

Many people over the ages have misunderstood parables. Jesus didn't invent parables. It was a common way of teaching even in the Old Testament.

Some have said that we cannot understand parables and Jesus said it was so, and they quote Matthew 13:13. *Here is why I speak to them in parables: they look without seeing and listen without hearing or understanding.*

This is a perfect example of how pulling one verse out of context can give a false understanding. Look at that verse in context.

*Then the talmidim (disciples) came and asked Yeshua (Jesus), "Why are you speaking to them in parables?" He answered, "Because it has been given to you to know the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven, but it has not been given to them. For anyone who has something will be given more, so that he will have plenty; but from anyone who has nothing, even what he does have will be taken away. Here is why I speak to them in parables: they look without seeing and listen without hearing or understanding. That is, in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Yesha'yahu (Isaiah) which says,*

***'You will keep on hearing but never understand, and keep on seeing but never perceive, because the heart of this people has become dull with their ears they barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, so as not to see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their heart, and do t'shuvah (turn back, turn from idol worship), so that I could heal them.'***

*But you, how blessed are your eyes, because they see, and your ears, because they hear! Yes indeed! I tell you that many a prophet and many a tzaddik (righteous people) longed to see the things you are seeing but did not see them, and to hear the things you are hearing but did not hear them.*

Matthew 13:10-17 (CJB)

To those who would listen to these simple day to day stories with an open mind, these stories told how God would expect those who desired to follow Him would act. Sometime it was from a positive perspective or an obvious negative perspective. The stories (parables) were a way of teaching theology without the stigma often accompanying the word.

Jesus often told these stories in sets of two or three – all having the same theological message. Often one would be set in a masculine setting and another in a feminine setting. This then placed the teaching for both men and women at the same level.

Women, during the time Jesus was teaching, were not considered to have Honor (remember the Honor/Shame culture). This seems to be one of the many ways Jesus lifted the women out of the Shame and gave them Honor. Jesus had many disciples who were women. It was virtually unknown during this period of time for a Rabbi to even acknowledge a woman, let alone teaching them.

All of the parables can teach us at various levels of depth. Depending on ones age and maturity they can give us encouragement and understanding at what ever level we are – if we are willing to listen and dig deep.

We can see parables as:

- A cute story with no particular relevance to our life
- A simple story that teaches a way to live
- A deep theological understanding
- A way to see and understand God

Although God is rarely mentioned in parables, they do give us a picture of who God is and how He thinks and reasons. If we want to get the most out of the parables and have a deeper understanding we need to read these parables in a way that will show us God.

This is true not only of parables but of the whole Bible. Since most of the Bible is stories of the Israelite people and their ancestors, their story and how God relates to them is one of the best ways to become intimate with our Creator.