

THE WORD WITH YOUR PASTORS ~ THE GOSPEL OF MARK  
*The Hidden Kingdom: The Parables of Jesus* Study Guide  
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### Overview

Parables were short, seemingly simple stories Jesus told in order to reveal something about the reign of God which Jesus' incarnation and ministry brought near. The Gospel of Mark contains six parables, which appear in two major blocks of teaching (chapter 4 and chapters 12-13). Parables are curious, in that they sometimes obscure as much as they reveal. When the disciples ask Jesus why he teaches in parables, his answer is that "everything is said in parables so that [outsiders] 'might see but not perceive, and hear but not understand, lest they repent and be forgiven.'" Are parables intentionally mysterious or confounding then, or filters to separate the deserving insiders from the outsiders? This would be out of keeping with much of the Gospel of Mark, a story in which missionaries are sent to proclaim the Good News to "all nations," while the closest followers of Jesus (the disciples) are routinely incapable of "perceiving" and "understanding." Ultimately, the parables hide the truth in plain sight. In that sense, there is no purer parable in the Gospel of Mark than the person of Jesus himself, whose death on the cross confounds reason but reveals to the faithful the full glory of God.

### Key Verses

[Mark 1:15](#) - Defines the Gospel as the revelation that the "reign of God is near"

[Mark 4:10-12](#) - Jesus on the use of parables

[Mark 4:3-9](#) - The Parable of the Sower

### Questions

- When you read the parables, do they help you understand Jesus' message, or do they leave you as confused as the disciples often were?
- Parables are not direct speech, and so can be tricky for communities of any size or scale because they allow for different and sometimes competing interpretations. How do you think Christians should handle that challenge?
- What are your favorite parables in Mark or the other Gospels?
- Many of the parables tell us what the kingdom (or reign) of God is like. It is not a far off time or place, but it has been brought into our very midst thanks to the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. When and where have you experienced the kingdom of God?