

Reflection on the Parable of the Ten Virgins

Imagine you have gone on a big trip. You have been away from home for a week. You are on a bus, making the long ride home. The trip was fun, but you are looking forward to sleeping in your bed.

You are about an hour away from your destination, so the trip leaders tell everyone to call their parents and let them know the time they should arrive to pick you up. You call and there is no answer. You look around the bus. Everyone else is talking to their parents. But your parents still aren't answering.

- How does this make you feel?

Finally, when you are about 10 minutes away from your destination, your mom answers the phone. She and your dad were at a movie. They can be there in a half hour. "But mom, you knew I was coming home tonight....."

- Now what are you thinking?

You have arrived. Everyone else's parent's have picked them up and are heading home. You spend an awkward 20 minutes waiting with the group leaders. Just you and the two adults. You feel sorry that they have to wait with you. It is embarrassing. Finally, your parents arrive.

- What do you want to say to them?

Bible Reading about the Parable of the Ten Virgins

In this gospel reading about the Parable of the Ten Virgins, the bridegroom experiences something similar:

Jesus told his disciples this parable: "The kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise.

The foolish ones, when taking their lamps, brought no oil with them, but the wise brought flasks of oil with their lamps. Since the bridegroom was long delayed, they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

At midnight, there was a cry, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!'

Then all those virgins got up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.'

But the wise ones replied, 'No, for there may not be enough for us and you. Go instead to the merchants and buy some for yourselves.'

While they went off to buy it, the bridegroom came and those who were ready went into the wedding feast with him. Then the door was locked.

Afterwards the other virgins came and said, 'Lord, Lord, open the door for us!'

But he said in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, I do not know you.'

Therefore, stay awake, for you know neither the day nor the hour.'"

[Matthew 25:1-13](#)

Discussion for the Parable of the 10 Virgins

The scenario of coming back from a trip and waiting for your parents to pick you up evokes feelings of expectation and disappointment. It's an earthly example that can help us understand the Parable of the Ten Virgins. In both cases, the key players knew an important event was coming: the arrival of the bridegroom in the parable, and your return from a trip in the scenario. Preparation, or the lack thereof, led to different outcomes.

Just like you expected your parents to be ready to pick you up, the bridegroom in the parable expected the virgins to be prepared for his arrival. And just as you couldn't rely on other parents to pick you up, the foolish virgins couldn't rely on the wise ones to share their oil. The sense of embarrassment, frustration, or even betrayal you might feel waiting for your parents can be likened to the foolish virgins' regret at being unprepared.

Jesus aims to impart two lessons through this parable. The first is to always be prepared for his coming, whether it's the end of the world, facing our own mortality, or recognizing him in everyday encounters. The second lesson is personal accountability. No one else can make us ready for these significant moments; it's up to each individual to prepare.

Small Group Reflection Questions for the Parable of the Ten Virgins

- How seriously do we take the need to be ready for Jesus? Is this a frequent thought or rarely considered?
- Do you feel we should be prepared for the world?
- Is spiritual readiness also about being equipped for life's challenges?
- Do you think we should be ready for our own deaths? How can faith make us more at ease with this reality?
- Should we be prepared to see Jesus coming in our daily lives, through people and events? Why or why not? Is this practical or too idealistic?
- What are some specific things we can do this week to improve our readiness? Any concrete actions or habits to develop?
- What sort of things can we do to remind ourselves to be ready? Are reminders like notes, apps, or rituals useful for this?

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Challenge for the Parable of the Ten Virgins

Building on the lesson from the Parable of the Ten Virgins, let's make this practical. This week, choose one specific action that will improve your readiness in any area of your life. It could be as simple as setting your clothes out the night before, so you're not rushed in the morning. Maybe it's spending a few minutes each day in reflection or prayer to be spiritually prepared. Or perhaps it's finishing your homework early to be ready for class.

Once you've picked your task, make a commitment to follow through. Keep track of how it affects your day or week. Are you less stressed? Do you feel more in control? The idea is to understand the value of preparation and how it can impact various aspects of your life.

This challenge is a stepping stone. If you can prepare in a small way, you're better equipped for bigger challenges. So take this week to focus on one thing that will make you more prepared. Then reflect on how that small change makes a difference.

Prayer for the Parable of the Ten Virgins

Close with this Prayer for Faithfulness or another appropriate prayer:

O Lord, my God,
Creator and Ruler of the universe,
grant that I may be faithful today and every day,
aware that you are with me in every circumstance.
Keep my heart vigilant,
ready to respond to your will and your grace.
May I be diligent in my work, kind in my dealings,
and eager in seeking you throughout my day. Amen.

Resources

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