

**Aim:** An introduction to parables

**Refer:**

**Resources:** Pictures of Pilgrims Progress are available here: <http://www.bunyanministries.org/>

Discuss: What is an object lesson? What is a parable?

Jesus used lots of parables and object lessons and here are some reasons:

- When someone sees the object again they remember the lesson
- It is a way to put a difficult lesson into a form that someone is more likely to understand
- It can be a more tactful way of showing where someone has gone wrong. The meaning is seen by those who want to learn but others see it as just a story without taking offence.

When you are young, an object lesson will remind you of the story someone has told, but somewhere around the age that you are now, you will start to understand more hidden meanings in object lessons, and they will become even more interesting.

John Bunyan was born in 1628 in Bedford, England. This was after the time of Tyndale who translated and published the Bible into English but before the Wesley brothers lived and the Pilgrims left England. His family was very poor but they managed to send him to school. It wasn't until his marriage that he started to question his salvation. He struggled for many years before finally finding peace and eventually becoming a deacon in an independent church in Bedford. They soon discovered that he had a talent for preaching and he started preaching not only in his own church but in other places as well; however, this was against the law and as a result, he spent many years in prison. During this time he often preached to the inmates but he also turned to writing. He is most famous for writing Pilgrims Progress which is an allegory – a made up story that, like a parable, has a hidden meaning.

Over the next 6 months, we will study the story of Pilgrims Progress to find some of the hidden meanings in it, and each week your family will receive a section of the audio book so by the end, you will have the entire story.

*As I walked through the wilderness of this world, I lighted on a certain place, where was a den; and I laid me down in that place to sleep: and as I slept, I dreamed a dream. I dreamed, and, behold, "I saw a man clothed with rags, standing in a certain place, with his face from his own house, a book in his hand, and a great burden upon his back."*

Let's stop there and look up the following verses – what is similar between these verses and the man just described:

- Isaiah 64:6 (filthy rags)
- Psalm 38:4 (burden)

The man described in Pilgrims Progress is an object lesson for the spiritual condition of a person. Compared to God's glory and righteousness, we are like filthy rags; sin makes problems and difficulties for us spiritually – like a heavy burden might cause us physical difficulties.

*I looked, and saw him open the book, and read therein; and as he read, he wept and trembled; and not being able longer to contain, he brake out with a lamentable cry, saying, "What shall I do?" I saw also that he looked this way and that way, as if he would run; yet he stood still, because, as I perceived, he could not tell which way to go. I looked then, and saw a man named Evangelist coming to him, who asked, "Wherefore dost thou cry?"*

*He answered, "Sir, I perceive, by the book in my hand, that I am condemned to die, and after that to come to judgment and I find that I am not willing to do the first, nor able to do the second." Evangelist gave him a parchment roll, and there was written within, "Fly from the wrath to come." The man therefore, read it, and looking upon Evangelist very carefully, said, "Whither must I fly?"*

*Then said Evangelist, pointing with his finger over a very wide field, "Do you see yonder wicket gate?" The man said, "No."*

*Then said the other, "Do you see yonder shining light?" He said, "I think I do."*

*Said Evangelist, "Keep that light in your eye, and go up directly thereto, so shalt thou see the gate; at which, when thou knockest, it shall be told thee what thou shalt do."*

Do you remember Jesus object lesson about the wide and the narrow gate? (Matthew 7:13) It is easy to sin and there are many ways to sin – like it is easy to find room to drive on a multi-lane motor way. There is only one way to heaven – through Jesus – and as Jesus said, not many people find it.

*So I saw in my dream that the man began to run. Now, he had not ran far from his own door, but his wife and children perceiving it, began to cry after him to return; but the man put his fingers in his ears, and ran on, crying, "Life! Life! Eternal life!" So he looked not behind him, but fled towards the middle of the plain. The neighbours also came out to see him run and there were two that were resolved to fetch him back by force. The name of the one was Obstinate, and the name of the other Pliable...*

Discuss the meaning of the words obstinate and pliable

*In a little time they overtook him.*

Then said the man, "Neighbours, wherefore are ye come?"  
 They said, "To persuade you to go back with us."  
 But he said, "That can by no means be. Be content, good neighbours, and go along with me."  
 "What," said Obstinate, "And leave our friends and our comforts behind us?"  
 "Yes," said Christian, for that was his name, "because that all which you shall forsake, is not worthy to be compared with a little of that which I am seeking to enjoy." And he went on to tell them of what he had read in his book.  
 "Tush," said Obstinate, "Away with your book; will you go back with us, or no? Come, then, neighbour Pliable, let us turn again, and go home without him..."  
 Then said Pliable, "If what the good Christian says is true, the things he looks after are better than ours; my heart inclines to go with my neighbour."  
 "What! More fools still? Go back, go back, and be wise..."  
 "Well, neighbour Obstinate," saith Pliable, "I begin to come to a point; I intend to go along with this good man, and to cast in my lot with him. But, my good companion, do you know the way to this desired place?"  
 Christian: "I am directed by a man whose name is Evangelist, to speed me to a little gate that is before us, where we shall receive instructions about the way."  
 Pliable: "Come then, good neighbour, let us be going..."  
 "And I will go back to my place," said Obstinate; I will be no companion of such misled fantastical fellows. Now I saw in my dream, that when Obstinate was gone back, Christian and Pliable went talking over the plain.  
 So Pliable said, "Well, my good companion, glad am I to hear of these things; come on, let us mend our pace."  
 But Christian said, "I cannot go so fast as I would, by reason of this burden that is on my back."

Have you ever met a person who is obstinate? - Someone who is always right – even when they are wrong.

Have you ever met someone who is pliable? - Someone who is always changing their mind depending on the last person who talked to them or someone who gives up as soon as they run into a difficulty.

Discuss: How can you avoid being too obstinate or too pliable?

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Depending on time discuss from the following:

- Christians as salt - Matthew 5:13
- Christians as light - Matthew 5:14-15
- Matthew 5:33-37 (don't swear or use promises, just says yes or no)
- Matthew 5:38-48 (An eye for an eye; love your enemies...)

## Information about drugs:

### Junior Drug Awareness – Marijuana by Judy L Hasday & Therese DeAngelis

- Ch3 - What does Marijuana do to me:
- Adolescents are especially vulnerable because their minds bodies and spirits are still developing.
- Weakens immune system and mixes up the hormone system
- Affects all parts of the brain: changes personality, impairs ability to learn and remember
- Interferes with thinking, problem solving, decision making and concentrating
- Affects coordination, alertness and ability to perform even simple tasks (a lot worse than alcohol)
- Contains mind altering THC (a powerful hallucinogen) – cotenancy depends on the plant, marijuana in late 1990's was 20-80% stronger than in 1960/70
- User may feel more relaxed, time seems to go slow, and things seem more intense, emotions are exaggerated. About ½ hour later the person becomes drowsy and may fall asleep. Person may become extremely thirsty and hungry; eyes become red, blood pressure increases. Can also cause nausea, shaking and fainting.
- The body develops a tolerance – requires more to get the same response.
- Using over a long period may cause "Amotivation" syndrome where the user doesn't care about the future or the things they used to care about.
- Marijuana, alcohol and cigarettes are called a "Gate-way" drugs; users are more likely to go on to use other even more addictive, more dangerous drugs. 12-17yo who smokes is 19 more times more likely to use cocaine. Young person who drinks alcohol is 50 times more likely to use cocaine. 12-17 yo who smokes marijuana or pot is 85 more likely to use cocaine. Young person who drinks, smokes pot an cigarettes are 266 times more likely to use cocaine. The earlier in life they start the more likely they will move onto harder drugs.

### Junior Drug Awareness – Alcohol by Nancy Peacock

- Mild toxin or poison
- Woman's bodies absorb more than men
- Alcohol slows eye focus and movement and impairs eye/hand coordination
- Causes brain damage – reduces blood flow: affects problem solving, memory
- Liver filters your blood, alcohol causes liver damage

### Valium and other Downers – Cindy Dyson

- This includes some drugs prescribed to depression and pain, even over the counter pain relievers
- These drugs, even over the counter ones can be addictive
- These drugs, even over the counter ones have side effects
- Most of these drugs should only be used for short term
- These drugs work on the nerve system in the brain, then go to the liver where they are processed and excreted or stored in the fat cells of the body.
- If a person takes a second dose before the first dose leaves the body there is a possibility of overdosing.
- Regular users will develop a tolerance and need more, or a more potent drug to get the same relief
- Using alcohol with drugs (even over the counter) or using more than one drug at a time can increase the effects of the drugs and the risk of overdosing and even death.
- Some examples of drugs:
  - Benzodiazepines -(Valium, Xanax. Librium, Itivan) – relax the body
  - Barbiturates (another family of drugs)

### Same Dress Different Day by Juliet Van Heereen

- Cocaine changes the pathways in the frontal lobe and destroys the ability of the body to make dopamine and endorphins which the body needs to have good feelings.
- Cocaine remains in the body for up to 3 years