerful experience if enough time is allowed for the individuals to practice. It involves very little dialogue because the drama is in the acting. If done in a closed room, plan to dim the lights near the end as each lighted candle adds to the scene. Use the drama as is or add

these modifications:

Print the name of each actor (The Light, Hungry, Hurt . . .) on a card and hang it on the back of the actor so it can be seen as the actor comes forward the first time. Have the actors emerge from places in the audience rather than from the back or sides

of the room.

The characters include **The Light, Sad, Runner, Cold, Hungry, Angry, Hurt, Hopeless, the Voice, First Speaker, and Second Speaker.** For props you will need candles, matches, two bags, a jacket, a dinner roll, and a word card for the song.

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The scene opens with **The Light** coming in from the center back, walking to the front, looking around with interest, then removing a candle from a bag, lighting it, and placing it on a table or worship center.

**The Light** stands quietly to one side of the center watching the flame.

**Sad** enters slowly from one side, dragging her feet, head down, unhappy attitude.

**The Light** watches, crosses to **Sad**, puts an arm around her shoulder and makes whispering sounds.

**Sad** looks up at **The Light**, straightens up.

**The Light** removes a candle, lights it from the one on the table, and hands it to **Sad**.

**Sad** moves to the far end of the front and stands motionless, looking at the candle.

**Runner** comes in from the back, moving quickly, stumbles, falls, and gets up holding his elbow.

**The Light** comes to **Runner**, inspects the hurt, pretends to clean the arm and bandage the injury.

**Sad** comes forward as **The Light** hands a candle to **Runner**.

**Sad** lights the candle **Runner** holds. Both move to the end of the front, smiling.

**Cold** enters shivering.

**The Light** watches, crosses to **Cold**, removes a jacket and places it around **Cold**.

**Runner** comes forward as **The Light** hands a candle to **Cold**.

**Runner** lights the candle.

**Cold** smiles and both move to the end of the front.

**Hungry** enters, holding his stomach, slightly bent.

**The Light** watches, removes a roll in a napkin and hands it to **Hungry**, placing an arm around him.

**Cold** comes forward and lights the candle **The Light** hands to **Hungry**. Both move to the front.

**Angry** and **Hurt** enter with **Hurt** in front and **Angry** stomping along behind, shaking a fist.

**The Light** comes between the two, whispers first to one, then to the other.

**Angry** and **Hurt** shake hands.

**The Light** puts an arm around each and pulls them together so they hug.

**Hungry** comes forward to light the candles **The Light** gives each of them. **All** move to the front.

**All** stand in a semicircle with smiles and candles.

**A Voice** from the back reads the following scripture: *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself (Luke 10:2-7 NRSV)*

**First Speaker:** (*Enters from the side*) I want to help, but I'm only one person. There are billions of people in the world! What can one person do? (**The Light** hands a candle to the speaker. *The person standing closest lights the candle.*)

**Second Speaker:** (*Enters from the opposite side*) I think we can do it, one person at a time! (*The Light brings the speaker a candle and a bag of candles to pass out to one side of the room. The Light begins to pass out candles on the other side as the Second Speaker continues.*)

**Second Speaker:** There are (*number of people in the room*) here now who are willing to help wherever they see a need. We can help one another and pass the love along. (*Those with lighted candles move to light the candles of others, gathering in a circle around the room.*)

Close with either "Pass It On" or "Salt and Light" found in *Songs from the Loft*.

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### Day Three: Fork in the Road

A sower went out to sow, and as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty,

Hear then the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet such a person has no root, but endures only for awhile, mid when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away. As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty. Matthew 13:3-8,18-23 NRSV

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### **Preparation for presenting the parable:**

Give the actors ample time to work on the lines or use cards for prompting and simple props to set the two scenes, one in the store and one at the corner.

*Scene opens with a table set up as the checkout counter in a convenience store. One actor stands behind the counter taking money from a customer buying toothpaste. The other two actors wait in line. One holds a soft drink can. Remind the actors to face each other and the audience while speaking.*

**Mike:** What are you doing?

**Tim:** Trying to decide. (*Looks at candy*) There are so many choices. Do I want chocolate or caramel, plain or with nuts, bite-size or regular?

**Mike:** Tough decision. Why do you need candy at all?

**Tim:** I need something to eat while I drink this, (*Holds up a soft drink can*). You can't believe how long it took me to settle on this. Diet or regular, cola or uncola, caffeinated or decaf, bottle or can. It's a wonder I didn't die of thirst,

**Mike:** (*looks at the drink in Tim's hand*) Interesting. You chose sugar free and now you're selecting just the right candy bar. They're loaded with sugar, you know.

**Tim:** Yeah, but by picking a diet drink; I won't get twice as much sugar. (*The cashier prepares to take Tim's money as he*

*completes a sale for a tube of toothpaste.)*

**Mike:** Lucky you aren't out of toothpaste. Fluoride or regular, whitener, mint, baking soda, family size, travel size, tube or dispenser—at that rate you would never get out of here. *(The friends leave the store, turn right and walk a few steps, stopping as if at a corner with traffic passing.)*

**Mike:** Where you going now?

**Tim:** I don't know. I should go home and study for a test tomorrow, but I would really like to see a movie. Then there is the basketball game in my neighborhood, that program I wanted to see on TV, and the swim meet at school. There is this really cute...

**Mike:** Sounds like you could use a priorities' list.

**Tim:** Sounds scary! Where do you get one?

**Mike:** It's strictly a do-it-yourself task. You learn to do it by planning. List all the choices you need to make and want to make. Then number them according to importance. *(His voice trails off as he moves away.)*

**Mike:** *(watching his friend walk away)* Too bad I didn't have a chance to invite him to the retreat this weekend. *(Looks both ways for traffic)* Maybe he'd just see it as one more choice complicating his life. *(Sue walks up to join Mike.)*

**Sue:** Going to the Food Pantry, Mike?

**Mike:** Yeah, my shift starts soon. You?

**Sue:** Just finished and I'm heading home. Lots to do there today. We could sure use more help. Know anybody with time on their hands?

**Mike:** No, but I do know someone who might enjoy this if we could help him get organized. *(The two separate: Sue walks off Mike appears to be thinking.)*

**Mike:** Maybe I'll call Tim. There's just enough time to leave an invitation on his answering machine before I start work. *(Exits)*

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#### **Day Four: Rocks in the Road**

There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me." So he divided his property between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating . . . But when he came to himself he said, "How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.'"

So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him . . . The father said to his slaves, "Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!" And they began to celebrate. Luke 15:11-24 NRSV

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**Preparation for presenting the parable:** Choose a narrator to read any lines in italics. The individual actors can read their lines from cards, adding expression or action when appropriate. This is one that

lends itself to readers' theater.

***The youngest child made announcement.*** "I am going out into the world to seek my fortune."

***And the father said:*** "You have a fortune here. I worked all my life so you would have everything you needed."

***And the mother said:*** "You are too young. You are my baby. I have always looked after you and taken care of you."

***And the brother said:*** "How come you get to go and I have to stay here? Who do you think will have to do your share of the work?"

***And the sister said:*** "You always get to do everything you want."

***And the dog looked on with sad eyes and a droopy tail.***

***And the youngest child made a statement.*** "I have decided. It's my choice. Give me what's mine and let me go."

***And the father said:*** "Here is your portion of all that I have. You are my child and I love you."

***And the mother said:*** "Here is food and clean clothing. Don't wear torn underwear in case you are in an accident."

***And the brother said:*** "Not fair! You get your portion now and I have to wait for mine."

***And the sister said:*** "Have a nice trip."

***And the dog walked the youngest child to the gate.***

***Time passed. Choices were made. Rocks appeared in the road. The youngest child felt fed up, used up, washed up, and passed up. Meanwhile, back at the house life moved on.***

***And the father said:*** "I wonder where he is and what he is doing?"

***And the mother said:*** "I wonder if we will ever see him again?"

***And the brother said:*** "He was my only brother."

***And the sister said:*** "He was my youngest brother."

***And the dog sat out by the gate and looked longingly down the road.***

"Time's up," ***decided the youngest child.*** "I need to go home if they'll have me." ***And he started down the road, barefoot and bedraggled, toward those who once loved him. And the dog saw him first and wagged his tail furiously as he barked to alert the others.***

(As these lines are read, the actors respond with appropriate action.)

***And the sister ran to meet him.***

***And the brother raced her.***

***And the mother wiped her tears and smiled.***

***And the father ordered pizza. And the family rejoiced and celebrated together.***

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### **Day Five: On the Road Again**

Someone gave a great dinner and invited many. At the time for the dinner he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, "Come; for everything is ready now." But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, "I have bought a piece of land, and I must go out and see it; please accept my regrets." Another said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please accept my regrets." Another said, "I have just been married, and therefore I cannot come." So the slave returned and reported to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and said to his slave, "Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame." And the slave said, "Sir, what you ordered has been done, and there is still room." Then the master said to the slave, "Go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in, so that my house may be filled." Luke 14:16-23 NRSV

**Preparation for presenting the parable:**

Give the two actors time to work on their parts so the action goes smoothly. The play ends with Cheerful offering a pad and pencil to the group. This activity will actually be completed at the banquet. Refer back to this part of the day when introducing the writing.

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*(Two actors, one with a pad of sticky notes and a pencil in a pocket)*

**Bored:** I'm so bored. There's nothing for me to do. Everybody else in the whole world has something to do—but not me!

**Cheerful:** Cheer up, friend. There are a lot of things you could do right now—in your home, in your neighborhood, in your church.

**Bored:** Oh yeah? Like what?

**Cheerful:** You could do your chores at home without being reminded.

**Bored:** Hey, it gives my parents a reason to talk to me—sort of helps them keep in touch.

**Cheerful:** You could help with a project to beautify your neighborhood; you and others could pick up trash, plant trees and flowers, or offer to help with mowing grass and raking leaves.

**Bored:** Yeah, but what's the point? As soon as you pick up the trash, somebody throws down some more. If you plant flowers, they don't last. And that last stuff you mentioned is hard work and makes you sweat.

**Cheerful:** Maybe your place to serve is in the church. You could sing in the choir.

**Bored:** Naw, that's **not** my kind of music.

**Cheerful:** You could volunteer for the

nursery.

**Bored:** And take a chance on getting diaper duty? No, thanks!

**Cheerful:** How about serving as a greeter and welcome people as they conic to church?

**Bored:** Well, I suppose I could hand out programs, but I don't want to have to say anything.

**Cheerful:** How about cleaning the church?

**Bored:** *(Pauses and looks skeptical)* Have you seen my room at home?

**Cheerful:** Sorry, I lost my head. Well, suppose you could do any job you choose. What would it be? Think of all the things you enjoy doing, make a list, and offer it to God.

**Bored:** Give God my list? What's God got to do with this?

**Cheerful:** God's the one who created you and put you right in the middle of this wonderful world. At least most of it is wonderful. It's just that there are things that need to be done and God could use some help.

**Bored:** God doesn't need me. I'm too young.

**Cheerful:** I can see one thing you're really good at.

**Bored:** Yeah, what's that?

**Cheerful:** Making excuses. Now how about turning that creative energy into making commitments instead? *(Hands Bored the sticky notes and pencil.)* You can start with

this. Just look around and write down something you are willing to do to help. *(Bored looks around, names one or two things that can be done such as pick up trash, paint the building, build a campfire, writes each on a separate sticky note, and then moves off mumbling and nodding. Cheerful looks at the group, holds out another pad of sticky notes and pencils.)*

**Cheerful:** Next? *(Walks through group handing out sticky notes and pencils randomly.)*

Note: This activity will be continued at a session later in the day. Actual writing can be done then.