



STORYTELLING **E**VANGELISM
Dominic Francese

**Parable-Making Like Jesus
Made Easy for Today**

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Dedication:

To my wonderful wife Kimberly who has stood by me through thick and thin, to my four daughters – Carissa, Mikayla, Jenae and Olivia – whose precious laughter encouraged me to invent many stories, to my dad Dominic Sr. who launched me as a performing/storytelling musician in my youth, and to Dr. John Rea, my primary mentor in Bible school and one among the scholars who helped translate the New American Standard Bible.

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Opening Parable:

The Father and the Family Album

A father was sad because his young children did not understand or appreciate the struggles endured by family members who had gone before.

An old family album – containing precious photos of days gone by – was boring and even offensive to them, in light of the way that social customs had changed.

Then, this man got an idea. He would tell them stories as he showed them each page. Immediately, his children were captivated and delighted!

Suddenly, the first photo on the oldest page fell to the floor. With it was a folded piece of paper that had apparently been tucked out of sight just behind. On that paper was a note written, signed by the man's great grandfather: "To whom it may concern," it said. "The photos in this collection are best understood if explained. Please see the back of each photo for notes to help with these explanations, each of which should be presented to young children in the form of a story."

Introduction:

Why Have I Written This Book?

What if Jesus taught using parables, not just to give us the parables themselves, but also to show us the best way to communicate God's truth? If our goal as Christians is to become more like Jesus, why aren't more Christians learning to tell stories?

In January of 2007, I was given the opportunity to teach at a pastors' conference in Nicaragua on the subject of Storytelling Evangelism.

I remember being driven through scenes of heartbreaking poverty in the sweltering heat, until we finally left the capital city of Managua and headed for a small mountain village called Cerro Pando. Upon arriving, we were taken to a humble, weather beaten structure made of concrete block and corrugated tin. There, I would be addressing pastors from the 19 sister churches of a certain Managua central church.

Somewhat nervous, and with the help of a translator, I started out by saying that I needed to tell them a story – one of my own stories – in order to teach what I had come to teach. And so I began...

Once upon a dismal day
 next door to you and me
there lived a little orphan
 by the name of Eva B.

She didn't live inside a house
 or even in a shack.
She slept between the bushes
 by the garbage bin, out back.

But, on this I-love-you morning
 as the sun woke up the skies,
as Eva B was opening
 her tired and sleepy eyes,

she felt all warm and special
 from a dream that she had dreamed.
A gentle voice was calling her –
 at least that's how it seemed.

But soon her tummy hurt so bad
 her mind began to doubt it.
She had to find some food
 and there was just no doubt about it.

So, sifting through the garbage
 making lots of noisy bangs,
looking there for something
 that might ease her hunger pangs,

she didn't even notice
 that she wasn't all alone –
that is, until she heard a voice
 she knew was not her own.

“Eva”

She looked around her pile of trash –
 behind, in front, above.
And there it was, a bird –
 that is, this white and shining dove.

“Precious Eva,” said the dove
 “I’ve come to call you home.
Your Father-Daddy doesn’t want you
 out here all alone.”

“I am sorry,” Eva said
 “there must be some mistake.
I do not have a daddy,
 or a home, when I’m awake.”

“I dream about them sometimes
 but I know it isn’t real.
So if you’ll please excuse me, Sir,
 I’ve got to find a meal.”

“Precious Eva,” said the dove
 “it is you I’ve come to call.
I know that people say you’re not worth
 anything at all,”

“but you are one of Father-Daddy’s
 precious works of art.
He loves you, and he wants to pour
 his love into your heart.”

Well, Eva B had never heard
 such gentle words before.
She even started crying
 as she yearned to hear some more.

“But who is Father-Daddy?”
Eva B at last replied.
The gentle dove responded
with a smile he couldn’t hide.

“Your Father-Daddy made this world
by singing out a song.
And in his love and wisdom
he made everything belong.”

“He made you to belong to him
and share the love he gives.
And now the time has come
for you to meet him where he lives.”

And with those words, the shining bird
completely disappeared.
And Eva was alone again –
at least that’s what she feared.

But then that gentle voice again
called softly from within...
It seemed to say that it was time
to leave the garbage bin.

So, walking barefoot through the trash
she went toward where it led.
She completely forgot about her tummy
waiting to be fed.

She started walking faster
till her feet began to run.
Then, off she went, toward the light
of brand new dawning sun.

From 1999-2003, as a Keynote performing missionary for Campus Crusade for Christ, I had used that story.

My Eva B. story – or “Little Eva” which my translator preferred – was the means by which I had presented the Gospel of Jesus Christ at American suburban church family events. I had also utilized it in inner city Indianapolis, and in Haiti, nearly always followed by a better response than I had expected from children, teens and adults in terms of first-time decisions to become followers of Jesus. But the stunned silence with which I was met as I concluded this latest telling, was like no reaction I had ever experienced.

At the risk of being presumptuous, I decided that their reaction was due to the fact that they had been deeply moved. Perhaps it was because the sight of orphans living off trash dumps is not uncommon in that country.

Pressing on, I explained that the use of this tale about Eva was my way of following in the storytelling footsteps of Jesus. Jesus told parables, followed by interpretations, as a way of communicating spiritual truth. The interpretation of my Eva parable was simply that the whole world could be compared to an orphan who had run away from home, and was now living in the trash of its sin. In his love, God the Father sends his Holy Spirit to call us home. And now, if we will listen to that voice and leave our trash, He will guide us toward the light of the world, which is Jesus Christ.

In English, I had rhymed that story in order to more effectively engage children. But whether in English, in Haitian Creole, or in Spanish, it seemed to work just as well as a simple narrative.

I had come to Nicaragua to teach them the parable-making skills I had learned through Scripture study, and through trial and error as a solo performer primarily in the U.S. I wanted to know if they thought they could use this kind of skill.

After a flurry of back-and forth with the translator, their reaction to that question was explained to me. Yes, such a skill would be timely and very valuable to them. They often found themselves addressing illiterate groups of people for whom original parables would be a perfect form of teaching. In addition, they often spoke at gatherings where adults would have to keep their children and teens with them, and so if the skill I was teaching could help them better engage young and old simultaneously it would again be most welcome.

It was then that I understood the significance of their earlier silence. They had perhaps expected a complicated seminarian discourse. Instead they heard a simple story. They no longer regarded me as an outsider. By the grace of God, they now saw me as someone who understood their world.

The rest of the workshop went so well, and the enthusiasm with which it concluded was so overwhelming to me, that the book issue was settled before it ever was specifically raised. By the time a friend back at our Managua missionary compound suggested that I put my workshop into the book form, I was already losing sleep thinking about how to do just that.

It is not just so-called developing countries – whose majority populations are now children and teens – that find themselves especially in need of this Christ-like skill. It is the entire world. In more developed nations – whose populations are not so youth-heavy – transformational changes are under way, both technologically and philosophically. People are becoming increasingly programmed to think in pictures, to expect entertainment, and to anticipate a high standard of attention-holding creativity.

Can anyone say YouTube? People are also becoming more and more resistant to being sold on any religious proposition presented to them as absolute truth. Can anyone say “political correctness”?

In short, the whole world is ripe for a Christian return to the parable approach. Not just from out of pulpits, but more importantly from out of loving hearts journeying with Jesus in everyday life who stop to talk with fellow travelers along the way. I believe that an everyday Christian return to the parable approach Jesus modeled is now the best way to communicate the truths of our Faith in this easily bored and easily offended 21st century world.

That is why I have written this book.

I wrote it in order to help teach the storyteller’s art to the non-artist. I want to show everyone how parable-making is something that any Christian can learn to do.

This book is a practical, how-to handbook, gleaned from my experience, being made available in all humility through this publisher in the hopes that it might be helpful. In an effort to lead by example, I have also included a collection of original parables that can be used to help re-communicate the foundational core beliefs of Christianity – the Christian Worldview – to an A.D.D. world that thinks it “doesn’t want to hear it” anymore. My hope and prayer is that you will take what I have offered in this book, use it on your own journey, and eventually come up with even better parables yourself!

***All these things Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables,
and He did not speak to them without a parable.
Matthew 13:34 (NASB)***

Part One:

How to Create a New Parable

He could speak to the sea and calm its raging thunder.
Then He could speak to your heart and leave it filled with wonder.

So even harlots and thieves would hear and believe,
and weep at His feet in awe.
'Cause through the tears in their eyes, to their surprise,
when they looked at Him they saw
the eyes of the Father.

That verse from one of my old performance songs is actually a window into my childhood. From my earliest recollection, I have always had an idealized picture of the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ. I imagined in my tree-climbing, bike riding mind that the sky was never bluer, the grass was never greener, and the birds never sang more sweetly than when that carpenter from Nazareth, with His strong yet gentle hands, touched the lepers and made them clean. But to me, especially back then, Jesus was not only someone who could heal the sick and raise the dead. He was also someone who could capture the imagination of adults and children alike by telling them a good story. Whether it was a story about a heartbroken father waiting for his long lost son, or one about a despised foreigner stopping to help a bleeding man that others had passed by, or even one about a feeble widow who banged on the door of a grumpy old judge's chambers until she got what she needed, it didn't matter. Jesus was the master storyteller of all time. Maybe as a child, that's what I loved about Him the most.

And so, you can imagine that it was with great fear and trepidation that I began in 2002 to study the parables of Jesus with the intent of trying to identify the thought process He must have gone through in order to create them. You might say it was an attempt at reverse-engineering. But was I intending to handle something wonderfully supernatural in an effort to clinically dissect it and in so doing neutralize its mystery? Was I stepping into the Holy of Holies with a flashlight and a magnifying glass? My point is simply this: I can assure you that I would have never embarked on a personal study of this kind had I not felt compelled to do so in the Spirit.

Now that I have concluded my study, topped off by several sleepless nights in Nicaragua, what have I found?

I have found that there are 4 steps that one should take if one is to create parables the way Jesus did.

These 4 steps are best expressed as 4 questions, namely:

- 1) What do I want to say?
- 2) What are the components of what I want to say?
- 3) Can these components be represented by symbols?
- 4) Can these symbols be arranged into a story?

In my workshop, I refer to these 4 steps – taken together – as The Art of the Concept Transfer. What I mean by this is the skill by which a plain communication is turned into a symbolic narrative one.

Before these 4 steps became at least subconsciously a part of me, telling stories to communicate spiritual truth was not something I could do easily. Why not? Because our natural tendency is to have something to say, and then immediately try to think of a good story to illustrate it. In other words, we tend to jump immediately from Step 1 to Step 4.

My observation is that very few people can make that jump successfully. I suspect that even those who feel that they can, actually go through all 4 steps subconsciously – as I believe I occasionally did prior to consciously identifying these steps.

I remember that my earliest period of storytelling composition was very time consuming, and did not always bring good results. But my hope is that, after reading this book, you will never have to go through such a period yourself.

Step 1: What Do I Want To Say?

As is often the case in the teaching of any step-wise method, the first step is the most important.

If one wants to tell stories like Jesus, one has to learn how to take the amorphous totality of what one wants to say and reduce it down into a clear and concise thought – or as my old English teacher used to say, an idea that is succinct and cogent.

I believe Scripture infers that this Step 1 I've described actually took place in the mind of Jesus at the start of His parable-creating process. This inference is conveyed in passages such as the following:

***Now He was telling them a parable
to show that at all times they ought to pray
and not to lose heart...
Luke 18:1 (NASB)***

This verse precedes Jesus' Parable of the Widow and the Unjust Judge. Notice that the Holy Spirit has done us all a favor here – and me a favor with regard to my study – by saying, in effect, that Jesus knew exactly what He wanted to say in plain language, before He set about communicating it symbolically. He wanted to say that people should pray, and never give up praying, no matter what. That is a clear and straightforward idea.

Now, here's how He expressed that idea in the form of a parable, followed by an admonition expressed plainly:

... "In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man. There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, 'Give me legal protection from my opponent.' For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, 'Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out.'"

And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge said; now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly.

However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"

Luke 18:2-8 (NASB)

The bottom line is: Know what you want to say.

Step 2: What Are the Components of What I Want To Say?

If we start by reducing an idea into a clear and concise thought, this does not mean that our idea cannot have multiple layers, or component parts.

Again, scripture infers in another passage that Jesus indeed started out with Step 1...

While they were listening to these things, Jesus went on to tell a parable, because He was near Jerusalem, and they supposed that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately.

Luke 19:11 (NASB)

...but now, here's the whole parable – The Parable of the Talents (or Minas in the Luke NASB):

So He said, "A nobleman went to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself, and then return. And he called ten of his slaves, and gave them ten minas and said to them, 'Do business with this until I come back.' But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We do not want this man to reign over us.' When he returned, after receiving the kingdom, he ordered that these slaves, to whom he had given the money, be called to him so that he might know what business they had done. The first appeared, saying, 'Master, your mina has made ten minas more.' And he said to him, 'Well done, good slave, because you have been faithful in a very little thing, you are to be in authority over ten cities.' The second came, saying, 'Your mina,

master, has made five minas.' And he said to him also, 'And you are to be over five cities.' Another came, saying, 'Master, here is your mina, which I kept put away in a handkerchief; for I was afraid of you, because you are an exacting man; you take up what you did not lay down and reap what you did not sow.' He said to him, 'By your own words I will judge you, you worthless slave. Did you know that I am an exacting man, taking up what I did not lay down and reaping what I did not sow? Then why did you not put my money in the bank, and having come, I would have collected it with interest?' Then he said to the bystanders, 'Take the mina away from him and give it to the one who has the ten minas.' And they said to him, 'Master, he has ten minas already.' 'I tell you that to everyone who has, more shall be given, but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away.

But these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slay them in my presence.'"

Luke 19:12-27 (NASB)

Notice that the overall idea – in accordance with verse 11 – is simple (as we have said): The Kingdom of God is not going to appear immediately. The body of the parable, however, contains layers of information that are more complex. And so it is that the overall idea along with its layers, can be outlined as follows:

The Kingdom of God is not going to appear immediately. More specifically –

- The King will first go away and then eventually return.
- The King will give tools to His servants with which they are to perform tasks in His absence.
- The King's enemies will initially reject Him.
- When He returns His servants will be required to give an account of their stewardship.
- His servants will receive rewards and punishments accordingly.
- When He returns the King will also execute judgment upon His enemies.

I am still awestruck whenever I consider this. If you have been attempting to teach spiritual truth through stories as long as I have, then you no doubt recognize this parable as pure genius. Jesus is able to encapsulate the entire span of human history between His first and second advent in the space of one paragraph: A paragraph so rich with meaning that a scholar could dedicate his life to studying its ramifications. But a story so simple that even a child could understand it.

Having said that, let me add that I believe the Holy Spirit stands ready to give this kind of storytelling anointing to God's people today, if they will only step out in faith and make an attempt. Not storytelling anointing to reach the power and authority of Jesus' parables, of course, but storytelling anointing that God can powerfully use, none the less.

But I digress.

If one wants to identify the component parts of an idea, I have found it helpful to simply write out the idea as one paragraph of conversational language, and then divide that paragraph into its obvious components or points of thought.

Let me illustrate using yet another parable – The Parable of the Mustard Seed (Matt 13:31-32).

I believe Jesus started out by wanting to communicate the following:

I am well aware of the way My Church will grow and develop over time: It will start small with only My own preaching, and appear less significant than all the other religions and philosophies around it. Then it will grow as more and more people come to believe in Me. Finally, it will become the most wide-spread of all religions and philosophies. In so doing, it will develop such a large organizational structure that this structure will eventually house comfortably, not only true believers, but also those sent by Satan.

Now, let's divide that paragraph into its obvious components.

I am well aware of the way My Church will grow and develop over time: More specifically –

- It will start small with only My own preaching.
- It will appear less significant than all other religions and philosophies.
- It will grow.
- It will become more widespread than all other religions and philosophies.
- It will develop a large organizational structure.
- That structure will eventually house comfortably, not only believers, but also those sent by Satan.

This may take a bit of practice, especially if you are not used to writing down what you want to say before you say it. At this point, you may want to “test drive” this step using one or more ideas that you have attempted to communicate in the past. Once you think you can employ Step 2 fairly easily, you are ready to move on.

Step 3: Can These Components Be Represented By Symbols?

The key to understanding this step can be found in the interpretation sections of Jesus' parables. So, before we finish our thought with regard to His Mustard Seed parable, let me shift gears and temporarily move us over to another one – His Parable of the Wheat and The Tares. Here now is that parable:

***Jesus presented another parable to them, saying,
"The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among***

the wheat, and went away. But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' And he said to them, 'An enemy has done this!' The slaves said to him, 'Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?' But he said, 'No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn."'"
(Matthew 13:24-30 NASB)

A good understanding of Step 3 can be found in the interpretation of this parable.

Here is the interpretation that Jesus Himself gave, which I have divided up for you in order to show how I believe He employed this step:

Then He left the crowds and went into the house and His disciples came to Him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field." And He said,

"The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man,

and the field is the world;

and as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom;

and the tares are the sons of the evil one;

and the enemy who sowed them is the devil,

and the harvest is the end of the age;

and the reapers are angels." (Matthew 13:36-39 NASB).

Can you discern what He must have done here? He simply made a mental list of the components that comprised His idea, and then He answered the question 'Can these components be represented by symbols?'

There is a short-cut to accomplishing this that I have found to be effective. After writing out and dividing your idea, simply continue by identifying the one component that would be the easiest to transfer into a symbol. Then, build the rest of your parable from there, as I believe Jesus did. I see evidence of this approach in the way that His summation of this parable reads:

"So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all (stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, and (will

***throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then THE RIGHTEOUS WILL SHINE FORTH AS THE SUN in the kingdom of their Father.
He who has ears, let him hear.
(Matthew 13:40-43 NASB).***

To further illustrate, let's return to Jesus' Mustard Seed Parable. Here again are its components:

I am well aware of the way My Church will grow and develop over time: More specifically –

- It will start small with only My own preaching.
- It will appear less significant than all other religions and philosophies.
- It will grow.
- It will become more widespread than all other religions and philosophies.
- It will develop a large organizational structure.
- That structure will eventually house comfortably, not only believers, but also those sent by Satan.

Do you see what I just did? I underlined the best place to begin. I identified the component that looks like it would be the easiest one to transfer into a symbol, namely:

- It will grow

Let's think this through. What can we use to illustrate something growing? No doubt many things come to mind: a baby in the womb, a flower in a garden, a thunder storm in the sky...the list is endless. So, how do we choose which symbol to use? Well, we need something that grows into a structure that can hold other things. That limits our choices to something man-made like a house being built, or something living that grows naturally like a tree. But we also need something that ideally is akin to other things like it to which it can be compared, since that's part of the original idea. We need something that has the power – in and of itself – to start smaller than others like it but then become bigger than them all. If you happen to live in that part of the world, the choice is obvious. The phenomenon of just such a tiny seed that can quickly grow into a big tree is well known. Your best choice is the mustard seed!

Once that first component has been transferred, constructing the rest of the parable becomes easier. Jesus had already used the birds of the air to represent Satan (see Matt 13:1-23), and so birds coming to nest in a tree becomes His final obvious symbol transfer. With that, the symbol-making process is complete:

***He presented another parable to them, saying,
"The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; and this is smaller than all other seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that THE BIRDS OF THE AIR come and NEST IN ITS BRANCHES."***

(Matt 13:31-32)

At this point, you may want to engage yourself in another time of practice, wherein you simply:

- write out an idea in conversational language
- divide up your sentences with a pencil to show its component parts.
- re-write those components as a vertical list.
- find the one component that would be the easiest to transfer into a symbol.
- think of a symbol and write it next to that component.
- think of other symbols for your other components, by relating them to that first one, and then write those next to the other components in like manner.

Step 4: Can These Symbols Be Arranged Into a Story?

If Step 1 was perhaps the most important step, Step 4 is perhaps the most difficult, or the easiest – depending upon which direction you choose at this point. Here’s what I mean:

Even a casual reading of the parables of Jesus reveals that they naturally fit into two categories: illustrations and stories. Even though the step-by-step manner in which He explained His illustration parables tended to give them a narrative feel, technically, not all of His parables were stories.

If you choose the direction of an illustration at this point, then congratulations! You are done. Simply explain the components of your illustration – your word picture – in a narrative style and let the Holy Spirit do the rest.

If, on the other hand, you get to this step and you choose the direction of arranging your symbols into a story, you will need to learn what I believe is the most important skill within the overall storyteller’s art – The Principle of Tension and Release.

It can be easily observed that great art has traditionally been built upon this principle. People are best engaged when artistic tension builds to a climax and then is released. In literature, the plot thickens, and then it is resolved. In music, melodies move from dissonance to consonance, chords modulate and then resolve, and drum rolls move toward their final symbol crash. Even paintings are most compelling when they draw the eye toward a cathartic point of focus. In the days of Classic Hollywood, it was said that the perfect formula for a great movie was to have a plot line that could be described as “Boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl back again.” Even the Bible itself can be summarized as “God has mankind, God loses mankind, God gets mankind back again.”

In my workshop, I describe this tension-and-release flow as The Storyteller’s Bell Curve. More specifically, the storyteller’s art involves creating narratives that form a bell curve shape – a line that starts low and then rises until it peaks in the middle, after which it

returns to the level from which it came. In other words, a good story should rise and crest like a wave as its narrative tension is created and then released.

That brings us to Step 4. Here is perhaps the most beloved of Jesus' parable stories – the Parable of the Prodigal Son:

And He said, "A man had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.' So he divided his wealth between them. And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living. Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him. But when he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men."' So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate. Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. And he summoned one of the servants and began inquiring what these things could be. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has received him back safe and sound.' But he became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and began pleading with him. But he answered and said to his father, 'Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends; but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.' And he said to him, 'Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found.'" (Luke 15:11-32 NASB).

If you were to take a blank sheet of paper and draw a bell curve for the purpose of “graphing” this parable, you might start at the left side of that curve and write the beginning of the story. Then, the words that describe the son’s life moving tragically from bad to worse might rise like tension with the rise of the curve toward the middle of

the page. Finally, the climactic release at the crest of that curve would be the words describing how his father sees him returning from a long way off and runs to greet him. The smooth journey down the other side of that curve would be the words describing the party given by the father in honor of his son who has returned.

I believe that the power of this parable, as well as the power of others like the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) and the Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13) comes largely from the fact that these were apparently built upon this tension and release principle.

Now you are ready to practice Step 4.

I have found that the best way to arrange your own symbols into a story is to first draw a Storyteller's Bell Curve. Then place your symbols along that curve with the intent of coming up with a narrative that comes to a climax with one of those symbols. Finally, try different story lines until you arrive at one that draws in your listener with tension and then releases that listener with resolution. If you have more symbols than can easily fit into one story, don't be afraid to link a second smaller story – or reprise – together with your first one. Jesus' Parable of the Prodigal Son in fact does just that, with the story of the brother that stayed home actually forming a second smaller bell curve subsequent to that first one.

If all this still seems a bit difficult, the next section of this book should be especially helpful. What follows is a group of illustration and story parables, intentionally designed to cover the historical doctrines of Christianity – the body of scriptural truths that together form the core beliefs of the Christian faith. These will give you an arsenal of word pictures to communicate when opposing beliefs and world views come up in casual conversation. As you arm yourself with these, I believe the things we have discussed will become more and more clear. Before long, you will be able to add your own original parables to this arsenal!

Part Two:

A Collection of New Parables

***And He said, "How shall we picture the kingdom of God,
or by what parable shall we present it?
(Mark 4:30 NASB)***

To me, that verse is not a rhetorical question. It is an invitation to the Church in our time. To me, it is an implied command that we should “picture” the things that pertain to the Kingdom of God so we can better communicate them to the everyday people we meet on the journey of our lives. To me, our hearts, combined with parables like these, together make a perfect medicine which The Great Physician has prescribed for a lonely and confused 21st Century world.

Now let me share something briefly from my heart.

As the Church struggles to stay relevant to people who have become jaded to traditional Christian presentations, my fear is that the Church will water down the process of discipleship until we are no longer passing on the essential, historical doctrines of the Faith which comprise the Christian Worldview. As a result, I fear that many who name the name of Christ will fall victim to other beliefs and worldviews which oppose everything we hold dear!

The way to avoid this slippery slope is not to insist on sticking to a boring, academic approach in order to remain true to orthodox Christianity. The answer is to learn the parable-telling skills of Jesus and use them as a primary means by which these truths are communicated. To put it another way: ‘A spoon full of storytelling helps the theology go down.’ That’s not my idea. That’s our Lord’s.

Here then, are the Doctrines of the Christianity as I understand them, explained using the tool that Jesus used – parables. You are welcome to say “It’s kind of like this _____” instead of “The Kingdom of God is like a _____” as I have done, since that would be more appropriate in most casual conversations.

In any case, get ready to be “armed and dangerous’ in the eyes of our enemy.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE SCRIPTURES

Unity of the Bible - The Bible is many stories that together tell one story.

Parable: The River

The Kingdom of God is like a long river, fed by large tributaries and smaller streams along the way.

It starts with an earthquake, and a storm in the mountains.

Then, as the water starts to flow downward, water from surrounding land gathers into streams, and then into the tributaries.

Some water never gets to the river, but instead runs off and eventually disappears into the ground.

But the water that reaches the river makes it stronger and wider as more is added.

Finally, the river reaches its destination, coming to rest in a beautiful crystal sea.

***Interpretation:* Luke 16:16, 16:31 The River**

The Bible – though made up of the Old and New Testaments – is actually one story with a beginning and an end. Its beginning is the creation. Its end is a new heaven and a new earth.

The earthquake is the sin of Adam and Eve that separated humanity from God at the story's beginning, the way an earthquake separates ground. The storm is the flood of Noah, whereby so much violence followed mankind's separation that God had to start humanity over again.

The river is God's subsequent story of the salvation of humanity. It flows like a river of redemption, in a land of time. The tributaries are the major events that fed into that flow. They include the call of Abraham, Moses and the Passover, the Kingdom of David, the exile and return of Israel, and the life and ministry of Jesus.

The smaller streams are individual people. You are a stream in that river of redemption, if you believe the Good News about Jesus Christ. If you do not, you are

like a stream that appears for a while, but then runs off into the ground, never connecting with God's plan, and never ending up in heaven.

Inspiration of the Bible - The books in the Bible were written by men who wrote under the inspiration of God. Together, they form a complete work, which cannot be added-onto by writings claiming to be equally inspired.

**Parable:
The Farmer and His Five Helpers**

The Kingdom of God is like a farmer who had five helpers, a field of hard ground, a plow, and an ox.

One day he was at the far end of his field with his helpers. He attached a plow to his ox, so the ox could pull it and break up the ground.

Then, he called to one of his helpers to come forward and said, "We are going to go back and forth across this field, in order to plow it. Take this stick and tap the ox to make him start. Then, use the stick to steer him as I plow."

The farmer then told the rest of his helpers to walk along behind.

The first helper drove the ox for a distance with the stick. He drove it over bumps and stones however he wished. But at the same time, the farmer was plowing the ground, and holding the reins of the ox, to keep it on track.

After a while, the farmer stopped the ox, and called another helper. Then, he told him to do the same as the first. This time, the helper avoided bumps and stones, and went slower.

The farmer did this again and again, until all his helpers had driven, each in his own way.

Finally, they finished plowing, and the job was complete.

They had all driven. They had combined their efforts to plow the field. But it was the farmer who had done the plowing, and had been in control, all along.

Interpretation:
2 Timothy 3:16, Hebrews 1:1-2, Revelation 22:18
The Farmer and His Five Helpers

God is the farmer. His five helpers represent:

- 1) Moses, followed by the*
- 2) prophets,*
- 3) priests, and*
- 4) kings of Israel, who wrote the books of the Old Testament, followed by the*
- 5) apostles of Jesus, who wrote the books of the New Testament.*

The field is humanity. The plow is the words of the Bible, which combine into one message like the blade of a plow to tell the Good News about Jesus. The ox is the Holy Spirit.

These who wrote the books of the Old and New Testaments, wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and were superintended by God – even when they wrote “each in his own way” using their own circumstances and personalities.

The Bible – the Word of God – has been sent out into all the earth to break up the hardness of men’s hearts, so they can receive the Good News about Jesus. Now that the Bible is complete, no other book is being written – or ever will be again – having this kind of inspiration from God.

Proof of Inspiration - The Bible offers proof of its supernatural origin, through accurate prediction of the future without any mistakes.

Parable:
The Map and the Treasure

The Kingdom of God can be compared to a map that gives us directions for taking a journey. At the end of that journey, the map promises that we will find a treasure!

As we travel the first leg of the journey, we find the first landmark that the map predicts we will find, a cut down tree.

As we take the second leg of the journey, the same thing happens. But this time, we don’t understand what the landmark is that the map describes, until we actually see it on the journey. The second landmark is described on the map as a mountain with stone walls – which is a puzzle to us. But when we see it, we realize that the map was referring to an ancient fortress of stone on a mountain. The map had described it accurately, but the meaning of the description was partially hidden in a mystery.

This continues as we move forward. We recognize one landmark, and then another. Some are plain, and some are mysterious. But whichever kind of prediction we read on the map, we are amazed that the landmarks are always there, and never wrongly described.

As each new landmark comes into view in accordance with the map's predictions, it gives us confidence that the treasure will also be there at the end of the journey.

Finally, we come to the end, and sure enough, there is the treasure!

Interpretation:
Deuteronomy 18:18-22, Psalm 22, John 19:23-25, Luke 24:44-48
The Map and the Treasure

As the story in the Bible unfolds, God used the accurate prediction of future events as the primary proof he presented, showing that it was he – God – who was speaking through his servant-writers.

Sometimes he spoke these predictions plainly, and sometimes in the form of a riddle or a symbol. But still, when these predictions came true, it was always clear that God knew about the event long before it happened.

The treasure is eternal life forever in heaven with God. We are strengthened in believing that we will receive this treasure, because the events of the New Testament came true after first being predicted in the Old Testament. In addition, many things happening in our world today, were also accurately predicted in the Bible.

When human history is complete, we will see that not a single prediction in the Bible will be left unfulfilled.

Promises - The Bible is a story that also offers promises to those who believe it.

Parable:
The Inheritance and the Journal

The Kingdom of God is like an old man who was leaving a large inheritance for each of his children in a will – a document to be read to his children after his death.

But, he was concerned that if they only received the blessing of his inheritance, and did not learn about the struggles of his life in order to obtain wisdom for using it, they would soon squander what they'd been given.

Now, this man had also kept a diary all his life – a journal that described the struggles and obstacles he had overcome to achieve success. So, he decided to write the terms of his inheritance in between the chapters of his journal. Then, he left a copy of his journal for each of his children to be given to them after his death.

Now, in order for his children to learn what they had inherited – and also learn how to obtain it – each child would first have to read their father’s journal.

Interpretation:
2 Corinthians 1:20, John 20:30-31
The Inheritance and the Journal

The old man is God. His will, or the inheritance he leaves, is every privilege he gives to those who become his children through faith in Jesus. His diary, or journal, is the story that the Bible tells us about God’s dealings with mankind.

If we read the Bible, and believe it, we receive the promises of God described therein at the same time. We also acquire the wisdom we need, so we can properly represent him while living in the blessing of those promises.

Covenants - The Bible is a book about successive covenants – the covenants of Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and finally the new and everlasting covenant of Jesus Christ.

Parable:
The Light House

The kingdom of God is like a man who built a lighthouse – a tower with a light on top of it to help ships stay away from the rocky shore.

The man was sad to see ships crashing on the rocks when it was foggy, or night time, or during storms.

So, first, he signed a paper to buy some land near the sea, and cleared away the houses on it.

Then, he signed a work order hiring a contractor to lay the foundation.

Next, he made an agreement with a framing contractor to put up the complex skeleton-beams of the tower.

After that, he signed a contract with a mason worker to fill out the tower with stones and cement.

Finally, when the tower was done, he placed a great light at the top of his lighthouse, so all the ships could see it and not crash into the rocks.

Interpretation:

***Genesis 8:2-9:19, Genesis 15, Deuteronomy 29:1-30:20, 1 Chronicles 17:11-14,
1 Corinthians 11:23-25, Ephesians 2:12***

The Light House

The Bible tells the story of God's plan for history. God's plan for history came to us through a series of covenants – or contracts – that were built upon one another.

After the fall of mankind – and the resulting self-destruction of humanity – God made a covenant with Noah, so He could flood the earth and start over with a new world out of which would come His salvation.

Then, he made a covenant with Abraham to begin forming a people of his own as a foundation.

Next, he made a covenant with Moses to establish the nation of Israel and give his rules for right and wrong.

After that, he made a covenant with David for a family through which salvation would come.

Finally, in the fullness of time, God made a covenant with us! He sent his Son Jesus to be the light of the world – to die and rise again for us, and introduce the new and everlasting covenant of salvation. Now, whoever believes in him will not perish – “crash on the rocks” – but have everlasting life.

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

Trinity - God is a triune God, which means he is one God in three persons.

Parable: The Painting and the Measuring Stick

The Kingdom of God is like a painter with three containers of paint – red, blue, and yellow. He knew that all the colors in the rainbow actually come from those three colors. So, he knew that whatever color he needed, he could make all by himself, simply by mixing these three colors in different ways.

Again, the Kingdom of God is like a boy with a measuring stick, who decided to measure his house.

When he took his stick and tried to do so, he realized that his stick could measure the house in three different directions. It could go up and down to measure height. It could go left to right to measure length. It could go forward and backward to measure depth.

The house he lived in was just one thing – one house. Yet, it was made up of three separate directions. Each direction was separate from the other, and yet each direction was as much a part of that house as the other.

Interpretation: Matthew 28:18-19, Luke 3, 21-22, Romans 1:19-20 The Painting and the Measuring Stick

The Bible tells us that the natural world speaks about the God who created it. The fact that all color comes from just three primary colors speaks about the fact that all that God is comes from a trinity.

In the same way, the house represents God, in whom we live, and move, and have our being. The measuring stick is the Bible. The boy is mankind.

The height, length, and width of the house represent the three separate, but co-equal persons that make up the one true God, concerning whom the Bible bears witness to mankind.

Its Persons - The trinity of God consists of:

- 1) the creating intelligence who created all things***
- 2) the expression or command of that creating intelligence***
- 3) the power who carries out the expression or command of that creating intelligence.***

Parable:

The Rising Sun and the One True Toy Maker

The Kingdom of God is like the sun at dawn in a land of snow.

First, its circle rises up over the horizon. Then its light fills the sky. Finally, its warmth and energy melt the snow and cause flowers to grow and bloom.

Or, again, the Kingdom of God is like a toy maker who made a special kind of doll called a puppet. This puppet was the toy maker's greatest work, because it was miraculously by itself able to dance.

Now the toy maker had an assistant, who was jealous and stole the puppet. The assistant took the puppet, and traveled to a nearby town near a forest. He gathered its people to show them the puppet, and they were all amazed. But when the people asked him to make another puppet just like it, the assistant knew he could not. So, he told them a lie. He claimed that the puppet had simply put itself together in the forest – one branch at a time – until finally it was able to dance. Then, it came out of the forest, and offered to dance for him – and so that was why he was now its rightful owner.

While the people were paying money to the assistant so they could see the puppet dance again, the true toy maker arrived. He told them that he had come to take back the creation that was rightfully his – namely his puppet. The people were confused. They asked him how he could prove that he was the puppet's true owner. The toy maker said he would show them.

First the toy maker pulled out a rolled up piece of paper containing the drawings and plans he had conceived in his mind for making the original puppet. Then he spoke to the forest with a command, and branches began to break off and come together on the ground – taking the shape of a second puppet! Finally, he blew into the air towards that new puppet, and, to everyone's amazement, it started to dance!

Interpretation:

Genesis 1:1-3, John 1:1-3, Hebrews 1:1-3, Luke 1:30-35

The Sun and the One True Toy Maker

The trinity of God can be illustrated by the sun itself, the light of the sun, and the warm energy of the sun. It is a picture of a source, the expression of that source, and the power of both the expression and the source.

The trinity of God can also be illustrated by a man who first conceives of an idea in his mind, then commands that idea to visibly take shape, and then sends the breath of his mouth into that idea in order to give it life.

After God created mankind similar to how the toy maker created the puppet, Satan stole mankind's heart, like the assistant stole the puppet from the toy maker. In order to maintain his control over mankind, Satan leads men today to believe there was no creator, just like the assistant also tried to make the town believe that the puppet had come to him after creating itself.

Omnipresent and Omnipotent - God is everywhere present, and possesses all power.

Parable: The Air and the Sky

The Kingdom of God is like the air. It is everywhere.

Again, the Kingdom of God is like the sky. When it becomes a storm, it is more powerful than any other force on the earth.

Interpretation: Psalm 139:7-12, Exodus 14 & 19:16-18, Revelation 19:6 The Air and the Sky

The air, that is everywhere, is a good illustration of God – whose Spirit is everywhere throughout his creation.

The sky, that is majestic in its grandeur and can become a storm of unimaginable power, is also a good illustration of God – who is great and awesome and possesses all power in the universe. In fact, by his power, he created all things.

Omniscient - God is all-knowing.

**Parable:
The Mother and Her Little Boy**

The Kingdom of God can be compared to a mother and her little boy. She instinctively seems to know everything there is to know about him – including when he is frightened, when he is lying to her, what he dislikes, what will make him laugh, and so on.

And yet, to that little boy, she not only knows everything about him. She also knows everything about every other subject as well. Whenever he has a question about anything, he goes to his mother and asks. He never thinks for a moment that she might not know the answer. In that little boy's mind, his mother must know everything – simply because she is “the Mommy.”

***Interpretation:*
Psalm 136:3-5, Psalm 139:1-6, John 21:17-19
The Mother and Her Little Boy**

The way of a mother and her little boy is a good picture of God and humanity, because the knowledge that the little boy thinks his mother possesses, is the knowledge that God actually does possess.

Not only does God know everything that can be known about each of us, he also possesses all knowledge concerning everything else in his universe as well – simply because he is God, the one who created all things.

Ageless, Unchanging, and Sovereign - God dwells apart from time, is unchanging, and is the controller all things.

**Parable:
The Fisherman's Pond**

The Kingdom of God is like a fisherman who dug a large hole and filled it with water to make a pond. Then, he placed fish in that pond, and fed them and took care of them.

One day, a big fish and a little fish were speaking with each other in the pond.

“I don’t understand,” said the little fish. “Everything in this pond has slimy moss on it. And yet, whenever the fisherman wades into the pond to feed us, he has no moss! I also know that when the season changes, this pond will freeze, but the fisherman will stay warm! On top of that, he seems to be able to control us – even though he lets us swim freely – and yet we cannot control him at all! How can these things be?”

The big fish smiled and said, “The fisherman is separate from this pond, and is therefore not affected by the things that only grow in it. He is also warm-blooded – which means his temperature does not change – and so he does not freeze in the winter like the pond. In addition, he made this pond, so, it is only natural for him to be able to control everything having to do with it – including us!”

Interpretation:
Psalm 90:2, Exodus 3:13-14, John 8:57-58, Malachi 3:6,
Ephesians 1, Daniel 2:19-21
The Fisherman’s Pond

The fisherman is God. The pond is the world.

The slimy moss represents the effects of time. We suffer the effects of time because we live in time’s domain. God does not.

The season changes that freeze the pond, represent the constant changes that take place in God’s world. Everything changes in God’s creation. But God never changes.

The control over the pond that the fisherman exercises, represents the control that God exercises over his creation – even when it seems like he has left it to itself. Because God made the universe, he is sovereign like a king over all that takes place inside it.

Just, True, and Holy - God is the judge of all the earth, who cannot lie, and who cannot bear to be with sin.

Parable:
The Good Judge’s House

There once was a good judge in a certain village who had great authority. All the people knew him. Even the children sometimes saw him waving to them in the marketplace.

All the people knew that this judge was completely fair in all his rulings, and so truthful he was incapable of telling a lie. But the people also feared him if they knew

they had done wrong, because they knew his judgements could be severe if he was made to become angry.

Now, the judge had a little son who had friendship with a certain boy in the village. Every day, his son went to the village to play with his friend.

One day, the two boys were playing, when the sky became dark indicating that it was about to rain. The friend did not want to stop playing, but sadly, he told the judge's son that the roof of his house was in disrepair. If they tried to keep playing there, the water would come in. So, the son told his friend to come instead to the house of his father, the judge.

The two boys began to walk out of the village until it was not visible behind them. Finally, the young friend saw a sight in the distance that amazed him – a house that was beautiful and shining. As they got closer, he could see through an open window that everything inside the house was beautiful and shining as well. This made him want to go in all the more.

Just as the young friend was about to go inside, the judge's son stopped him.

"What's wrong?" said the friend.

"You can not go in," said the son.

"But, why not?" said the friend.

"Because you have dirt on your clothes," said the son.

"But my clothes have just been washed," replied his friend. "They will never be cleaner than they are right now. If my clothes have to be cleaner than they can ever be, how will I ever be able to enter your father's house?"

The judge's son smiled.

"There is one way you can come into my father's house," said the son. "If my father adopts you, and makes you his own, then you will be able to go into his house – not because you are clean enough, but because you will then be his own child."

Interpretation:

Psalm 9:7-8, Acts 17:31, Exodus, 20:5-6, John 14:15-17, John 17:17, Leviticus 11:45, James 1:13-17, Leviticus 10:1-3, Matthew 17:1-2 & 27:50-51, Romans 8:15-17

The Good Judge's House

God is a good judge who judges fairly, and who loves the truth so much that he cannot lie. In addition, he is a judge to be feared by those who do wrong, because his judgements can be severe if he is made to become angry.

God is also completely clean and pure, having no sin or evil in him at all – which is the same as saying God is holy. Nothing can dwell with God that is not holy like he is. So, we can not enter into God's presence because all of us have sinned. Our lives are like clothes that we can never make clean enough to enter into his pure and shining house.

But God loves us so much that he sends his son Jesus to befriend us. Jesus uses the troubles of our lives that come like dark clouds as an opportunity to invite us to his father's house. But, he also reveals to us the truth – that we are sinful and cannot come in.

Yet, in spite of this, if we become one of God's own children, then we can indeed enter into his presence – the way Jesus can – even though we have sinned.

It is the blood of Jesus' death on the cross – which takes away our sins – that makes it possible for us to become children of God and come into his presence.

Merciful - The first person of the trinity is moved with compassion by the suffering of people, whether they are good or evil.

Parable: The Farmer and the Two Wolves

The Kingdom of God can be compared to a pair of wolves who often stole chickens from a farmer.

When one of the wolves met a lion in the forest, the other came to help. But the lion was too strong. In the end, both wolves were badly torn and left for dead.

The farmer heard noise in the forest, and came to see what had happened. He found the wolves lying in their blood and took pity on them, even though he knew they had been killing his chickens.

He took them to his house, bound up their wounds, and cared for them. Soon, both of them were well again.

Out of gratitude, one of the wolves stayed with the farmer and became his pet. But the other wolf did not. Instead, he went back to the forest where the lion was, and continued to steal the farmer's chickens.

Interpretation:
Exodus 34:5-6, Matthew 5:43-45, Luke 6:35-36,
Mark 1:40-41, Mark 10:46-52, Ephesians 2:4-6
The Farmer and the Two Wolves

The farmer is God, the two wolves represent mankind, and the lion is Satan.

The heart of God is moved by suffering. He is merciful to all of humanity, though mankind sins against him, because mankind has been harmed unto death by Satan. He shows kindness to all – even in providing what is needed for life.

Some respond to God's kindness, by coming to live with him and by serving him in his kingdom. Some do not, returning instead to their old sinful ways, and to the kingdom where Satan is still king.

Loving Father - *The first person of the trinity is a father who loves humanity, and who yearns for humanity to return to fellowship with him. And so Jesus – the Son of God – said we should think of God as our father in heaven. This explains why, according to scripture, repeated Old Testament temple rituals and feast-holiday celebrations served as a ministry to him...they reminded him of how mankind would someday return to him in Christ.*

Parable:

The Father and the Kidnapped Son

The Kingdom of God is like a loving father who lived near a jungle village with his son. One day, his son was stolen away and dragged off into the jungle by a band of kidnappers. The father's heart was broken, and he grieved with many tears.

The kidnappers demanded a ransom be paid for the return of his son, but the father was not able to pay it right away. The father knew it would be several years before he would be able to raise the money they wanted. So, he set a time with the kidnappers, took a more exhausting job in the village that paid higher wages, and began working to raise the money.

As time went by, the father missed his son so much that he was often unable to sleep. So, he built a playhouse on his property as a way to comfort himself in preparation for the day when his son would return. When it was done, it eased the pain in his heart because he could picture himself playing there with his son one day.

Next, he placed small-sized furniture in that playhouse. Every piece of furniture he chose reminded him of something concerning his son, such as times they had spent together.

Then, he gave a party at the playhouse on the date of his son's birthday, and invited the whole village. This blessed him so much that he also gave a party on the anniversary of his son's first walking step, on the anniversary of his son's first spoken word, and on several other dates that had been important in the life of his son. More than anything else, this helped him pass the years that were yet to be completed before his son's release.

Finally, the day came when he was able to pay the kidnappers. The ransom was paid, and his son was returned. The father rejoiced greatly!

Then as his son was being returned, he saw certain things that enabled him to figure out who it was who had kidnapped his son. Immediately, he gathered some villagers and went into the jungle. Together, they captured the ring-leaser, hunted down the other kidnappers, and brought them all in chains back to the village to be put into prison.

Interpretation:

Luke 15:11-32, Matthew 6:9, Hebrews 9:1-10, Exodus 28:1-3, John 2:18-21, Leviticus 23, 1 Corinthians 5:6-8, Mark 10:45, Matthew 25:41

The Father and the Kidnapped Son

The loving father is God. The son is humanity. The kidnappers are Satan and his demons. The ransom needed for the son's return is a payment sufficient to pay for all of humanity's sin. Just as the return of the son could not be accomplished immediately, so too the salvation of mankind took many generations, as recorded in the Bible.

The loving father comforted himself with symbols of his son's return – the playhouse with furniture and the celebrating of important dates in his son's life. In the Bible, God commanded his people Israel to build a temple that was symbolic of Christ in how it functioned, and also in its furniture. In addition, God commanded Israel to celebrate certain holidays – each having a significance that was to be fulfilled in the life and ministry of Jesus. Both the temple and the holidays repeatedly reminded God of the day when humanity would be able to again return to fellowship with him. In the Bible, the blood Jesus shed on the cross provided the payment for mankind's sins that served as a sufficient ransom for the return of humanity to God. According to the Bible, when Jesus returns to earth, Satan – and all those who were loyal to him – will be judged by God and confined to a prison called "hell" for all eternity.

THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

Equal in Nature, Obedient in Function - *The second person of the trinity is God, and yet at the same time he is different from, and obedient to, the first person of the trinity.*

Parable: The Hand in the Tide Pool

The Kingdom of God is like a man who went to the beach, and saw a pool of water in between some rocks. This tide pool had been formed by waves splashing water into the rocks when the tide was high.

Inside that little pool were small fish, crabs, and other living creatures. They could not see him, but he could see them.

The man watched these creatures with fascination. Soon, he wanted to let them know that he was there. But he knew he was much too big to go into that little pool with his whole body.

Finally, he decided to lower his hand into the pool.

With his hand, he petted the fish, played with them, and even fed them. The fish knew that their pool was being visited, but they didn't know that their visitor was being directed from outside the pool.

For, the man was now outside the pool, and inside of it, at the same time. The hand that the fish saw was the man himself, but also an obedient extension of that man.

Interpretation: ***Isaiah 53:1, John 5:19, John 10:29-30, John 14:6-11*** ***The Hand in the Tide Pool***

The man at the beach is God. The tide pool is the world. The man's arm is the second person of the trinity of God, who became flesh and entered the world as the man Jesus.

From Theophony to Incarnation - The second person of the trinity of God, first observed humanity from heaven, then appeared as the divine "Angel of the Lord" in Old Testament times, and then finally emptied himself of his deity to become the man Jesus Christ in New Testament times.

**Parable:
The Eagle Who Pulled Out His Feathers**

The Kingdom of God is like an eagle who saw suffering children, and yearned to help them.

First, he watched them and called to them from the sky.

Then, he flew down from time to time and spoke to them from the trees before flying away.

Finally, he got down on the ground and pulled out his own wing-feathers until he could no longer fly. Now, he could be like the children, and share in the suffering of their lives. Now, he could know even better how to help them.

***Interpretation:
John 1:1-3, John 8:56-58,
Micah 5:2, Hosea 12:2-5, Genesis 32:24-32, Judges 6:11-24, Philippians 2:5-8
The Eagle Who Pulled Out His Feathers***

In the story that the Old Testament begins to tell, the God of heaven came near to his people Israel on certain occasions, sometimes appearing to them like an angel would appear, yet speaking things about himself that only God could speak. When he did this, it was the second person of the trinity of God who was reaching out and doing so.

In the New Testament, the second person of the trinity of God became flesh and came to live among us as the man Jesus. In so doing, he voluntarily emptied himself of his divine qualities, and yet still remained God.

He did this out of love and compassion for humanity. He wanted to share the human experience with those whom he'd created, as well as redeem them.

Pre-existence, Visitation, Return to Heaven - Jesus Christ pre-existed in heaven as the second person of the trinity, before he came to earth as a human being. Then, he returned to heaven, after making it possible for other human beings to go there with him after they die.

**Parable:
The Boy and the Flying Seed**

There once was a boy who caught a flying seed in the wind. He did not know where it came from, but he knew it came from a land different from his own, because he had never seen a seed like this before.

When he looked closer at the seed, he saw that one part of the seed was like a fuzzy tail that enabled it to fly, and the other part was a shell containing the seed.

The boy went home and planted that seed, and watered it every day to see if it would grow. Soon, it became a beautiful flower.

Time went by, and eventually the flower withered and died.

But, before it completely fell apart, the boy saw that the center of the flower had become many flying seeds, like the first one.

Suddenly, a gust of wind came. It lifted all the new flying seeds off the dead flower, and carried them away into the sky.

**Interpretation:
Isaiah 9:6, Luke 1:30-35, John 1:14-18, Acts 10:38-43,
John 14:1-3, 1 Corinthians 15:20-23
The Boy and the Flying Seed**

The boy is Israel, and the seed is Jesus. The fuzzy tail of the seed enabling flight is Jesus' God-qualities, and his shell is his human-qualities. The wind is the Holy Spirit, and the land different from the boy's land is heaven.

The beautiful flower that came from the seed is the life and ministry of Jesus. The flower's death is Jesus' death on the cross.

The dead flower not only brought back the seed again, but also many others like it. In the same way, Jesus' death not only resulted in his resurrection, but will also one day result in the resurrection of many other people as well – all of whom will return to heaven with him forever.

Fully God and Fully Man - When Jesus Christ came to earth, he was God and man at the same time, and so he called himself both the Son of God and the Son of Man.

**Parable:
The Water and the Web**

There once was a far off land where no water had fallen for many years.

A certain little spider lived in that land. He had never seen water in his life. He began to wonder if there really was such a thing called water up in the clouds, as his parents had told him.

Then one morning, the sun came up over that land, and all at once his web was covered with water droplets! His web still had its familiar shape, but now it also looked like it had turned into water!

And so, the little spider finally believed his parents. Not only because he now saw water on the ground with him, but also because water had come to him in a way that was familiar and was not frightening to a little spider.

**Interpretation:
Colossians 2:8-9, Matthew 16:16 & 26:61-64a, Mark 2:8-12
The Water and the Web**

The far off land is Israel. The years when water did not fall, represent the 400 years between the events of the Old and New Testaments when God was silent and did not send a prophet.

The little spider represents the Jewish apostles of Jesus, who had heard about God from their ancestors, but had not seen his glory themselves up close.

The water represents the divine nature. When Jesus came to earth he was fully God like the water. And yet he was also fully man, dwelling in a temple of flesh the way the water had come to dwell in the house of the little spider.

Sinless Substitute, Intercessor for Sinners - When Jesus Christ came to earth, he lived a sinless life, died as a substitute for our sins, and rose from death on the third day. Then, he began his present ministry from heaven of interceding for those who love him.

**Parable:
The Man and the Savage Bees**

The Kingdom of God is like a man who lived in a village that was often attacked by savage bees.

The people who lived in that village suffered greatly from the bees – and many even died. But the man himself seemed to be immune to the bees' venom, though the people thought it was because he had received only a few stings.

Then one day the man noticed a dead bee at the base of a certain plant. The plant smelled sweet and apparently had attracted the bee. But because the bee was dead, he knew that the plant was also poisonous to bees. This gave him an idea.

The man gathered up as many of those plants as he could find, and made a paste out of its sap. Then he covered a coat, a hood, and a mask with the sap. When he was finished, he put on that coat, hood, and mask, and walked out into the center of the village.

When he arrived, many in the village were once again by bees being bitten. But, as soon as he came, the bees smelled the sap and turned to attack the man instead. Soon, he was completely covered with bees.

The bees stung him furiously, but they also quickly died from the sap. The man received the stings bravely, but eventually, he collapsed in the middle of the village. He lay there for three hours. All the people thought that he had died, because he had received too many stings. They were very sad.

Then suddenly, the man got up and took off his coat, hood, and mask. Now, all the bees were dead, but he was alive. All the people rejoiced.

As for the man, he immediately went to those in the village who had been bitten, and began helping them to take care of their wounds.

Interpretation:

***2 Corinthians 5:20-21, Matthew 12:40, Acts 2:22-24 & 29-33, Hebrews 7:22-25
The Man and the Savage Bees***

The bees represent sin, the man is Jesus, and the village represents the world. Jesus himself was without sin. Yet he took upon himself the sins of the whole world and died to make sin powerless. But because his fleshly body was merely a temple for his divine nature, he rose again from the dead on the third day.

Now Jesus is alive at the right hand of God the Father, aiding those who believe in him by interceding to God on their behalf as their heavenly high priest – which means chief intermediary or representative.

Sacrificed and Resurrected in Fulfillment of Scripture - The sacrificing of Jesus Christ on the cross, and his resurrection from death on the third day, happened according to the plan that God hinted at ahead of time throughout the Old

Testament. His future return to the earth – to receive his people to himself in glory – will also happen as predicted in many scriptures, this time found in both the Old and New Testaments.

**Parable:
The Father Who Wrote Before Coming**

The Kingdom of God is like a family of children who were raised away from their father, so that they did not know him.

But as they were growing up, their father sent them letters, promising that he would come for them one day, and make them rich.

In his letters, he told them how to recognize him when he arrived, and what he would do in order to prove his identity as their father.

When he finally came, he looked like his letters said he would look, and he did the things his letters said he would do, but he was poor.

Some of his children gladly received him, because they had missed him greatly and wanted very much to know their father. As soon as they heard him speak, they knew he was their father, and so they loved him. But the rest of his children rejected him, because he was poor. They could not imagine any way that he would ever be able to make them rich.

Then, the father took another journey. But before he left, he promised his children who loved him that he would return. While he was gone, the children who loved him went throughout all the land telling any children who were poor and homeless about their wonderful father. They yearned to be his children also.

Then one day, the father came back. He took those children who had first received him, and the homeless children who had heard of him and yearned to be his children also, to the land from which he had come.

There, he made them all rich beyond their wildest dreams.

***Interpretation:
Isaiah 53, 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, Daniel 7:13-14, Luke 24:46-47, Matthew 25:31-34
The Father Who Wrote Before Coming***

The family of children is Israel, in the generation of Jesus' coming. The letters he wrote to them, describing himself and the things he would do, are the Old Testament

scriptures. These scriptures promised Israel that God one day would send them a divine Messiah.

But the scriptures spoke of him coming in two different roles – that of a suffering Messiah, and that of a conquering Messiah.

Israel was under bondage to the Roman Empire at that time, and so they especially looked forward to the coming of their conquering Messiah to set them free from that bondage and establish them as God's special nation over the earth.

But when Jesus came, he came instead as a humble servant, who suffered on our behalf in order to set us free from the bondage of sin and death through the blood of his cross. As a result, even though he performed miracles that only a divine Messiah could, only a portion of Israel believed in him.

The second journey in the story represents Jesus' death on the cross and ascension to heaven – after which those who did believe, spread the Good News about him to the rest of the world.

The New Testament promises Jesus will return to earth one day and fulfill the rest of the Old Testament scriptures about the conquering Messiah. He will also return for all those who believed in him – throughout the world – and take them back with him to heaven to live in wonderful glory.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Involved in Christ's Coming - *The third person of the trinity – the Holy Spirit – was involved in Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection. More specifically, the Holy Spirit:*

- 1) conceived Jesus in the womb of the Virgin Mary***
- 2) empowered him with the ability to perform miracles***
- 3) enabled him to sacrifice his life for mankind's sins***
- 4) raised him back to life on the third day of his death***

Parable: The Mother Owl and the Baby Owl

The Kingdom of God can be compared to a mother owl and her baby owl, in a nest among the trees of a forest.

First there was an egg. Then, the baby owl came out of that egg, and lived in the nest.

Next, she fed him and strengthened him in that nest, until he was the strongest young owl in the forest.

Then, she pushed him out of the nest, though he couldn't fly.

Finally, she swooped down and caught him on her back as he was falling, until all at once he was able to fly on his own along with her.

Interpretation:

Luke 1:35, John 1:32, Acts 10:38, Matthew 12:28, Hebrews 9:14, 1 Peter 3:18
The Mother Owl and the Baby Owl

The mother owl represents the Holy Spirit. The egg is the Virgin Mary – Jesus' mother. The nest is Israel, and the forest is the world.

Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary. He was also crucified in Israel – in accordance with the plan of God – just as the owl cast her baby out of the nest. But Jesus was raised from the dead in glory by the power of the Holy Spirit, the way the owl swooped down and caught her baby so he could fly.

Empowered Miracles, Inspired Writers - The Holy Spirit enabled God's servants in the Bible to perform miracles. It was also the Holy Spirit who inspired certain of them to write down God's message for humanity – handed down to us in the Bible.

**Parable:
The Doctor with the White Shirt**

The Kingdom of God can be compared to a doctor with a white shirt who went to an orphanage – a house where children with no parents and no family are sometimes given a place to stay. At this orphanage, all the children were acting wildly, and many were sick.

When the doctor saw this, he taught the caretakers of the children how to be good and strong leaders. He also taught them how to make medicines, and perform medical operations to heal them.

After he did this, he told the caretakers to write down the story of his arrival at the orphanage, and the story of everything he had taught them to do.

In addition, he told them to write down new rules for healthy living, so the children would not get sick in the future.

Finally, the doctor told them to take all the things they had written, and combine them into a book for the children to read as soon as they were able.

When the book was finished, the doctor no longer helped the caretakers to write, but he did continue to help them lovingly care for, and heal the children.

Interpretation:

Numbers 11:14-17, 1 Samuel 16:13, 2 Kings 2:9 & 2:15, 2 Kings 4-5, Isaiah 11:2, Isaiah 61:1-3, Luke 3:14-21, Acts 2, 2 Peter 3:16, 1 Corinthians 2:12-13 & 12:1-11, Galatians 5:22-23

The Doctor with the White Shirt

The doctor with the white shirt is the Holy Spirit. The orphanage of children who acted wildly and were also sick represents mankind.

The caretakers of the children are the servants of God who were leaders in the Old and New Testament. The story that was written is the Bible, which not only tells of God's miracles, but also gives God's wisdom for living.

The Holy Spirit no longer inspires men to add to the Bible, the way the caretakers were no longer helped to write.

But in the same way that the doctor helped the caretakers continue to care for the orphans, the Holy Spirit still helps God's leaders care for his people today.

Convicts of Sin, Indwells Believers - Today, the Holy Spirit first makes people aware of their sin, and then enables them to receive Jesus as their Savior from sin and its judgement. After that, the Holy Spirit comes to live inside those people, in order to counsel and empower them for God's service.

Parable:

The Orphan and the Shepherd's Big Dog

The Kingdom of God is like an orphan boy – who had no parents and no family. He wandered throughout the countryside, stealing food in order to live. When he came to a shepherd's pasture, he decided to stay there, so he could steal sheep while hiding in the woods.

One day, a big dog came to the boy. To the boy's surprise, the dog was able to speak. He told the boy that he was the shepherd's dog. He had come to tell him that it was wrong to steal, and that the boy should be ashamed of himself. The dog's words touched the boy's heart, and soon he was weeping out of remorse. The boy promised to never steal again, even though he didn't know how he would survive.

Then, the dog told the boy that the shepherd and his son were well aware of his stealing. It would have been easy for them to catch and bind him. Had they done this, he would have been forced to pay for the stolen sheep or go to prison. But the shepherd and his son felt sorry for him. So, the shepherd's son volunteered to pay the price for the stolen sheep to his father, and – fortunately – this arrangement was acceptable to his father.

The boy was overwhelmed with gratitude. He told the dog he wanted to go and personally thank them for their kindness. So, the sheep dog took him to the shepherd's house.

Upon his arrival, the boy humbly thanked the shepherd and his son, and told them he was very sorry for what he had done. As soon as he did, the shepherd, the son, and their big dog, embraced the boy.

The shepherd hired the boy, and gave him a job working in his pasture. He took the large collar from his dog, and hung it inside the boy's shirt, next to his heart. The collar had a ring with the shepherd's name written on it. The shepherd told the boy that whenever he needed food or materials to do his job, he only needed to show that ring to any merchant in town, and his needs be provided for him.

In addition, the shepherd did that which made the boy happiest of all. He sent his dog out to go with him. The shepherd told his dog to never leave the boy's side. Now, if ever the boy needed help finding his way, the shepherd's big dog would be right there to help him.

Interpretation:

***John 14:15-17 & 16:8-11, Romans 8:14, 1 Corinthians 6:19 & 12:3, Acts 1:7-8
Philippians 4:19***

The Orphan and the Shepherd's Big Dog

The orphan boy who stole food represents fallen humanity. The sheep dog is the Holy Spirit.

The dog's explanation represents conviction of sin, which the Holy Spirit brings about in those who have receptive hearts. Coming to the shepherd's house to give an apology and thanks to the shepherd and his son, represents coming to God to confess our sins and receive salvation through Jesus. The embrace of the shepherd, his son, and the dog represents the forgiveness of God, who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The placing of the dog's collar containing the ring next to the boy's heart, represents the giving of the Holy Spirit's power to those who believe in Jesus. The sending of the dog to stay with the boy, represents the Holy Spirit himself, who has been sent to believers from God to be their counselor, and to remain with them forever.

THE DOCTRINE OF ANGELS & DEMONS

Powerful Spirit Beings Seen By Men - Before he created mankind, God created spirit beings called angels, who cannot die, and also possess great power. They have appeared to people in the Bible looking like men, strange animals, and stars.

Parable: The Gust of Wind and the Cloud

The Kingdom of God is like a gust of wind. It can seem to be alive, but can never be killed. It can be gentle, and yet it can suddenly have great power.

Again, the Kingdom of God is like a little girl who looked up in the sky at sunset and saw a cloud. First, the cloud became the face of a man in appearance. Then, it became the shape of a strange animal. Finally, it faded and became a bright star.

***Interpretation:
Hebrews 1:14, Luke 20:36, 2 Peter 2:11,
Daniel 9:20-22, Luke 1:19, Ezekiel 1:1-14, Job 38:6-7
The Gust of Wind and the Cloud***

The gust of wind is meant to represent an angel – described in the Bible as eternal and powerful spirit beings.

The little girl stands for the people who lived in the days of the Bible. The cloud represents the times when angels appeared to them – sometimes looking like people and sometimes like strange animals.

In addition, the Bible also describes angels as being like stars.

Satan and the Angelic Revolt - In a time before human history, the greatest of God's angels wanted to be like God, and not have to obey him. This angel – called Satan – rebelled against God. Then, he persuaded one third of the other angels – called demons – to join him. Eventually he also persuaded the first humans to want to be like God and disobey as well. Satan's punishment, as well as that of his angelic and human followers, has been reserved by God until the end of human history.

**Parable:
The Chief and His Warriors**

The Kingdom of God can be compared to a chief who ruled over a village, and who also had trusted warriors around him.

The strongest of these warriors became jealous, until he decided to no longer obey the chief. After he rebelled, he persuaded one third of the other warriors to also stop obeying the chief.

The chief could have easily destroyed the rebellious warrior and his followers, but he decided not to do so. Instead, he watched with great sadness as they went into the village and lied about his intentions. Soon, the villagers also no longer obeyed him.

But the chief had a plan to bring all things back into their proper order. Through these villagers, he would demonstrate the truth about his own intentions, and the truth about those of the rebellious warrior. Then, he would place the rebellious warriors, and all the villagers who had remained loyal to them, into a great cavern, never to be let out again.

Interpretation:

***Ezekiel 28:12-15, Isaiah 14:12-20, Genesis 3:1-15, Revelation 12:3-9,
Daniel 10:10-14, Luke 4:1-8, Matthew 8:28-34 & 25:41, Ephesians 2:4-7
The Chief and His Warriors***

The chief is God, and the warriors are his angels.

The strong warrior's rebellion represents the angelic revolt that took place in heaven among Satan and one third of God's angels before human history.

The turning of the villagers against the chief by the rebellious warriors represents the fall of mankind, and the giving over of the earth temporarily into Satan's dominion.

The chief's plan to eventually make things right represents God's plan for the eventual salvation of mankind through Jesus.

The full course of human history will vindicate the love of God and the true consequences of following Satan. After that, Satan and his rebellious angels will be judged, and will be sent to an eternal prison called hell.

Holy Angels in Scripture - In carrying out his plan for history, God has sometimes sent good angels to help and encourage those who love him – even sometimes appearing to people himself as the divine “Angel of the Lord.”

**Parable:
The Prison Visitors**

The Kingdom of God is like a certain country that had a large prison, and a powerful man ruling over it. From where he sat in his high tower, he could see every prisoner.

Because he had compassion on the prisoners, he sometimes sent visitors to encourage them when they were in despair, even though he knew they were in prison for doing wrong. On certain occasions, he even disguised himself as a visitor, and went to visit them directly.

Then at last, he gave a pardon – a decree for their release – to those who would admit their guilt, and follow the simple instructions of the decree. As a result, many prisoners were set free, and came out.

When they did so, those who had been sent as visitors, saw it and rejoiced greatly.

Interpretation:
2 Chronicles 32:20-21, Judges 6:11-16, Acts 12:6-11, Luke 15:10
The Prison Visitors

The prison is the world of fallen humanity, the man who ruled over it is God, and the tower is heaven.

The visitors are his loyal angels.

The Bible says that on certain occasions, an angel appeared to God's servants and spoke things about himself that only God could speak. On these occasions, God himself was visiting men on earth in the appearance of an angel called "The Angel of the Lord."

The pardon and the setting free of many prisoners represents God's plan of salvation through Jesus.

Because the conflict between God and Satan involves all the other angels as well, the Bible says that the good angels in heaven rejoice when even one sinner is set free by God.

THE DOCTRINE OF MAN

Common Ancestry - *All of today's human beings are the descendants of one man and one woman whom God specially created.*

Parable: The Spreading Waterfall

The Kingdom of God is like a waterfall going over a cliff.

It starts as one stream, but then it splits into two as it hits a rock on the way down.

Those two streams then hit more rocks as they continue to fall, and divide again.

This happens over and over as the water continues to fall.

By the time they reach the bottom, these streams have spread out into very many streams, yet they all came from the one stream at the top.

***Interpretation:* Genesis 2:4-25 & 9:18-19 The Spreading Waterfall**

The Bible says that all of the people on earth today, can be traced back to the first male and female that God created – Adam and Eve.

Sinful Nature Inherited - *All of today's human beings have Inherited the sinful nature that was freely chosen by the first man and woman, though the first man and woman were originally created without sin.*

Parable: The Tree in the Spreading Waterfall

Again, the Kingdom of God is like a waterfall going over a cliff.

At first the water is pure. Then, just at the place where the water is going over the edge, a tree falls across the water.

The tree is poisonous.

As a result, all the water that divides into many streams on the way down is poisonous also, even though the water from the original stream was pure.

Interpretation:
Genesis 2:16-17 & 3:1-24, Romans 5:12
The Tree in the Spreading Waterfall

Adam and Eve were created without sin, but also with the ability to choose sin. When Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden God made for them, they acquired an unstoppable tendency to sin on the inside. This poison of a sinful nature was then handed down to all their descendants after them.

Was Created with a Spiritual Nature - All human beings have a material nature that dies – which can be seen, and an immaterial nature that doesn't die – which can not be seen.

Parable:
The Hand Not Seen

The Kingdom of God is like a little girl who saw a doll peaking out from behind a tree.

The doll seemed to be moving and nodding its head as if it were alive.

But when the girl ran up to it, and pulled on its head, the doll came loose from behind the tree and there was a bare hand in its place.

The doll in her hand was now lifeless, because it had only been a puppet – a toy for pretending that your hand is a person. The hand of a second child – behind the tree – had been the one giving it life all along. She had not been able to see that second child's hand, as long as it had remained inside of the puppet. Now, the puppet was gone, but the hand still had life.

Interpretation:

Genesis 1:26-28, John 6:63, Ecclesiastes 12:5-7, Luke 16:22-23, 1 Corinthians 2:11
The Hand Not Seen

Human beings can be compared to a hand puppet. The life of the puppet really comes from what is inside and unseen. The outside part without the inside part is dead.

In addition, just as the life of the puppet is temporary, but the life of the hand that gave it life goes on, so too the life of a man's flesh eventually dies, but his spirit keeps on living.

That is why the Bible says that men and women were created "in the image of God." Because of the eternal spiritual nature we all possess, we are actually similar to God, who is also an eternal spiritual being.

Good Works Cannot Change Sinful Nature - The invisible sinful nature of all human beings exists inside of everyone, even those who do good deeds.

Parable:
The Boy and the Rotten Fruit

The Kingdom of God is like a boy who found fruit under a tree.

Some of it was rotten, and some of it looked good.

But when the boy broke open the fruit that looked good on a rock, he saw that it had fungus at its core.

Even though the fungus could not be seen on the outside, he knew the fungus inside had the potential of getting worse, until it eventually ruined the outside of the fruit as well.

Interpretation:
Isaiah 64:6, Romans 3:9-20
The Boy and the Rotten Fruit

The fruit under the tree represents the heart of all humanity after the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

The rock represents Christ, who reveals our sin nature to us when we come to him in broken sorrow for our sins.

In Christ, we realize that, whether our lives seem good or evil, sin always lurks on the inside, capable of coming out in the form of evil deeds at any time.

Sin Tendency Remains After Salvation - Even those who love God have a sinful nature deep inside them that must be continually cleansed and kept under control.

**Parable:
The Boy Who Preserved Rotten Fruit**

Again, the Kingdom of God is like a boy who found fruit under a tree.

He saw one piece of fruit that was especially beautiful. He knew it had fungus somewhere on the inside, but it looked so beautiful on the outside that he decided to take it home and try to preserve it.

He took the fruit home, and washed it every day. Whenever a dark spot started to show on its skin – indicating that the fungus was coming to the surface – he washed that spot and the darkness went away!

Every day he did this, and every day, any darkness that came to the surface was washed away.

And so it was, that by continually washing his fruit, the boy was able to keep the fungus inside.

And so it was, that the fruit looked beautiful, for a long, long, time.

***Interpretation:
Romans 7:21-8:14, Ephesians 5:25-27
The Boy Who Preserved Rotten Fruit***

The beautiful piece of fruit is the believer in Jesus Christ. The home is the fellowship of believers in the church of Jesus Christ. The water is God's Word, the Bible.

Whenever sins begins to show itself in our lives, like the dark spot on the piece of fruit, God's Word has the power to wash it away. Nevertheless, the potential of our sinful nature still remains on the inside.

THE DOCTRINE OF SIN

Violation of God's Rules - Sin is any external act that violates God's laws, and also the selfish, internal desire which leads to that act. Both lead to death.

Parable: Two Fish Out of the Water

The Kingdom of God is like a group of fish, beginning its migration upstream. Before they began, their leader told them to stay in the stream and not jump out of the water – no matter what!

Along the way, two fish within the group saw the grandeur of the forest outside the stream, and began desiring to see it up close.

Finally, they both jumped onto the bank beside the stream, and were hopelessly trapped in the mud.

They tried to breathe, and found that they could not.

Because they had desired what was forbidden in the first place, they eventually broke the rule given to them by their leader. Now knew they would soon die.

One fish is then picked up by a man for his dinner. The other is picked up by another man, and thrown back into the water.

Interpretation: ***Genesis 2:16-17 & 3:1-6, Exodus 20:1-17, Matthew 5:21-28, Romans 6:23*** ***Two Fish Out of the Water***

The journey of mankind began with a command from God not to disobey him. That command was the same as a law from God. Breaking a law from God is sin.

Adam and Eve understood God's law, but desired what was forbidden anyway, because it looked attractive to them. Eventually, they acted on that desire and disobeyed, committing sin.

As a result, they and their descendants were all doomed to die.

That is why the Bible says the desire to break God's law is as deadly to us as the act of breaking that law itself.

The first man represents Satan. But the second represents Jesus Christ, who made it possible for us to be forgiven for breaking God's law.

Affront to God's Character, Requiring Mediation - Sin is completely opposed to God's character, and so it separates man from fellowship with God. The only remedy for this separation is Jesus Christ, because only Jesus is both God and man.

**Parable:
The Two Fighting Families**

The Kingdom of God can be compared to two families, who for generations have been enemies against one another.

The things in life that each cherish are completely different, and so there is no hope for reconciliation.

Then, a miracle happens. A child is born whose father is from one family and whose mother is from the other. He becomes the mediator between the two families, and finally brings peace.

***Interpretation:
Genesis 6:3 & 5-8, Matthew 6:10, Galatians 4:4-5,
1 Timothy 2:5-6, 2 Corinthians 5:20
The Two Fighting Families***

God's will is done in heaven among his loyal angels, but is not done on earth by humanity. Since God's will comes forth from his character, and represents who he is and what he thinks and feels, God has been out of friendship with man since the fall of humanity to sin.

But then, God performed a miracle. The second person of the trinity of God became flesh by the Holy Spirit, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and became the means by which reconciliation took place.

Because Jesus was the only begotten son of God – which means the only man ever born who was also God – he alone can now bring reconciliation between God and mankind.

Grows Until It Results in Death - Disobedience toward God – encouraged by Satan and his demons – always grows, until it brings death upon one’s self, and terrible harm to others. It never stays small.

**Parable:
The Girl and the Puppy**

The Kingdom of God is like a little girl who found a puppy.

The puppy wore a sign around its neck that read “Do not feed this dog.” The girl understood the sign, but the puppy had a pleasing face. So, she decided to take it home and feed it anyway.

At first, the puppy seemed to be harmless. But soon, it grew into a large and vicious dog that demanded more and more food from her.

Finally, it viciously attacked her, and others.

***Interpretation:
Genesis 4:3-8, John 8:34-36, Matthew 5:29-30, 1 Corinthians 5:7-8
The Girl and the Puppy***

The little girl is humanity, the sign is God’s Word, and the puppy is sin.

When we give in to the practice of sin, it may seem small at first, but inevitably it grows and grows until it becomes extremely destructive. Sin not only works death into our own lives. It also becomes more horrific in its outward actions toward others, than ever could have been imagined at the start. That is why the Bible says we should be ruthless and diligent to keep sin out of our lives.

THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION

Substitutionary Atonement - *Jesus Christ was our sacrifice, dying as a substitute for the sins of humanity, in fulfillment of the way animals were sacrificed for sin during Old Testament times.*

Parable: The Maker of Clay Statues

The Kingdom of God is like a maker of clay statues who lived with his son near to a high cliff.

He made many statues of animals, and often moved them around his property. But his most cherished statue was that of a man, which he did not move. Instead, he set it on pedestal and permanently anchored it with cement.

Now, the man's neighbor was his enemy.

One day the statue maker saw his neighbor getting ready to throw a large jagged stone at his man statue from the cliff above his property. Quickly, he grabbed one of his animal statues and placed it in front. The stone came down, and would have hit its mark, but instead it smashed the animal statue.

He looked up and saw that his neighbor was determined to keep throwing stones until his precious man statue was destroyed. Frantically, he called his son to come out. He told him to continue placing animal statues in front of his man statue, until he could climb the cliff and stop his neighbor once and for all.

The son did so, and one jagged stone after another came flying down from the cliff. As a result, one animal statue after another was destroyed.

Finally, there were no more animal statues left. His father had almost reached the top of the cliff, but now one last jagged stone was descending toward its mark.

The son could not bear to see his father's precious man statue smashed. So, he made a decision. He himself stepped out in front of it, and was struck down by the jagged stone.

**Interpretation:
Exodus 12:1-34 & 38:1-7, Leviticus 1:1-5,
Galatians 4:4-5, John 1:29-34, 1 Peter 3:18,**

The Maker of Clay Statues

The statue maker is God, his neighbor is Satan, his man statue is humanity, and the statue maker's son is Jesus.

The Bible says that Jesus died as a substitute to pay for our sins.

But instead of sending Jesus to die immediately, God first set up a system of laws in the Old Testament which enabled his people Israel to receive substitution-payment for their sins through the sacrificing of animals.

This was done as a symbol of the cross of Jesus to come, during times when God was preparing a testimony to the world about his nature and deeds – through Israel and through his Word.

Only after this was accomplished did Jesus come and die for our sins. When he did so, he fulfilled God's true intent for these animal sacrifices. That is why the Bible refers to Jesus as the sacrificial "Lamb of God" who took away our sins.

Adoption by Grace, Through Faith - Jesus Christ made it possible for us to be adopted as children by God the Father, after we are called home by his Holy Spirit. This adoption is a gift of grace, and undeserved, requiring only believing faith.

Parable: The King and the Orphan Girl

The Kingdom of God is like a great king who was led in procession through the streets of his kingdom.

On the side of the road, he saw an orphan girl –a girl with no parents and no family – looking for food in a pile of garbage.

The king's heart was moved with compassion. So, he decided that he would offer her the right to be adopted as his daughter, though she was not of his royal family, and had done nothing to deserve being adopted by him.

When he returned to his palace, he gave orders to have the girl summoned with the good news that she had a father that wanted her to come home. She only needed to believe that this good news was from the king. If she believed, she would be led to the palace immediately, and welcomed by him.

Again, the Kingdom of God is like an orphan girl, who stayed alive by finding food in the trash thrown along the streets.

One day, after a great procession, she fell asleep. She was awakened by a dove, who spoke to her, saying she could now come home to her father. She replied

that she did not have a home or a father. But, he explained that, though she did not have a natural father, she did have a father nonetheless – a king who had created all things. It was this father who now wanted to lead her home to a new dawning day.

So, she left the trash, and ran toward the light of the new dawning day in front of her, until she found her new father in his palace, and was welcomed home.

Interpretation:

John 1:11-13 & 3:16, Ephesians 2:1-3, Romans 5:8 & 8:14-17, Galatians 4:4-6, Ephesians 2:8-10

The King and the Orphan Girl

The king is God. The orphan girl is humanity, the trash is sin, the dove is the Holy Spirit, and the light of the world is Jesus.

God loves us while we are still sinners. His Holy Spirit calls us to come home to God, our Heavenly Father. If we believe in Jesus – and leave the trash of our sin – we come home and become God’s children.

That is why the Bible says we are saved by grace, though faith in Jesus. That is also why when we believe the Good News about Jesus – and receive the Holy Spirit within us – our spiritual nature cries out for God, in the same way that a long lost child cries out for “Daddy.”

The Only Means of Returning to God - Jesus Christ is the only way to receive forgiveness of sin from God.

Parable:

The Disease with the Foolish Cure

The Kingdom of God is like a far off land, where the people were being stricken by a terrible disease that no one could cure.

The disease made the faces of the people very frightening before they died.

Some tried to believe that any medicine would cure this disease, but no medicine ever did.

Then one day, a man came with many small mirrors –pieces of glass that enabled the beholder to see his own face. He proclaimed that anyone who would simply receive a mirror, and look deeply into his own hideous face, would be instantly cured.

He told them there was no other cure for this disease, and so he solemnly begged them to believe and receive.

Those who did not want to look at themselves, even though they were dying, refused to believe the man and receive a mirror. They used the excuse that this not a true medicine – discovered or created by wise men – but instead only foolishness.

Yet, those who knew they were sick unto death, and only wanted to get well, decided to believe the man and receive a mirror.

It was heartbreaking for them to see themselves as they truly were. But as soon as they did, a miracle happened. They were all instantly cured.

Interpretation:

John 14:6, Acts 4:10-12, 2 Timothy 3:13-15, James 1:23-24, 1 Corinthians 1:18-21
The Disease with the Foolish Cure

Sin is like a fatal disease that makes us hideous with evil before we die. It is also a disease with only one cure – Jesus.

The Word of God is the story of Jesus. It is also like a mirror that shows us our true sinful nature, and our need for Jesus to save us.

Some think that all beliefs should be considered equal. But only those who receive the one cure that God has provided for this disease, the Good News about Jesus – and face the truth about their sinful nature – will live forever in heaven with him.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

A Spiritual Organism - The Church of Jesus Christ is an organism joined together by the Holy Spirit, made up of all those who believe in him. They have become spiritual citizens of heaven, rather than of this world.

Parable: The Good King and the Bad King

The Kingdom of God can be compared to two kingdoms, one led by a good king, and the other by a bad king.

Because he took pity on those whom the bad king was oppressing, the good king intended to one day attack that kingdom, take control of it, and liberate its people. But he feared that, unless the people of that land could be told about his goodness and intentions, they might fight his army when he came and die in great numbers.

So, the good king sent many from his own kingdom to secretly go into that land as spies.

Even though they were spread throughout the land of the bad king – each with different identities – they all were secretly together, because they all were loyal to the good king, and committed to the same mission.

In obedience to their mission, they went about telling anyone who would listen, about the good king and his kingdom. Some believed the spies. They became loyal to the good king and eagerly awaited his coming. But others did not believe, and treated many of the spies shamefully.

Finally, the day came when the good king made his move. He stormed into the land of the bad king with his army. Those who opposed the good king died. But those who welcomed him, received freedom and prosperity beyond their wildest dreams.

Interpretation:

John 18:36, Matthew 12:26 & 24:14, Acts 1:3-8, Romans 8:9, 1 Corinthians 12:13, Revelation 11:15-17 & 20:10-15

The Good King and the Bad King

The good king is God, and the bad king is Satan.

The king's people sent as spies are believers from all the different nations of the earth who make up the Church of Jesus Christ.

The people in the land of the bad king are the people of the nations who have not yet heard the Good News about Jesus.

Those who believe in Jesus are in this world, but not of it. They are citizens of heaven who have been sent on a mission while they are still on earth. Their mission is to spread that Good News.

One day, when Jesus returns to earth, this world will be taken away from Satan and given to God.

At that time, they who hated the Good News about Jesus, mistreated his messengers, and despised his coming, will die a second death in an eternal prison called hell – along with Satan, their bad king.

Body of Christ, Temple of God, Bride of Christ - The Church of Jesus Christ is the Body of Christ on earth, with Jesus himself being the head of the body. It began its existence on earth during the Jewish holiday called the Day of Pentecost – shortly after Jesus, died, rose again, and ascended back into heaven. On that day, the Holy Spirit was given to all believers in Jesus, making his Church the dwelling place of God, just as the Temple was in Old Testament times. The future coming of Jesus for his church is also pictured as being like a groom coming for his bride – and so the Bible also calls his Church the Bride of Christ.

Parable: The Teacher's New House

The Kingdom of God is like a teacher who had formed a great bond of friendship with his pupils, and over whom he served as head of their class.

One day, the house he had lived in for many years was destroyed by fire.

But his pupils built for him a new house. This time, it was made of stones that would not burn, and incorporated stones from the old house in its foundation.

On a very special day, the house was completed, and presented to the teacher.

In his gratitude, the teacher wrote the names of his pupils on each of the stones they had gathered.

Then, he lived in his new house, until he invited them all to come there for a great celebration.

Interpretation:
Colossians 1:18, 1 Corinthians 12:12-27,
Acts 2, 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, Ephesians 2:19-22,
Matthew 25:1-13, Revelation 19:7-9
The Teacher's New House

The teacher is Jesus, and his pupils are those who believe in him.

The teacher's old house is the temple from Old Testament times, which was destroyed by the Roman Empire shortly after the time of Jesus.

But the teacher's new house, bearing the names of his students and made up of old and new stones, represents the Body of Christ, which is made up of all who believe in him – both Jewish and non-Jewish. It can never be destroyed.

The Body of Christ is now the temple of God's Holy Spirit, as was the former Temple.

The special day of the presentation of the new house represents the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came.

Right now, Jesus is the head of the body, but is not bodily present on earth with his people.

But when Jesus returns to earth, he will receive his people to himself, like a groom that comes to take his bride and marry her. When this happens, he will celebrate with his people in what the Bible calls "The Marriage Supper of the Lamb", and live with them forever in heaven.

Consists of Those Who Believe in Christ's Deity - Only those who believe Jesus was both God and man, truly belong to the Church of Jesus Christ – though others who say that Jesus was something less, also call themselves by his name.

Parable:
The Chief and His Blood

The Kingdom of God is like a man who came from a foreign land, yet eventually became the chief of his tribe.

As was the custom in that tribe, he had many children as chief.

When he was old and about to die, he declared that only those who were his descendants by blood had the right to bear his name. But after he died, others took his name as well, and claimed to be among his royal descendants.

Then a strange disease came to that land, and everyone died – everyone, that is, except for those who had been truly related to the chief by blood.

When the chief's descendants searched for wisdom regarding why this had occurred, they discovered the chief's personal writings. In those writings was a story about how a certain disease had come to the foreign land in which he had once lived. Only those with a certain type of blood had survived. The chief himself had survived, and so it was that he learned he had the right kind of blood in his veins.

Upon reading this, the chief's descendants realized that it was the chief's blood, passed down to them, which had saved them. Only those who had been truly related to him by blood, rather than only by name, had survived.

Interpretation:
Leviticus 17:11, Colossians 1:13-20, 2 Corinthians 5:18-19,
John 14:8-11, 1 John 4:1-3
The Chief and His Blood

The heart of the Good News of salvation is that God took upon himself the sins of humanity in the person of Jesus.

Only the blood of Jesus is sufficient to pay for humanity's sins, because only the blood of Jesus represents the very life of God.

Those who believe Jesus was something less than God-in-the-flesh, believe that something less than the poured out life of God had the power to pay for their sins.

But, on the Day of Judgement, only those sins taken up by God himself, and paid for by the poured out life of God in Christ's blood, will receive God's forgiveness.

THE DOCTRINE OF FUTURE THINGS

The Spreading of the Gospel, and Christ's Second Coming – Even though the events of the Bible happen in Jewish Israel, they look forward to the gradual spreading of the Good News about Jesus to the rest of the nations, and then to the eventual return of Jesus to earth to rule in glory.

Parable: The Wedding Ring

The Kingdom of God is like a jeweler who was making a ring with a diamond for the woman he was going to marry.

First, he took a piece of gold and rolled it into a thin gold band with one end as a beginning and the other as an ending.

Next, he bent it into a ring-sized circle, so that the beginning and the end portions met each other at the top.

Then, he made two small brackets – like two metal fingers – and melted them onto the top of the circle, so that both pointed upward.

Finally, he placed a beautiful diamond in between the two brackets and squeezed the two brackets together to hold the diamond in place.

When the man saw that the brackets and the diamond could be seen reflected in the circle of the ring – and that the two brackets attached the diamond to the ring while also holding it away from the ring – he knew that the ring was finished.

***Interpretation:
Genesis 3:1-6, Isaiah 5:1-7, Galatians 3:22-25,
Isaiah 53 & 9:6-7, Daniel 7:13-14, Zechariah 14:1-4, Acts 1:9-12,
Genesis 12:1-3, Galatians 3:8-9, Matthew 24:14, Revelation 19:11-20:4***

The Wedding Ring

The ring represents the Old Testament, which begins with the fall of humanity to sin, and comes full circle to the realization that even when people are being led by God they are still under bondage to sin.

The two brackets represent predictions about the first and second comings of Jesus Christ, reflected – or hinted at – in the Old Testament.

The diamond is the Good News about Jesus – also hinted at in the Old Testament -- and the New Testament writings that explain the full meaning and out-working of that Good News. It is attached to – and yet at the same time set apart from – the Old Testament.

In some places in the world, a woman agrees to marry a man who loves her by receiving a ring he has offered. In the same way, God will have a people for his very own forever, when the story about the Good News of Jesus has spread to all of the nations, gladly received by those who desire him.

The Last Judgment, and the New Heaven and New Earth - The Bible tells us that human history will end with certain events:

- 1) The spreading of the good news about Jesus to all nations by the power of the Holy Spirit.**
- 2) The returning of Jesus to earth as its conquering king.**
- 3) The coming back to life of all who ever died, and the gathering of all those still alive, to be judged by him.**
- 4) The sending of all the disloyal angels, and all people who died apart from him, to a place of eternal punishment called hell.**
- 5) The receiving of all those who believed in him into a new heaven and new earth, wherein there is no more suffering. There, they will live in loving fellowship with God, together with the loyal angels, forever.**

Parable: The Captain and His Trees

The Kingdom of God may be compared to a ship captain who landed on a certain island. The island was filled with trees that grew thorns, instead of fruit.

Seeing this, the captain purchased a small field in the midst of it. There, he cleared its ground of thorn trees, and planted seeds that he knew would bring forth fruit trees instead. When he was finished, he left a crew with instructions to care for his trees until he returned.

As time passed, his trees did indeed bear fruit rather than thorns. Their seeds even took flight on the wind, spreading out from the captain's field, until fruit trees could be found among the thorns all over the island.

But the people hated those trees because they came from someone who was not of that island. They preferred their thorny trees instead. So, they cut down many of the captain's trees, both on and off his property.

After a long time, the captain returned. He found that many of his trees had been cut down. In anger, he hunted down those who had cut down his trees, and imprisoned them in the dark lower chamber of his ship.

Then, he inspected all the trees on the island, including those still standing yet no longer alive. He cut down all the thorn trees, burned them, and dumped their ashes into the lower chamber of his ship with those who had preferred them. Finally, he set the ship adrift into the sea, never to be remembered again.

On the island, the captain took wood from his beloved trees – those cut down and those still standing – and made a beautiful new house. There, he lived happily ever after, together with his crew.

Interpretation:

***John 15:16, Matthew 5:10-11 & 24:14 & 28:16-20, Acts 1:8, Revelation 19:11-20:4,
Matthew 25:31-46, Revelation 20:10-22:7
The Captain and His Trees***

The captain is Jesus, coming twice to the island. The island is the world, with Israel being a small land in the midst of it.

The thorns represent sin, and the good fruit represents the works of Jesus through those who believe in him.

The captain's crew represents the good angels, while the people of the island are Satan and his demons.

The wind is the Holy Spirit, spreading the Good News about Jesus from Israel to the rest of the world. The hatred and shameful acts of the people of the island against the good trees represents the persecution of believers in Jesus by those on earth inspired by Satan.

The captain's return-inspection is the Day of Judgement. When Jesus returns, he will gather Satan, his demons, and resurrect all those who were loyal to Satan. He will cast them all into an eternal prison called hell.

But he will also resurrect all those who believed in him, and live with them and with his angels in a beautiful new heaven, and new earth, forever and ever.

Conclusion:

Have You Understood All These Things?

"Have you understood all these things?" They said to Him, "Yes." And Jesus said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a head of a household, who brings out of his treasure things new and old."(Matthew 13:51-52 NASB)

As a final thought, I would like to direct our attention to the above passage. Jesus had this exchange with His disciples after giving His first seven parables in the Gospel of Matthew. I believe it can also be understood as being, all by itself, a final instructive parable to Christians who journey in our time.

More specifically, I see it as a parable that can be interpreted as follows:

<i>"Therefore"</i>	From now on
<i>"every scribe"</i>	everyone who wants to communicate God's truth
<i>"who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven"</i>	who is part of the new spiritual regime I am introducing
<i>"is like a head of a household"</i>	is like a loving father
<i>"who"</i>	who, when he wants build a strong spiritual foundation in the hearts of his children,
<i>"brings out of his treasure things new and old"</i>	tells them new and captivating stories to help them better understand precious old family albums that speak of what it has always meant to be member of the family.

No doubt some of you are saying that a more faithful interpretation would convey that the words "new and old" represent the New and Old Testament. I will joyfully concede that point. But my alternate interpretation comes from the hope and prayer I have expressed in this book. It also helps make the point of my opening parable:

The One who originally gave us His Word has already told us the best way to explain it. "It was there all the time." Now it's up to us to follow His lead in order to captivate an easily bored and easily offended world that, deep inside, is also very lost and very lonely – yearning to come home. He who has an ear, let him hear.

And Eva was alone again –
at least that's what she feared.

But then that gentle voice again

called softly from within...
It seemed to say that it was time
to leave the garbage bin.

So, walking barefoot through the trash
she went toward where it led.
She completely forgot about her tummy
waiting to be fed.

She started walking faster
till her feet began to run.
Then, off she went, toward the light
of brand new dawning sun.

The End

Author's Bio

Dominic Francese is a veteran Bible Teacher and former itinerant musical missionary for Campus Crusade for Christ's (CCC's) Keynote division. He has specialized in communicating in-depth scriptural truth through storytelling since completing his Master's degree in Biblical Studies at Regent University in 1984. After being ordained in California in 1993, he composed a series of musical story-rhymes and plays, which eventually led to his joining with CCC in 1998 for the purpose of sharing these with a wider national and international audience. Dominic subsequently joined Artists in Christian Testimony in the Fall of 2005 in order to share his "Parable Power of Jesus" concepts in a workshop, under the banner of his Storytelling Institute. He has served as Pastor of River Oaks Community Church in Carmel, IN since 2006 and lives with his wife and four daughters in Noblesville, IN.