

Welcome to yet another TFG weekend! We all know that God calls us to be His witnesses. This weekend we will be exploring what it means to be just that... to point the way to those who are **'lost'**.



Programme

Friday

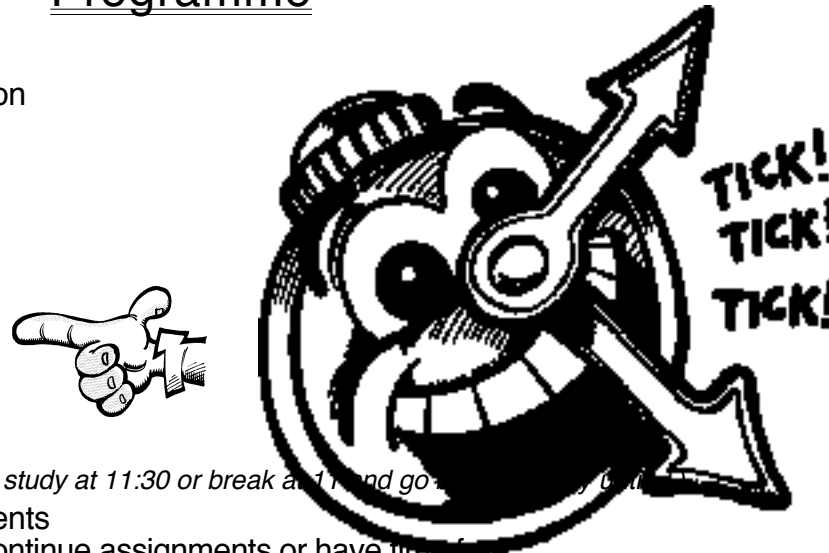
8:45 Introduction/Celebration
 9:00 Quiz
 9:20 Introductory Talk
 9:30 Worship & Ministry
 10:40 Video
Lights out and Quiet by 1am

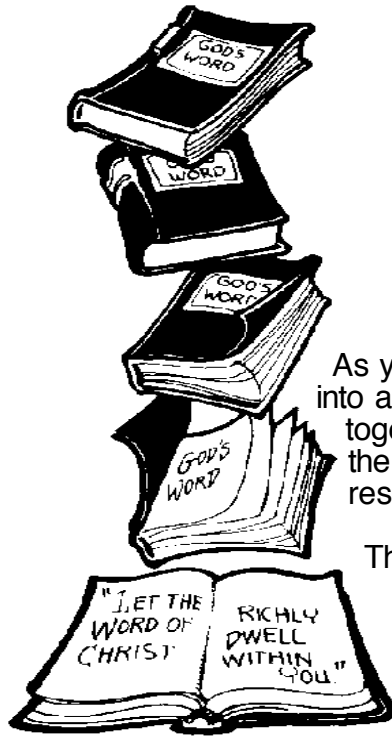
Saturday

8:30 Breakfast
 9:30 Worship
 10:00 Introduction to Grouptime
 10:15 Two Parables Bible Study
(tea/coffee available from 11. Either finish study at 11:30 or break at 11 and go to the bar)
 11:45 Meeting and group assignments
 1:00 Lunch. Afternoon to continue assignments or have time free.
 4:30 Worship
 5:00 MISSION 2000...the Event!
 6:45 Dinner
 8:15 Prayer
 8:45 Worship/Talk/Ministry
 11:00 Video

Sunday

8:30 Breakfast
 9:30 Worship & Testimonies: "The Vision God has given me"
 11:00 Coffee
 11:20 Holy Communion
 1:15 Lunch
 Tidying and Cleaning
 3:00 Coach leaves





The Weekend starts here!



As you join your group on Saturday morning you will be looking together into a couple of Jesus' parables. In this book we will look at some others together. These particular parables all throw some light on the subject of the weekend, speaking about the 'lostness of the lost' or about our responsibility to spread the Gospel.

The parables in your group time are:

Salt and Light and the 10 Virgins.

The first of these appears in all of the first three Gospels, whilst the 10 Virgins only appears in Matthew. Choose one of them to begin with, and study it together using the following as a guide. If you

have time, then also look at the other one.

Salt & Light

Read all three of the following passages (don't skimp by reading just one!)
Matthew 5: 13 - 16; Mark 4: 21 - 25; Luke 8: 16 - 18 and Luke 11: 33 - 36

The Ten Virgins

Read the following passage:

Matthew 25: 1-13

Before going any further you now need to *briefly* answer the following questions (for the parable you are looking at):

- i/ Who is Jesus telling the story to? Are these people believers in Him or not?
- ii/ Are the characters being spoken of in the parable believers or not?
- iii/ What do you think is the main point Jesus is trying to get across here?

Ok, now we are ready for a close examination of the passages. This year you are not going to be feeding back what you do to the rest of the group, but I do want you to write down your thoughts as a group and give them to me so that I can produce a follow-up to this book later.

Salt & Light

Now we consider bits of the parable in detail. Firstly compare the three passages...are they all reports of the same event, or did Jesus tell this parable in different places?

What are the *similarities* and what are the *differences*?

Salt. What is it used for, what was it used for in those days? Why did Jesus say His followers are the 'salt of the earth'? What does it mean to 'lose saltiness'?

Looking at the Christian Church today, would you say it is or it isn't *salty*? Give reasons! What about you personally, are you salty?

Light. Jesus says His followers are the light of the world. What does He mean by this? Why does He talk about the lamp being hidden under a bowl? What does this mean for Christians?

In the Mark passage verse 25 reminds me of what He said at the end of the *parable of the Talents* (Matt. 25: 14 - 30). Does that parable help to explain this one?

Different versions of the parable can be found in Luke. Jesus is making a different point in the second version. He is talking about light coming in as well as shining out. How do we 'see to it, then, that the light within you is not darkness' (v 35)?

LAMPS in those days, of course, were

The Ten Virgins



Let's start by thinking about the main characters and who they represent:
the *Bridegroom*?
the *Virgins* or *Bridesmaids*?

Obviously the virgins represent pure people...are they all believers in the bridegroom?

The LAMPS were most probably torches. Long poles with a burning end. The end would be made of rags, soaked in oil. They would burn for several minutes, then the rag would need to be trimmed and re-soaked. So only those with spare oil would be able to keep them alight all night. What does this represent for us?

What is the job of a bridesmaid? Essentially to prepare the bride for the groom. What is the 'Bride of Christ'? How do we prepare it for Him?

Why were all of them asleep? Is Jesus saying something about Christians here before His return?

What was the main difference between the wise and the foolish virgins?

There are many Old Testament references to oil, what was it used for? What do you think the *oil* represents today? (Compare, for instance, Exodus 8:10 - 12 with Acts 10:38 or 1 John 2:20)

Salt & Light

not like those of today. There were two types: small, oil-burners for use indoors (they would blow out outside) and torches...described on the previous page in the "10 Virgins" section. What would happen if you put one of these under a bowl? So what is Jesus saying happens to Christians who try to hide their light?

Finally try to summarise what this parable is saying, and write down what you have learnt as a group from it.

The Ten Virgins

What happened to those who 'weren't ready'?

I can imagine some of the disciples asking Jesus to say more about this, and so He goes on to the next parable (v 14 onwards). How does that help in the understanding of this one?

Finally try to summarise what this parable is saying, and write down what you have learnt as a group from it.



More Parables

There isn't time to look at these on the weekend itself, but (as ever!) this book aims to take you beyond the content of the weekend and give you something to do to continue your studies. In the next few pages we look at some other parables which relate to our theme, and I will share some thoughts about them. However, let the Holy Spirit speak to you directly too. Read the passages and answer similar questions to those above for each one....don't just take my thoughts. Remember: Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. (Hebrews 5:13,14) Milk is food that has been digested by someone/thing else and then fed to you; solid food is food that you digest yourself. You grow much stronger if your main diet is solid food; you become a stronger Christian if your main diet is straight from God's Word. Milk is great for puddings, what other Christians teach you should be your 'afters', not your 'main course'. You could try one of these parables a week.....

The Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin: Matthew 18: 1 -14 and Luke 15: 1 - 10

In Matthew Jesus is speaking to His disciples, in Luke to the Pharisees. So these are different occasions that Jesus is telling the story of the sheep on. In the Matthew story, Jesus has just been talking about children and says we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven unless we are 'born again' (3), He then goes on to say that we must become like a child to be part of the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus Himself became like a child, and teaches us what it means to do so: to be helpless, relying totally on others. Imagine.....the God Who made the universe humbled Himself to be *totally dependent* on others. He teaches us to do that

He then goes on to underline one of His major points: *For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.* (Luke 19:10) by saying how important it is to Him, God, that the lost get returned to His care. Verse 14 gives us

What should we do for the lost?

It depends on them!

If someone is lost and they know it, they will ask for directions. All we have to do then is guide them home.

If they *don't* realise they are lost, they need to be convinced that they are. This is much harder.

The Holy Spirit does the convincing, we help those who know they are lost.

So we pray that those who don't know come to realise they are, and we help them when they do!



Why did Jesus emphasise God rejoicing to the Pharisees? Probably because they were so convinced that God could not stand sin (as they saw it). Jesus wanted them to know that the very people they thought were scum caused God to celebrate when they repent. He was saying "Don't judge anyone": not the murderer on the cross nor the prostitute who followed Him or any other criminal or lifestyle. *All* can repent and make God rejoice!

The Fig Tree: Matthew 24: 30 - 35; Mark 13: 26 - 31 & Luke 21: 25 - 36

Why is this parable included here? Its not directly about the lost, but it is about the fact that Jesus is coming back, and that there is a limit to how long the lost have before its *too late*. By the same token, there is a limit to how long we have to bring in the harvest, to get the message to those who need to hear it. The **Second Coming** is a fact, it is not a fairy tale. Matt 24:30 tells



us three immediate effects of the second coming:

- all the nations will mourn
- Christ will be seen with His power and glory
- all God's people (His 'elect') will be gathered up

Why will the nations mourn? Because they will realise they have been wrong, and now its too late. This passage should give us a sense of urgency about what we have to do.

But what is all this about fig trees? We can look at it on several levels. Firstly, just as simply as it was said. We know spring is here and summer is coming when we see a tree beginning to show leaves. In the same way, we will know the time of the second coming is close when we see 'all these things' beginning to take place. All *what* things? Read through the earlier part of Matthew 24 and make a list for yourself! When we see the things listed there taking place we know His coming is near.

Many people also think there is a deeper meaning as to why Jesus chose the fig-tree. The fig tree was a symbol of the nation of Israel and often the old testament prophets alluded to it when they were speaking about Israel. Was Jesus prophesying that when the nation of Israel begins to put forth its leaves (begins to exist after a time when it did not) we would know the second coming was near, and people alive at that time ('this generation') would not all be dead before the second coming happened? If so, then He was speaking about 1948, when Israel came back into being after having been destroyed in 70AD. And *if* so, we don't have much time left!

The Sheep and the Goats: Matthew 25: 31 - 46

There are three parables that come together, right after Jesus has been talking about the second coming. The first is the ten virgins, which we've already looked at, then comes the parable of the talents, and then this one. All three

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
(Romans 6:23)

one of the TFG 10 verses to memorise

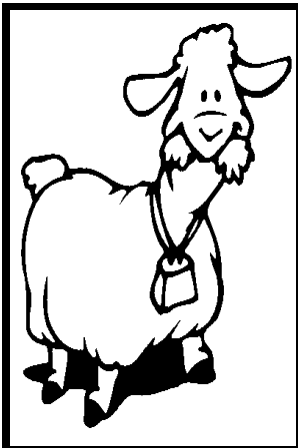


In the parable of the Sheep and Goats He expands this even further. He is talking to *disciples* remember, though He is speaking about all people. Some people read this parable and think He is saying that the way you get into heaven is by doing good things to other people. Is He saying this?

There is no way He can be, because that goes against the rest of scripture and other things Jesus says. Notice that the righteous and unrighteous have already been selected *before* He speaks about what they did or did not do. Its as if He is saying "Look at the righteous over here... they were saved and because of that they served me by loving others. And the lost over here, they proved that they were lost by not caring about others". So a sign of being saved is that we begin to live the way Jesus lived, for he went around doing good and caring for people (Acts 10:38). He didn't do this to make Himself the Son of God, He did it because He is the Son of God. In the same way, the righteous don't do good to get saved, but *because they are saved*. It is a sign of salvation. Jesus own brother, James, explains this more in his letter (its only 5 chapters, read it!).

What this parable, like the two before it, makes very clear, however is that there is a different ending for the two groups:

- the righteous enjoy *eternal life*
- the lost get *eternal punishment*



Which group are you in? What about your friends? Are you living in such a way as to point them to Jesus, or are they going to remain lost?

The Great Banquet:

Matthew 22 : 1- 14 & Luke 14: 15 - 24

Two slightly different stories about a great banquet or party. You know, its amazing how much of Jesus teaching happens at or is about parties, and yet they see Christians are boring! Well, God certainly isn't! Heaven is described as a party and feast over and over again. That's what we are invited to! Jesus is telling these stories at feasts and to big crowds.

In the Matthew story the invited guests ignored the invitation. People often just refuse to listen to the gospel and don't even comment when they hear it. In Luke, the guests made weak excuses (who would buy a field if they hadn't already seen it, for instance). People often give silly reasons why they won't become Christians.

In both accounts Jesus says that those who were originally invited chose not to



We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:6)

one of the TFG 10 verses to memorise



God invites us all to His party. We come as sinners, but He cleanses us by His blood. However, if we choose not to be clean, not to wear the 'white robes of righteousness' (Revelation 7: 9 -13), then we will get chucked out. Heaven is for those who put on heavenly clothes. *You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.* (Galatians 3:26,27). If we don't 'wear Christ' we can't get into the heavenly party.

What does it mean to 'wear Christ'?

The Rich Man and Lazarus: Luke 16: 19 - 31

Jesus is speaking to His disciples, and again He there are things He is not saying: He is not saying that the poor go to heaven and the rich go to hell. However, in this story it is the poor man who was righteous, and the rich man who wasn't.

What He is teaching is the eternal condition of the two: the righteous are comforted and the lost are tormented. It may not sound nice, but that is the truth.



There is a separation, just as in the sheep and goats parable. And both are conscious.

People often say "if only God would come down and show Himself, we'd all believe". Jesus counters this. He says that if people won't believe when they hear the Word of God (verse 31), then nothing will convince them. In other words, some people are so adamant they could never be saved. And those that will be saved will be convinced by hearing the Word of God.

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" (Romans 10: 14,15). Our job is to be prepared to go out and to preach....for we have been called and we have been sent (read the last 5 verses of Matthew's gospel!). But will we go, or are we afraid

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.
(John 3:16,17)

one of the TFG 10 verses to memorise



So, just what is the condition of those who do not belong to Christ (Romans 8:9)? What right do we have to preach to them and to try to convert them?

Modern thinking is that all people have the same destiny: we're all going to heaven eventually! (Some might need several reincarnations first, some might spend a while getting through the gates but, hey, God is a god of love and it is

'not His will that any should perish' 2 Peter 3:9).

It is not popular, and its often strongly condemned, when Christians say
"many are going to hell, the only way to heaven is through Jesus".

But that is definitely what God says. In full context, 2 Peter 3:9 says

.....the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

If we do not come to repentance, we go to hell. What is hell like? There are joke references to hell in modern culture. A hot place with rooms for sin and a dude in a red suit with a fork to prod you. Or,

*Hell's a bummer
Its like school all year
without a summer'*

But the Bible is not so flippant. It paints a grim picture. At the very least, hell is without the Holy Spirit, and He brings
love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

(Galatians 5:22,23)

Imagine a place filled with people and without any of those things. Hell is worse, because people there are also under the wrath of God. To be on a road leading there is to be *truly* lost.

But stop just a moment, what about *now*?

Lost people even now are living their lives without so much of the fruit of the Spirit mentioned in Galatians 5:22,23.

If we seek God, we can be *filled* with love, joy, peace etc every moment of every day,
but the lost can't.

How lost is lost?



Instead of patience they produce road rage.

We looked at this in some depth a few years ago in the weekend Mission:Impossible?. If you haven't got a copy of the book from that weekend, we can print you one for a pound! (It should be available to read on our website by Easter). The tapes of the weekend can also be purchased.....

But some thoughts on the subject now would be good.



war, you name it.

Instead of kindness to other people which comes from the heart there needs to be laws about how to treat others.

Instead of goodness there's a world filled with selfishness and evil: abuse, theft,

Instead of faithfulness there's adultery, cheating, divorce and broken promises.

Instead of gentleness there's a multi-million pound film industry dedicated to violence and destruction, which feeds the appetites of the lost.

Instead of self-control there's greed, indulgence and lust running out of all control.

That is the result of a world out of the influence of the Holy Spirit, a world full of people who are lost. And so to counter this, God's people who are supposed to be signposts pointing the way to Him, who are supposed to be filled daily with His Spirit and displaying the fruit are..... doing exactly the same things. Why? Because we've:

- forgotten what Jesus has done for us
- forgotten what we can have if we are saved²
- forgotten how seriously God views sin
- bought into the idea that "God is love and wouldn't hurt a fly"

Let's remind ourselves again of 2 Peter 3:9: *He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*

So, what is repentance?

Isaiah 30:15 This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says: "In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it.



But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8)

one of the TFG 10 verses to memorise



our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham.

Luke 13:3 I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.

Acts 3:19 Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.

God **NEVER** overlooks sin. It is serious.

Because just one man disobeyed, the whole of Israel was punished (Joshua chapter 7).

Why doesn't God move in power and bring revival like we pray for so often? Because we are playing with sin! When we show Him we are serious, and repent, and turn from our sinful ways, **then** others will come to Him. As God said to Israel in 2 Chronicles 7:14

*if my people,
who are called by my name,
will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways,
then
will I hear from heaven and will
forgive their sin and will
heal their land.*

(By the way "wicked" in this verse means evil, not good or great!)

Some people say "You can't win people unless you show them it's cool to be a Christian, so you have to do what they do and then tell them God loves them".

Here's a picture that describes what God thinks of that argument

God doesn't call us to be *COOL* in the eyes of the lost,
He calls us to be *SAD* in their eyes.

He calls us to stand out like sore thumbs, not fit in like

OUCH!

And there is salvation in no other One; for there is no other name under Heaven given among men by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:12)

one of the TFG 10 verses to memorise



AMBASSADORS

Each of us has a choice to make, and we need to renew it every day. We need to choose to be God's signposts for the lost, to be His representatives, to think "What *would* Jesus do?" and to do it, not just to wear the armband.

Will God forgive you if you don't, if you go on living just like the lost, even though you are "saved" from all that? He might, if you are seeking to serve Him but also being casual about it. He might.

But the people who watch your life, who look at you and think "these Christians are all just hypocrites. They say one thing and do another" won't be saved. And on the day of Judgment they will be lost forever, because they looked at you and thought it doesn't matter.



The other "verses to learn":
John 14:6 & 17:3 Romans 3:23
Ephesians 2:8,9
1 John 1: 8 - 10
Revelation 20:15



This song is one that was quite popular in my youth group in the early 70s:

Though the world has forsaken God
Treads a different path, lives a different way
I walk the road that the Saviour trod
and all may know I live under Jesus' sway:

*They are watching you, marking all you do
Hearing the things you say
Let them see the Saviour as He shines in you
Let His power control you every day*

Men will look at the life I lead
See the side I take and the things I love
They judge my Lord by my every deed-
Lord set my affections on things above

When assailed in temptation's hour
by besetting sins, by the fear of man
Then I can know Jesus' might power
And become like Him in His perfect plan

Here on earth people walk in night
With no lamp to guide, they are dead in sin
I know the Lord Who can give them light
I live, yet not I, but Christ within.

(R.T. Bewes 1964)

Let's live for revival, not just pray for it!