

How to Integrate Parables into Your Parenting | Parabolic Parenting

I. To tell good parables, we must know our child's spiritual need.

- I don't know how many times I've witnessed children fighting, and the teacher or parent or camp counselor steps in with the sole intention of merely resolving the argument. The spiritual need, the heart issue, the adultery in their hearts that lead to their conflict was completely ignored. Yet, the authority walked away thinking they achieved some great feat of magic by helping these kids resolve the argument.
- Previously we learned that the arguments are absolutely nothing compared to the worship problem in their hearts. We argue because we love ourselves more than we love God and more than we love our neighbor — we're all the worst people in the Good Samaritan. And yet, too many of us parents are blind to the real need in our children.
- For this reason, in order to parent well in general and utilize this amazing form of communication in particular, we must know our child's spiritual need.

II. To tell a good parable, you need to know what the Bible says about your child's spiritual need.

- Modern psychiatry will fail every time because — like the argument-quashing authorities from our last example — without a biblical understanding of man's basic sin struggle, no one can cure a person of their behavioral issues.
- They may have an understanding of the problem. Through trial and error, they may even be able to make adjustments that appear to relieve the issue for a time, but without a deep understanding of the Creator — no one (no counselor, no pastor, no parent) will be able to understand what He created and how He created it to work.
- These are the top two things you need to know in order to start using parables with your children: 1. You need to understand your child's true problem, and 2. You need to understand what the Bible says about the problem.
- Otherwise, your illustrations will be fraught with Failure Philosophies

III. To tell a good parable, you need to know creation.

- All of Christ's parables dealt with His creation. In fact, each day of creation has its place in Jesus' parables; nothing was left out. From light to animals to plants to people, Jesus shared spiritual truth with nearly every physical category available.
- To tell parables well, we need to understand two things:
 - God created the physical world to mirror the spiritual world, and . . .
 - If we don't know how the physical world works, it will be hard to see the spiritual realities illustrated in it.
- If I don't understand how a branch from one tree can be grafted onto another, I'll never think to use that as an example of being born again.
- Most sighted people intrinsically understand the relationship between light and dark. Those illustrations are easier to use. But there are so many powerful illustrations in nature.
- Your ability to fulfill the Creation Mandate well actually makes it easier for you to mature in Christ and parent your children to do the same.

IV. To tell a good parable, you need to know how to tell a story.

- Your parables don't have to be original to you. In fact, it would probably be better if they weren't.
 - Use Jesus' parables. I prefer God's illustrations over my own any day! Use morality tales and sermon illustrations . . . just make sure they correctly communicate God's expectations.
 - Start by telling other's stories; this will both communicate the necessary information, but it will also help you better understand how a story is formed. The more you tell, the more with which you engage, the better you'll be at creating your own illustrations and object lessons and parables on the spot — the better you'll become at drawing out metaphors.
- Second, use simple point-for-point comparisons as a starting point.

V. In order to use parables well in your parenting, make the connection for your children between the story and their lives.

- Your children do not think well naturally on their own. You need to teach them to take facts, understand them the way they were meant to be understood, and apply them to their lives. You need to teach them to reason and be analytical and logical.
- Using parables helps your kids not only understand the spiritual reality you're trying to teach, but also models for them how they are to understand creation, how to think through a complex concept, and how to better understand metaphor.
- Mark 4 — parables can be confusing if you don't then take the opportunity to explain the connection. *“But why? I've just taken at least three times the amount of time to illustrate my point and then explain my illustration. Why would I do this?”*
- I think that question perfectly exemplifies our hesitancy to use parables. But — if we're being honest — it also reveals our heart concerning parenting in general. We don't view parenting through difficult situations to be the most beautiful calling God has bestowed on us. It's something to be avoided, something at which to be annoyed. We want to get in, get done, and get out as quickly as possible so we can move on to *not* having to parent disobedient children.
- The previous question reveals that someone may not yet understand that the combination of parable and interpretation is what makes the parable so powerful. The lesson likely wouldn't be learned as well had we just shared the interpretation or merely shared the parable. But the combination can cement to truth far better.
- This is one of the reasons Jesus used parables in the first place.