Parable of Ten Bridesmaids



Scripture Reference: Matthew 25:1-13

Suggested Theme: When Jesus returns to the earth, our lives should show that we are ready to spend eternity with Him. We can live as if Jesus will return any day.

Memory Verse: “So prepare your minds for service and have self-control. All your hope should be for the gift of grace that will be yours when Jesus Christ comes again.” 1 Peter 1:13, ICB

Story Overview:

Jesus told a parable about ten girls who participated in a wedding feast. The custom of that time was for the feast to begin when the bridegroom arrived. Five bridesmaids were wise and had their lamps ready for his arrival. They were escorted into the feast. The five foolish bridesmaids were off buying oil and missed being invited in. Jesus said the parable meant that we should always be ready because we do not know the day of His return.

Background Study:

Information about teaching the Parables

Are you ready for the second coming of Jesus? Some of the children might well ask you questions about the second coming. Although the emphasis today is on our preparedness and not the events surrounding Jesus’ return, be ready to answer any question with a straight biblical answer. Here are some scriptures to be familiar with:

- 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
- 1 Corinthians 15:12-26, 50-57

Jewish weddings in the first century often took place at the end of harvest time. It was frequently a big gathering of people. There was usually lots of food and drink, music and dancing. Guests wore special clothes (Matthew 22:11-12).

The bride and her close friends would wait at her family home until the groom came and got her to take her to the place that would be their home. No one but the groom’s father knew the exact time that the groom would come. The “bridesmaids” had to plan ahead and be ready with their lamps whenever the bridegroom finally came.

When the groom arrived at the bride’s house, he would ask to see her. When she came out, he would lift her veil and proclaim his joy at seeing her. This joyful beginning would follow the whole wedding procession through the streets and onto the feast.

The lamps most commonly used in the first century were small, about the size of a hand. Lamps were made from clay, like shallow, covered dishes with two holes in the top. Olive oil was poured through the larger of

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the holes, and a wick was placed in the smaller. Special care was taken to keep the wick trimmed. If it burned down too low, it would smoke and finally go out.

The five foolish girls in today's parable did not plan for the wedding. They should have known that it might take a while for the bridegroom to come. This was the normal wedding procedure.

The wise girls had come prepared. They brought extra jars of oil with them. They were ready for the groom's arrival.

The foolish girls had to go and find oil while the rest of the wedding party proceeded to the feast. Once the feast began, the groom's family closed and locked the gate (probably to keep out strangers and uninvited guests). Once the foolish girls arrived, they were not allowed in.

Jesus concludes his parable by explaining its meaning (verse 13). None of us knows the hour when Jesus will come. We should be wise and always be ready for that time.

Way to Introduce the Story:

Bring a suitcase to class today, along with items you might use if going on a holiday. Ask the children where they have been for holidays or what kind of trips they have been on. Discuss that before they left, they had to pack some things to prepare for the journey. Show them some of the items they might pack to prepare for a trip (actually pack the bag together). You might have warm clothes or an umbrella to prepare for the weather. "Before we could go on a trip we needed to be prepared. Jesus once told a parable about some girls that were supposed to be prepared for something. Let's read about these girls."

The Story:

The Bible says that Jesus died on the cross and came back alive. After that, He went up to heaven to be with God. Before He went to heaven, He said that someday He would return. He would return to the earth and get all the people who loved and obeyed Him. He would take them back with him so they could live in heaven, too.

So Jesus will come back someday and take us to heaven. When do you think that will happen? Could it be today? Could it be tomorrow? Could it be 20 years from now? No one can answer that question. No one knows when Jesus will come back to the earth.

We do not know the date, but there is something we do know. Jesus said to be ready. How can we be ready for Jesus to come back? We can be ready by obeying God and by loving him. Are you ready?

In the bible, we read about a time when Jesus was teaching people to be ready for when He came back. He told a parable to help them understand what it is like to be ready. A parable is a story that helps people to understand something very important. Here is the parable:

Once there was a big wedding. The wedding was so big that there were ten bridesmaids. The bridesmaids all helped the bride get ready for the wedding. Weddings back then started at night. Everyone knew that sometimes, during the night, the groom would come to the bride's house and call out for her. The bridesmaids would hold up their oil lamps so the bride and groom could see each other. The groom would be so happy to see his beautiful bride!

Everyone would keep holding up their lamps so they could walk down the streets to the groom's house. Then there would be dancing, eating, and lots of fun celebrations at the wedding.

In Jesus' parable, He told what happened when the ten bridesmaids helped the bride prepare for the wedding. Five of the bridesmaids were wise. They knew that sometimes the groom would wait long before he came to get the bride. So, the wise bridesmaids brought extra oil for their lamps. They wanted to be ready even if the groom came very late in the night.

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The five other bridesmaids were foolish. They did not think about bringing extra oil.

After the bridesmaids got the bride ready, they waited for the groom to come. They kept their lamps lit so they would be ready when he came. As time passed, the bride and all the bridesmaids got sleepy and fell asleep.

Then someone shouted, “Here’s the bridegroom, come outside and meet him!”

The bride and all of the bridesmaids woke up. They fixed their lamps to make them nice and bright. The five foolish girls noticed that their lamps had run out of oil and had burned out. They asked the wise girls for oil, but the wise girls did not have extra. They only had enough to keep their own lamps burning.

The foolish girls had to go and try to find more oil for the lamps. They did not get to go out with the bride to meet the bridegroom. They did not get to walk down the streets to the wedding feast with all of their friends. They were too busy trying to find oil.

When the wise bridesmaids and everyone else arrived at the groom’s house, they went inside and began the celebrations. The groom shut the door and locked it so no strangers could get inside. The foolish bridesmaids were not allowed in when they came to the door. The groom didn’t even know who they were!

This parable helps us understand what it will be like when Jesus comes again. We do not know the day or the time when Jesus will come back. We should always love God and obey Him so we will be ready whenever He comes. We want to be ready to go with Jesus to heaven. Are you ready?

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Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using various methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible, but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection or other group participation.

Be selective. Each teacher is unique, so only use the illustrations that best relate to how YOU tell the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing, so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

Click here for visual aids and more storytelling methods.

View this slideshow and download it from the original source: https://freebibleimages.org/illustrations/gnpi-081-wise-foolish-virgins/

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Review and Reflection Questions:

Review questions help children remember and know the facts of a story. Reflection questions encourage them to internalise the meaning and implications for their lives. Asking at least one of each type of question can help strengthen a child’s spiritual development and help them connect to God. Click here to learn more about review and reflection questions.

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Review:

- In the Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids, how many of the bridesmaids were ready for the bridegroom to come back? (Five)

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- What happened to the foolish bridesmaids' lamps in the parable? (Their lamps ran out of oil, and they did not have any extra oil)
- How can we be ready for Jesus when He returns to Earth? (By obeying and loving God)
- Why should we be ready for Jesus to come back at all times? (Because we don't know when He will come back)
- What does this parable show us about Jesus? (Remind the children that the Bridegroom is like Jesus)
- What does this parable show us about God?

Reflection:

- How are people like the bridesmaids?
- What do you think the lamps in the story represent?
- What do you think the wedding feast was like? What did people do? How did they feel?
- Jesus is coming back just to us just like the bridegroom. How will you feel when Jesus comes back? What will you do?
- Why do you think the girls who ran out of oil couldn't enter the wedding?
- How would you feel if you were one of the girls who ran out of oil and couldn't go to the wedding?
- How can we be ready for Jesus' return?

Prayer:

It is important to guide children in learning how to pray. In prayer, children can connect with God and learn that He hears and answers them. God can become a lifelong friend who is with them every moment of their lives. Try using a variety of prayer methods from time to time so that the children can learn to connect with God in different ways. Note that you can pray at any time throughout your lesson. A variety of prayer methods are found here.

Song Suggestions:

- This Little Light of Mine Song
- Give Me Oil in My Lamp Song
- Goodbye World Song
- Possible songs out of a church hymnal might be "There's a Great Day Coming," "In the Morning of Joy," or any song that mentions Christ's second coming.
- Refer to the Song Page on this website for more song options.

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Activities and Crafts:

- How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation.
- Visit the activities and songs pages for additional activities and crafts.

Activities:

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- Make a Bible-times lamp. Use pictures from bible encyclopaedias or commentaries for patterns. If you can buy clay from a craft shop, look for one that can be baked. Read the instructions on the packaging to see if the baked clay is capable of holding liquid and withstanding heat. If so, use olive oil and cotton cloth wicks to finish the lamp. Another alternative is to make lamps from salt dough. These will only be for visual effects. Once the oil is poured on hardened salt dough, the dough will probably go soft and soggy.
- A fun way to do a review today is to light ten candles. When a child answers the question correctly, they blow the candle out.
- Draw simple pictures of lamps on the chalk/whiteboard. Write behaviours/attitudes on the lamps. Make some good and some bad. Examples might be helping others, going to church, hating someone, swearing, etc. If possible, provide a red chalk or whiteboard marker. Let the children take turns going up to the board and drawing a flame on the behaviours that show we are ready when Christ comes back for us. This activity can also be done on paper using crayons or markers.
- Older children can look up wedding customs in bible encyclopedias or commentaries.

Invite the children to respond to this story using the adaptable “God’s Story” printable reflection page. Free printables for this story.

Crafts:

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Print and use these free bookmarks, trading cards or timelines. Free printables for this story.

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Other Online Resources:

- Colouring page and worksheets that cover both the parable of the ten bridesmaids and the parable of the talents (Calvary Curriculum)
- Colouring page and worksheets about parables in general (Calvary Curriculum)
- Visual Aid- Flames appear on the lamps using a “Magic Window” (bibleclasscreations.blogspot.co.nz)

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Date
2026/11/12

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