

STUDENT'S GUIDE

Discussion Questions: The Parable of the Leaven

The Parable of the Leaven can be found in Matthew 13:33 and Luke 13:20-21.

1. **What is leaven?** _____

Parable of the Leaven. (Both verses are almost identical, read the verse outlined in black: Matthew 13:33).

2. **What is your interpretation of this parable based on what you've heard or read in church?** _____

3. **Please provide the group with any study notes or comments you have in your Bible regarding Matthew 13:33?** _____

4. **Please provide the group with any study notes or comments you have in your Bible regarding Luke 13:21?** _____

Scholars have provided three interpretations of this parable.

The most popular interpretation, and probably the one you are most familiar with, is the first one.

5. Leader to read: The woman represents the church, and the leaven represents the good news or the gospel that is to be spread. It is regarded as a positive force that initiates a gradual yet irreversible transformation of the world. It works tirelessly behind the scenes, unnoticed yet persistent until its impact is felt on a global scale until the return of Jesus Christ.

Here is a similar way to interpret Jesus' parable comparing the Kingdom of God to leaven or yeast. Just like yeast transforms the dough into bread, the presence of Jesus in our lives can transform us into better people. We become more loving, joyous, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, humble, and self-controlled, which reflects the Kingdom of God within us.

Jesus' power works silently but surely, just like the yeast in bread. Although we cannot see how the Holy Spirit works within us, others can see the positive changes in our behavior and attitude. Therefore, it is essential to act like yeast ourselves and spread Jesus' message of love and peace to others.

6. The second interpretation is similar to the parable of the tares. In this interpretation, the enemy represents sin, and he sows weeds that symbolize the corrupting influence of sin. This view suggests that the world will eventually infiltrate every

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church, and that no church will be able to maintain its purity and holiness until Jesus Christ returns. The use of leaven as a metaphor for sin reinforces this idea.

Consequently, churches will face persecution as they strive to remain faithful to God's teachings amidst a world that is increasingly hostile to the gospel.

Neither of the first two interpretations of the parable explain the woman or the three measures, or why the leaven was hidden instead of kneaded into the dough. The idea that the kingdom of heaven spreads like yeast through the church and the gospel is a popular interpretation, but it doesn't fully account for all the details in the parable.

As part of our investigation, we examined every instance of the words "leaven" and "unleavened" in the Bible using Strong's Expanded Exhaustive Concordance. Our research found that throughout the Old and New Testaments, leaven is consistently portrayed as something bad, while unleavened is good. There are a few instances where leaven is burned as an offering.

This makes the parable of the leaven somewhat unique, as it is the **only** time where leaven is described as a positive force. Some scholars have interpreted this as a metaphor for the transformative power of the gospel, but it's important to recognize that this interpretation goes against the usual biblical understanding of leaven.

Here is a breakdown of the scriptures identified. We will include several of these in the study guide.

a. Scriptures referring to **Unleavened** is good or a feast of Unleavened Bread:

Genesis 19:3	Leviticus 23:6	2 Chronicles 30:13
Exodus 12:8	Numbers 6:19	2 Chronicles 35:17
Exodus 12:17	Numbers 9:11	Ezra 6:22
Exodus 12:18	Deuteronomy 6:3	Ezekiel 45:21
Exodus 12:20	Deuteronomy 16:16	Matthew 26:17
Exodus 12:34	Joshua 5:11	Mark 14:1
Exodus 12:39	Judges 6:19	Mark 14:12
Exodus 13:6	1 Samuel 28:24	Luke 22:1
Exodus 13:7	2 Kings 23:9	Luke 22:7
Exodus 23:15	1 Chronicles 23:29	Acts 12:3
Exodus 34:18	2 Chronicles 8:13	Acts 20:6
Leviticus 6:16	2 Chronicles 30:13	1 Corinthians 5:7
Leviticus 10:12	2 Chronicles 30:21	1 Corinthians 5:8

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b. Scriptures referring to **Leavened** as bad (sin):

Exodus 12:15	Leviticus 2:11	Matthew 16:12
Exodus 12:19	Leviticus 6:17	Mark 8:15
Exodus 12:20	Deuteronomy 16:3	Luke 12:1
Exodus 13:3	Deuteronomy 16:4	1 Corinthians 5:6
Exodus 13:7	Hosea 7:4	1 Corinthians 5:7
Exodus 23:18	Matthew 16:6	1 Corinthians 5:8
Exodus 34:25	Matthew 16:11	Galatians 5:9

c. Scriptures refer to **Unleavened** bread as a sacrifice.

- a. Exodus 29:23 (Wave Offering)
- b. Leviticus 2:4 (Grain Offering)
- c. Leviticus 2:5 (Grain Offering)
- d. Leviticus 7:12 (Law of the Sacrifice of Peace)
- e. Leviticus 8:2 (Sin Offering)
- f. Leviticus 8:26 (Wave Offering)
- g. Numbers 6:15 (Sin Offering)
- h. Numbers 6:17 (Sin Offering)
- i. Judges 6:20 (Gideon's Offering)
- j. Judges 6:21 (Gideon's Offering)

d. Scriptures refer to **Leavened** bread as a sacrifice.

- a. Leviticus 7:13 (Sacrifice of Thanksgiving of the Peace Offering)
- b. Leviticus 23:17 (Feast of Weeks)
- c. Amos 4:5 (Sacrifice of Thanksgiving)
- d. Matthew 13:33 (Sacrifice to get into the Kingdom of Heaven)
- e. Luke 13:21 (Sacrifice to get into the Kingdom of Heaven)

7. Let's read some examples from both the New and Old Testament scriptures:

- a. Exodus 12:19-20, Exodus 13:6-7, Leviticus 6:16, Leviticus 10:12, Deuteronomy 16:3, Matthew 16:6, Matthew 16:12, Mark 8:15, Mark 14:1, Luke 22:7, and 1 Corinthians 5:7-8.

8. **What is the "Feast of Unleavened Bread" commonly referred to as?**

The third interpretation of this parable is not mainstream, but it closely examines the words used by Jesus and how they are consistently used throughout the Bible. The

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keywords are "leaven" or "leavened." In 21 scriptures, the word "leaven" describes something bad, while in 39 scriptures, "unleavened" represents something good. It is unlikely that Jesus would go against this consistent metaphor without providing an explanation. Since Jesus did not clarify why leaven should be good, we must maintain the consistent metaphor used throughout the Bible that leaven is bad and unleavened is good.

9. **What narrative could help explain this parable by creating a passageway to get into the Kingdom of Heaven? What and how could Jesus remove all our sins?**

10. **Who does the woman represent?** _____

11. **What is "three measures of a meal?"** _____

12. **What does a meal offering consist of?** _____

13. When the priests gave an offering, they gave 1/10 of an ephah. (Read Leviticus 6:20-21) **Why did the priest only give 1/10 of an ephah?** _____

14. **Can you put leaven in a meal offering?** _____

15. **How is the meal offering created?** _____

16. **What happens to Jesus when the Holy Spirit hides the leaven in dough?**

17. **Why did the woman hide the leaven in the dough?** _____

18. **What happens to leaven bread when it is placed into the oven?** _____
