

Chapter 3 Key Words in Understanding all Parables

It may be a little difficult to explain what key words are, and how the Bible uses them, but an example should answer a lot of questions. First off we need to review the general Bible Study rules related to Key Words.

1. Key words are words the author repeated to draw attention to his main thought, point, or lesson. Key words are words that are the SAME, SIMILAR, or RELATED. Highlighting key words helps to show the main thought in scripture as well as patterns you may otherwise miss. It may take a bit of practice to develop a pattern highlighting key words. I look at it as a fundamental and necessary way for God's Spirit to slow you down and get you to listen. It's difficult to thoroughly highlight all the key words in one pass. You have no choice but to go back and forth over scripture to do a complete job.
2. Key words are also contrasts. In this case a simple contrast is shown between new and old. Always look for contrasts used as key words. When contrasting key words are used, look for contrasting examples teaching the same lesson in the chapter.
3. Authors repeat key words to draw attention to their use as symbols. Remember, symbols always point to something far greater.

The best thing to do is read through the example. Look at how key words are grouped together in sets, and how key words are used in parables.

Matthew 13:1-32 NLTse

Mat 13:1 Later that same day Jesus left the house and sat beside the lake.

Mat 13:2 A large crowd soon gathered around him, so he got into a boat. Then he sat there and taught as the people stood on the shore.

Mat 13:3 He told many stories in the form of parables, such as this one: "Listen! A farmer went out to plant some seeds.

Mat 13:4 As he scattered them across his field, some seeds fell on a footpath, and the birds came and ate them.

Mat 13:5 Other seeds fell on shallow soil with underlying rock. The seeds sprouted quickly because the soil was shallow.

Mat 13:6 But the plants soon wilted under the hot sun, and since they didn't have deep roots, they died.

Mat 13:7 Other seeds fell among thorns that grew up and choked out the tender plants.

Mat 13:8 Still other seeds fell on fertile soil, and they produced a crop that was thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times as much as had been planted!

Mat 13:9 Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand."

Mat 13:10 His disciples came and asked him, "Why do you use parables when you talk to the people?"

Mat 13:11 He replied, "You are permitted to understand the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven, but others are not."

Mat 13:12 To those who listen to my teaching, more understanding will be given, and they will have an abundance of knowledge. But for those who are not listening, even what little understanding they have will be taken away from them.

Mat 13:13 That is why I use these parables, For they look, but they don't really see. They hear, but they don't really listen or understand.

Mat 13:14 This fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah that says, 'When you hear what I say, you will not understand. When you see what I do, you will not comprehend.'

Mat 13:15 For the hearts of these people are hardened, and their ears cannot hear, and they have closed their eyes-- so their eyes cannot see, and their ears cannot hear, and their hearts cannot understand, and they cannot turn to me and let me heal them.'

Mat 13:16 "But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear.

Mat 13:17 I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, but they didn't see it. And they longed to hear what you hear, but they didn't hear it.

Mat 13:18 "Now listen to the explanation of the parable about the farmer planting seeds:

Mat 13:19 The seed that fell on the footpath represents those who hear the message about the Kingdom and don't understand it. Then the evil one comes and snatches away the seed that was planted in their hearts.

Mat 13:20 The seed on the rocky soil represents those who hear the message and immediately receive it with joy.

Mat 13:21 But since they don't have deep roots, they don't last long. They fall away as soon as they have problems or are persecuted for believing God's word.

Mat 13:22 The seed that fell among the thorns represents those who hear God's word, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the worries of this life and the lure of wealth, so no fruit is produced.

Mat 13:23 The seed that fell on good soil represents those who truly hear and understand God's word and produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted!"

Mat 13:24 Here is another story Jesus told: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a farmer who planted good seed in his field.

Mat 13:25 But that night as the workers slept, his enemy came and planted weeds among the wheat, then slipped away.

Mat 13:26 When the crop began to grow and produce grain, the weeds also grew.

Mat 13:27 "The farmer's workers went to him and said, 'Sir, the field where you planted that good seed is full of weeds! Where did they come from?'

Mat 13:28 "'An enemy has done this!' the farmer exclaimed. "'Should we pull out the weeds?' they asked.

Mat 13:29 "'No,' he replied, 'you'll uproot the wheat if you do.

Mat 13:30 Let both grow together until the harvest. Then I will tell the harvesters to sort out the weeds, tie them into bundles, and burn them, and to put the wheat in the barn.'"

Mat 13:31 Here is another illustration Jesus used: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed planted in a field.

Mat 13:32 It is the smallest of all seeds, but it becomes the largest of garden plants; it grows into a tree, and birds come and make nests in its branches."

At first we see how this paragraph begins with a set of words highlighted in green showing both a physical location and the physical position between Jesus and the people listening to Him. We also see this chapter began with the words, "Later that same day." That shows the relationship this chapter has with the previous chapter.

Once we highlight the key words we can see one important group of key words. “*Stories and parables*,” in this story are directly related to the key words “*taught, understood, teaching, understanding, knowledge*,” and others. We should instantly see how this entire chapter is dedicated to **teaching**. That was what Jesus was doing. When we look at a few other words, we can begin to see an important point within the lesson. Jesus used a few specific key words like, “*scatters and shallow*.” to begin the lesson. The major point in that lesson was showing how wisdom and knowledge is spread all over the world, but the world has their own way of scattering, or treating that wisdom and knowledge. At times for good, and at times for poor reasons.

At the end of the parable Jesus used a group of key words associated with communication. “*Ear, hear, listen, replied, and listening*.” are all related to communication, and in this example, highlighted yellow. In this parable the set of key words related to listening explain the symbols Jesus used in the parable. “*Seeds, sprouted, and plants*,” are symbols related to and explained by key words related to communication.

When Jesus began to explain the spiritual meaning of the parable, He once again repeated a set of key words related to *learning and knowledge*. In other words, Jesus is teaching how symbols are interpreted or defined by the Bible.

This is one example showing how key words explain or define symbols. Jesus quoted some Old Testament scripture focusing on communication to help explain the symbols in the parable. Notice how Jesus quoted scripture using the same key words. That is the type of signatures we have to pay attention to. In this example quoting scripture interjects another important Bible Study rule. When an inspired author quotes scripture, look it up and read the entire story. We will cover that rule in later chapters in this book.

We have to pay attention to how key words are used. Since **understanding** is the main theme and **parables** are the main subject, we have to pay attention when Jesus makes the comment, “You are permitted to **understand** the **secrets** of the **Kingdom of Heaven**, but others are not.” The contrast in Jesus’ answer established a choice. Understanding just doesn’t happen. Understanding takes time, hard work, dedication, and a good teacher. It doesn’t make sense for the greatest teacher the world has ever seen to make such a comment, then neglect to teach every detail involved in the process. This may be a good time to exercise another important Bible Study rule. When the beginning of the chapter contains a word or phrase pointing back to the previous chapter, look at how that chapter ended.

Mat 12:46 As Jesus was **speaking** to the crowd, his **mother and brothers** stood outside, **asking** to **speak** to him.

Mat 12:47 Someone **told** Jesus, “Your **mother and your brothers** are outside, and they want to **speak** to you.”

Mat 12:48 Jesus **asked**, “Who is my **mother**? Who are my **brothers**?”

Mat 12:49 Then he pointed to his **disciples** and **said**, “Look, these are my **mother and brothers**.”

Mat 12:50 Anyone who does the will of my **Father** in **heaven** is my **brother and sister and mother!**”

In this case we see a direct link to the parable about seeds and who Jesus referred to and brothers and sisters. Who is going to learn what Jesus is going to teach? People who are

going to listen to Him. Those people become Jesus' brothers and sisters. When we link two consecutive stories that have always been connected in the Bible, it opens the door to see other lessons Jesus taught and how they are related. Jesus taught a lot about God's family. Who are those people? The brothers and sisters willing to listen and learn. In other words, the good seeds.

Because we all learn on different levels at different speeds, Jesus often followed up one parable with another related parable. Not only are key words related, so are parables. In this example we see how Jesus continued to use the same key words.

It wasn't by accident that Jesus told another parable related to plants. This was a learning and practice session. A lesson is taught and like any normal teacher, the students are given a quiz. Now we learn there is not only good soil and bad soil, there are good and bad seeds in this world. We also learn there is an enemy lurking around in the dark sowing toxic seeds. The deeper we look into the stories in scripture and how they are related, we more details come to light. Seeds can't grow without light.

The last parable we have in this example shows how those seeds can grow. They can be either weak or strong plants. We have to go back to the first parable to see why those seeds grow up either weak or strong. They need knowledge and understanding to be strong. Without wisdom their growth is tainted by their surroundings. We also see this world has a way of throwing about threats and distractions to stunt that growth.

Now that you have seen how Key words are found, highlighted, and used, you have to practice the skill. You have also seen how one story is related to the previous story, which is one of the best examples of both context and repetition. Now we need a few more examples to go over and see what other lessons we can learn and what skills we can hone.