

## Talk it out

Have you ever been told a story which was intended to teach you something?  
What was it?  
How effective was it?

Jesus was a teacher. He used stories in his teaching called **parables**. These stories helped people understand how to live as God wanted them to. People could go to the temple and listen to priests, but their words were often difficult to interpret for ordinary people. In the Gospels, there are words made everything very clear for ordinary people. In the Gospels, there are 37 different parables. Here are three of the best known:

### The Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–32)

A rich man had two sons. The younger son asked for his share of an inheritance and left to travel. He had a great time, partying wherever he went; he was a prodigal (waster). Meanwhile, his older brother kept working hard on the family farm.

Eventually, the party money ran out. Being too ashamed to go home, the younger son found a job looking after pigs, but it paid so little that he was forced to eat the pigs' food to survive. He realised that his father's servants had a much better life, and he decided to go home, beg forgiveness and ask for a job from his father.

On his return, his father was overjoyed and threw a huge party. He even killed the calf he had been fattening for a feast. The older brother was angry and jealous – after all, his brother had wasted all that money but he had been loyal. Now it looked as if the father was not bothered about his younger son's selfishness. His father took the older brother aside. He reminded him that everything now belonged to him, and his brother had nothing. However, everyone had thought the son had gone forever, so it was right to celebrate the return of this son and welcome him home.

*Everyone who returns to God is forgiven – even the badly behaved.*

### Parable of the Sower and Seed (Mark 4:1–20)

A farmer went out to plant seed. As he scattered it, some fell on the path and was gobbled up by the birds. Some fell on rocky soil and sprouted quickly but also died quickly, having nowhere to send its roots. Some seeds fell among the weeds and were choked before they could grow properly. Some fell on good soil. These seeds put down good roots and were well nourished by the soil. They grew into fine plants.

*The seeds are the Christian message and the soil types are people who hear*

*it. The good soil is people who accept the Christian message and live by it*

## Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14–30)

The master of a house had to go away on business. He called three of his servants to him. To one he gave five talents (a talent was a high value coin), to the next he gave three and to the third he gave one. Then he left.

The first two servants decided to use their money to earn more from it. Both doubled their money by the time their master returned. The third was afraid to lose it, so hid it.

On his return, the master praised the first two servants and said they would be greatly rewarded. He was furious with the third, as he had expected more back – even by investing it in the bank, the servant would have earned a little interest. The master threw him out.

*The talents are the Christian message which grows if others are told about it.*

### Activities

- 1 What is a parable? Why were they told?
- 2 Write out this table correctly so that each parable matches its correct meaning.

<b>Parable of the Prodigal Son</b>	We should not hide the skills and talents we have. We should use them to do better.
<b>Parable of the Sower and Seed</b>	People can change and should be praised for positive change. We should never be afraid to ask for help when we need it.
<b>Parable of the Talents</b>	People respond differently to the same message – some ignore it, some seize on it but lose interest, some are influenced by others to forget it, some listen and do well because of it.

- 3 Choose one parable. Retell it in your own words, or as a cartoon strip or storyboard. Explain the meaning of the parable you chose.
- 4 People use parables all the time to explain things. Do you think that is true? Explain your answer.
- 5 'Parables have messages for everyone who hears them, not just Christians.' Do you agree with that statement? Explain why using at least two reasons. Can you think of a different point of view? Give reasons to support that view.