

Parable of the Leaven

Matthew 13:33; Luke 13:20-21

The Parable of the Leaven is found in Matthew 13:33 and Luke 13:20–21. Many years ago, a little girl about five-years-old discovered what many people miss today about this parable; when commenting on her expressive art, she said, “The lady is Moses and the bread is not *matzo*.” *Matzo*, the bread for the Jewish Passover, has no leaven in it.

In modern English, the term *leaven* has a positive connotation, but in ancient literature, except for Jesus’ surprising parable, the connotation was negative. Leaven was a sign of moral corruption. This was because fermentation is a process of putrefaction in the mass of dough. Leaven was made by storing a piece of bread in a dark, damp place until mold formed. These historical matters are not interesting to children, but are mentioned to invite you to discover more about this parable as an adult.

How to Use this Parent Page

With your child, begin by looking together at the illustrations below and listening as your child recalls—and in a sense *relives*—the experience of today’s lesson. Invite your child to respond to the drawings. You might say, for example:

- I wonder what you can tell me about these pictures?
- I wonder what these pictures have to do with today’s story?

Just listen. This is *not* a time to quiz children on what they may or may not recall about the lesson, but to be quietly present as they share their own experience. This will be different for each child—one may retell much of the presentation, another recall a single moment that had meaning, and yet another talk about his or her own creative response. Again, your role is not to correct or supplement what your child tells you, but simply to *listen* in a supportive way.

You are supporting the formation of young—sometimes very young—theologians.

Then, if you wish, you can read with (or to) your child the condensed version of today’s lesson offered below. A smaller version of the materials used in today’s Godly Play presentation is available for home use; to order, contact Godly Play Resources (1-800-445-4390 or www.godlyplay.com) and ask for the “Miniature Parable of the Leaven.”

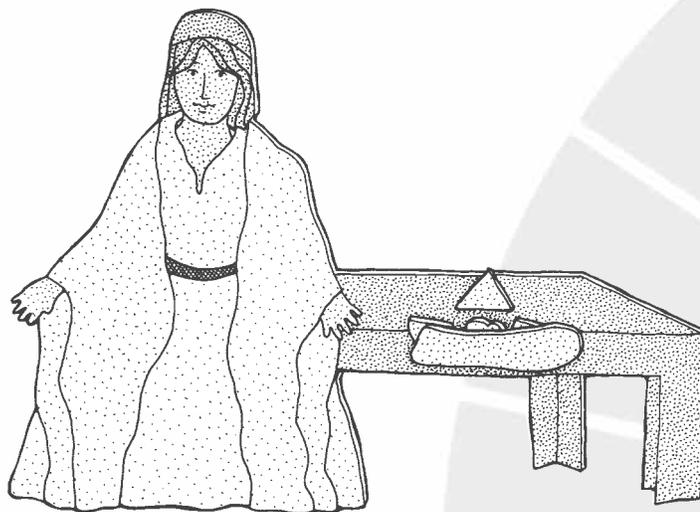
Whether you read the presentation or simply listen as your child shares what was received in today’s lesson, ask the Wondering questions printed in the left column. Remember, there are many right answers! Be open to what the parables can mean to you and your child. God will teach you new meanings every day. Parables cannot ever be all used up. Conclude by sitting quietly for a moment and then saying “Amen.”

The Presentation

There was once someone who said such amazing things and did such wonderful things that people followed him. As they followed him, they heard him talking about a kingdom, but it was not like the kingdom they lived in. It was not like any kingdom anyone had ever visited. It was not like any kingdom anyone had ever heard of. They couldn’t help it. They had to ask him what the kingdom of heaven was like.

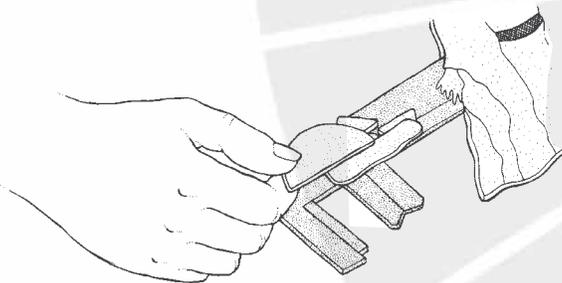
Wondering

- **I wonder** what the leaven could really be?
- **I wonder** if you could take the bread that was leavened all over and put it back like it was before the woman hid the leaven in it?
- **I wonder** if you have ever come close to a place where this happens? I mean really, not just in the parable or making bread?



One time when they asked him this, he said “The kingdom of heaven is like when a woman takes three measures of flour, which is a lot, and mixes them together.

“She then hides the leaven in the mixture, which swells up and is leavened all over.”



Godly Play The Godly Play Environment

In every Parent Page, we offer information about Godly Play to help you understand both its methodology and purpose. Godly Play pays careful attention to the environment it provides for children. The Godly Play environment is “open” within a clear structure. Choices then are from among constructive alternatives.

The Godly Play environment is “boundaried” in the sense that Godly Play lovingly manages *time*, *space* and *relationships*:

- Godly Play manages *time* the way most Christians organize their worship together, first by building a circle of community, then by hearing and responding to scripture, then by sharing a feast, and finally by saying goodbye and leaving the Godly Play space.
- Godly Play manages *space* by arranging materials in the Godly Play room in such a way that the arrangement itself communicates—visually and silently—the flow of the biblical story, the centrality of worship and the importance of community. Everything is at “child level,” accessible and inviting.
- Godly Play manages *relationships* by emphasizing the importance of teacher preparation and by providing a safe, consistent environment for the community of children. As much as possible, It removes “setups” for misbehavior so each child feels competent, confident and deeply happy.