



PUZZLING PARABLES

WEEK 5

BIBLE STORY

Get ready!
Mark 13:28-33

PARABLE

Fig Tree

TODAY'S TAKEAWAY

I should live every day like Jesus could return.

SERIES VERSE

His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

2 Peter 1:3 NIV

WEEKLY VERSE

You also must be ready all the time, for the Son of Man will come when least expected.

Matthew 24:44 NLT



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SKIT INFORMATION

OVERVIEW

The skits will require two people. One person will play him or herself (the straight character), and the other person will play the funny character. It works best if you can find a person willing to commit to being the character for the entire series.

CHARACTER BIO

The character's name is Captain Puzzler. This skit is written with a male in mind, but feel free to use a female for this character if desired. Captain Puzzler is a super hero who has the super power of solving a puzzle faster than any other human being alive... or so he says. Consider putting your character in all royal blue and red. Captain Puzzler will wear a cape and mask at all times to conceal his identity. Optional: Order a Captain America shield and put a large puzzle piece over the star in the shield. Embellish Captain Puzzler's shirt, mask, and cape with more puzzle pieces. Use super hero theme music to make Captain Puzzler's entrances more dramatic.

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SKIT

- Leader:** ***Walks out looking around for Captain Puzzler.*** Have you guys seen Captain Puzzler? I hope he has stopped eating all those donuts and chips!
- Captain Puzzler:** ***Optional theme music begins. Comes in carrying a bag full of items while the leader is talking. Optional items include a travel puzzle, a timer, hand lotion, reading glasses, and a 5-hour energy or energy drink.***
- Leader:** Oh, there you are! What's in your bag? I've never seen you carrying that before.
- Captain Puzzler:** I decided that since I'm Captain Puzzler, I need to have all the essentials with me at all times, just in case a puzzle needs solving.
- Leader:** I see; that's actually really smart!
- Captain Puzzler:** Of course it is; I thought of it! I'm literally ready for any puzzle you could throw my way.
- Leader:** I'm dying to know what the essential items for puzzle solving are! Can you show us what's in your bag?
- Captain Puzzler:** Only if you promise not to share these secrets with any of the other puzzle super heroes!
- Leader:** Wait! There are more puzzle super heroes like you?
- Captain Puzzler:** How did you not know this? There is Puzzle Princess, The Puzzler, Iron Puzzle...
- Leader:** ***Interrupts Captain Puzzler*** Those kind of sound like made up names, but ok... back to what's in the bag! We promise not to tell any of the other puzzle super heroes.

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Captain Puzzler: *Begins pulling items out of the bag and talks about them as he pulls them out.* I have my travel puzzle for practicing my puzzle skills, a timer for practicing my puzzle speed, reading glasses for when my eyes get tired, hand lotion for when my hands get chapped from puzzling so hard, and some caffeine for when I want to go to sleep, but I must keep puzzling!

Leader: Wow! I guess you really are ready for any puzzle. We are actually talking about being ready for something a lot more important than puzzles today.

Captain Puzzler: Something more important than puzzles? What could it be?

Leader: Oh, you know, Jesus coming back to Earth to take us to heaven. It's kind of a big deal.

Captain Puzzler: You've got me there. That does sound a lot more important than puzzles, but how exactly can you get ready for that? How do you know when He is coming back?

Leader: We can't know exactly when He is coming back, but we can make sure that we have made a decision to ask Jesus into our lives and that we are living for Him every day.

Captain Puzzler: So, you just have to be ready at any time for Him to come back?

Leader: Yes!

Captain Puzzler: I'm going to make sure that I am ready for that too, but I have to go now. I just received a super secret puzzling mission!

Leader: Not sure what that means, but good luck!

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GAME: POP A PUZZLE!

SUPPLIES

- 2 white or DIY puzzles (12 pieces each, if possible)
- 24 balloons (12 in two different colors)

SETUP

- Put the puzzles together and write the series verse on the puzzle pieces with the marker. It should be one word per piece if you have a 12-piece puzzle. (You may be able to reuse the puzzles from a previous week.)
- Pull the pieces apart and put one piece in each balloon. (If you have more than 12 pieces for each puzzle, put more than one piece in each balloon.)
- Blow up the balloons and put the two different colors of balloons in separate bags, one for each team.

HOW TO PLAY

1. Choose 2-4 kids for each team and have the teams stand on opposite sides of the room.
2. Pour the balloons out for each team on the floor near the teams.
3. When the leader says "go," kids can begin popping the balloons to reveal the puzzle pieces.
4. When a team has all of their puzzle pieces out of the balloons, they can begin putting the puzzle together to reveal the verse.
5. The first team to put their puzzle together correctly wins.

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MESSAGE

SUPPLIES

- A Bible in your preferred version (This week uses NLT.)
- A tree branch with leaves (fake or real)
- Large calendar
- Red marker

INTRODUCTION

Today we will be tackling another one of Jesus' Puzzling Parables, the parable of the Fig Tree. Like all of Jesus' parables, it isn't really about a tree or branches, but about a much deeper spiritual truth. I like to believe that some of Jesus' parables, possibly this one, were simply inspired by things or items that were nearby while He was teaching. Perhaps He was talking with his disciples and saw a fig tree out of the corner of his eye and it sparked this short, but important, parable.

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BIBLE STORY

Today's parable is found in all three of the Synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke. We are going to look at Mark's version of the parable today. Turn with me to Mark 13:28-33.

Allow the kids time to turn to Mark 13:28-33.

Earlier in chapter 13 we see that four of Jesus' closest disciples, Peter, James, John, and Andrew, came to Jesus to ask Him about when the world would end and what would be the signs. Some of the signs Jesus warned them about were false prophets and Messiahs who would claim to be from God, teaching against the truth, wars, earthquakes, famines or lack of food, the sun will be darkened, the moon will give no light, and the stars will fall from the sky. Jesus went on to share a quick parable or example of what it would be like.

Let's read Mark 13: 28-31 together: "'Now learn a lesson from the fig tree. **Hold up the branch with leaves on it.** When its branches bud and its leaves begin to sprout, you know that summer is near. In the same way, when you see all these things taking place, you can know that his return is very near, right at the door. I tell you the truth, this generation will not pass from the scene before all these things take place. Heaven and earth will disappear, but my words will never disappear.'"

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So, Jesus is telling them that there will be signs very similar to when the trees change with the seasons. When a tree loses its leaves and flowers and becomes bare, we know the winter is coming soon. When a tree begins to bud with leaves and blossoms, we know that spring is here and summer is coming soon. However, this is not the most important part of our Scripture passage today. Let's read on to verses 32-33 to hear what Jesus taught next: "However, no one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son himself. Only the Father knows. And since you don't know when that time will come, be on guard! Stay alert!"

Jesus is saying, yes, there will be signs, but no one actually knows when it will happen or when Jesus will return to take us to heaven, except for God Himself.

LIFE APPLICATION/OBJECT LESSON

Many people have attempted to predict the end of the world and Jesus' return. Even the disciples believed that Jesus would return before they died, and here we are 2,000 years later! Men have predicted the end of the world right down to day and hour! They put it on their calendars **hold up a big calendar and circle a date with a red marker and write "end of the world"** on the date and tell everyone they know it's going to happen for sure this time. They have based their predictions on blood moons, lunar eclipses, polar flips, earthquakes, wars, and even the ancient Mayan calendar ending in 2012! Every single time, the date rolls around and they are wrong. **Put a big red x over the date you just circled.** Clearly none of those people ever read Mark 13:32. Let's read that one more time: "However, no one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven

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or the Son himself. Only the Father knows.” The Bible is clear that none of us can know the day or the hour. We can’t predict it, so what can we do?

I believe the answer is found in verse 33. Let’s read that verse one more time as well:

“And since you don’t know when that time will come, be on guard! Stay alert!”

We can get ready for Jesus’ return. Who remembers today’s takeaway? **Allow kids to respond.** I want us to say that together: “I should live every day like Jesus could return.” That is what we can do. We can choose to live our lives like Jesus could return in the next minute, hour, day, or week. We would probably live our lives differently and make different choices if we knew that today was our last day on Earth. Let’s pray and ask God to show us how we can get ready for His return and make the most of our time here on Earth.

Optional: Offer a prayer of salvation for any kids who have not accepted Jesus into their lives.

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REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Who did Jesus teach the parable of the fig tree?
Answer: His closest disciples
2. Which Gospels contain the parable of the fig tree?
Answer: Matthew, Mark, and Luke
3. Who can know the day and hour that Jesus will return?
Answer: Only God
4. What is Today's Takeaway?
Answer: I should live every day like Jesus could return.
5. Where is our series verse found in the Bible?
Answer: 2 Peter 1:3

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is something you do every day and spend a lot of time on?
2. Would you live differently if you knew that today was your last day on Earth?
3. What is something you might do differently if you knew that today was your last day?
4. What is something you could do every day to get ready for Jesus' return?
5. Have kids look up these verses and discuss them as a group.
Matthew 24:44, 1 Corinthians 15:52, Revelation 1:7

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GROUP GAME: ARE YOU READY?

SUPPLIES

- No supplies are needed.

SETUP

- No setup is needed.

HOW TO PLAY

1. Everyone can play. Have all of the kids lay down on their backs before each round. All heads and feet must be on the floor.
2. The leader will wait as long as they want before giving an action for the kids to get up and do. They won't know when it is coming. Vary the waiting period each time to make it more suspenseful.
3. Action ideas: Do ten jumping jacks, do a summer-salt, jump five times, do one burpee, find someone you don't know and give them a high five, find someone and come up with a secret handshake, hop on one foot seven times, spin around six times, do three pushups, run a lap around the room.
4. Play as many rounds as you like.
5. Remind the kids at the end of the game that we must always be ready for Jesus' return.